



American Association of Geographers

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Douglas Richardson

January 27, 2017

The Honorable Michael S. Lee
U.S. Senate
361A Russell SOB
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Lee,

Congratulations on your re-election and best wishes for the 115th Congress.

On behalf of the American Association of Geographers (AAG), I am writing with regard to S. 103, legislation you recently introduced regarding Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations. We are specifically concerned about §3 in the bill, which says "...no Federal funds may be used to design, build, maintain, utilize, or provide access to a Federal database of geospatial information on community racial disparities or disparities in access to affordable housing."

This provision is broadly worded, and it is our belief that it could have far-reaching consequences on federally-sponsored research on racial discrimination, including on federal human health programs; census issues; education programs, including services for children; Department of Justice programs; and other critical programs. Geographers and related scientists often conduct research – some of which is federally funded – using geospatial information related to disparities, and we fear that the enactment of §3 could have a damaging effect on a wide range of Americans and their communities. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you or your staff to discuss this issue in detail.

The AAG is a nonprofit scientific, research, and educational society with a current membership of over 12,000 individuals, including numerous geographers at the University of Utah, Utah State, Weber State, and elsewhere in the Beehive State. Our members work in the public, private, and academic sectors to advance the theory, methods, and practice of geography for the betterment of society. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or if you would like further information on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Douglas Richardson, PhD
Executive Director

cc: Senator Marco Rubio