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U.S. Bureau of the Census
Washington, DC

Dear Sir or Madam,

This comment is in response to the recent Federal Register notice concerning the Census Bureau's plans for the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) in OMB Docket Number USBC-2023-0003.

I am a Professor of Economics at Johns Hopkins University and conduct research on social programs in the U.S. I have used the SIPP for over 30 years in my research career because it is the most valuable survey on social programs in the country. I have published many articles in professional and policy journals using SIPP data which are often highly cited by other researchers because the findings are so unique and not available elsewhere.

I wish to express my deep concern with the proposal to permanently reduce the size of the SIPP sample from 53,000 housing units to 35,000. That reduction will make it more difficult for me and other researchers like me to conduct research on social programs for low income families. The poverty rate in 2022 was 12 percent, and 12 percent of 35,000 is only 4,200 (I know that the poverty rate measures individuals, not housing units, but this is still approximately correct). If I want to continue to study poor families of different types—single mothers, married couple families, single childless individuals—and possibly also by race and ethnicity, for example--the sample size will get so small as to risk the viability of my analysis. I will have no other data set to turn to because none of the other existing federal surveys have anything close to the detail on poor families and the social programs they receive.

I urge that the reduction in sample size be reconsidered.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Moffitt
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Professor of Economics