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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

The Department of Commerce will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. chapter 35).

Agency: U.S. Census Bureau.

Title: Annual Survey of School System Finances.

OMB Control Number: 0607-0700.

Form Number(s): F-33, F-33-L1, F-33-L2, F-33-L3.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved collection.

Number of Respondents: 3,709.

Average Hours Per Response: 1.02 hours.

Burden Hours: 3,789.

Needs and Uses: The U.S. Census Bureau, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), requests an extension of approval for the Annual Survey of School System Finances, OMB Number 0607-0700.

The Census Bureau's collection of school district finance data and associated publications are the most comprehensive sources for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 finance data.

These data are collected from the universe of school districts using uniform definitions and concepts of revenue, expenditure, debt, and assets as defined by the Financial Accounting for Local and State School Systems. This survey and the Annual Surveys of State and Local Government Finances (OMB No. 0607-0585) are conducted as part of the Census Bureau's State and Local Government Finance program. Data collected from cities, counties, states, and special district governments are combined with data collected from local school systems to produce state and national totals of government spending. Local school system spending comprises a significant portion of total government spending. In 2012, public elementary-secondary expenditures accounted for 33.6 percent of local government spending.

This comprehensive and ongoing, time series collection of local education agency finances maintains historical continuity in the state and local government statistics community. Elementary-secondary education related spending is the single largest financial activity of state and local governments. Education finance statistics provided by the Census Bureau allow for analyses of how public elementary-secondary school systems receive and spend funds. Increased focus on education has led to a demand for data reflecting student performance, graduation rates, and school finance policy – all of which are related to the collection of this local education finance data. State legislatures, local leaders, university researchers, and parents increasingly rely on data to make substantive decisions about education. School district finance is a vital sector of the education data spectrum used by stakeholders to form policy and to develop new education strategies.

The Census Bureau uses an announcement letter and form to collect state and local government public education finance data. We mail the letter electronically to respondents at the beginning of each survey period soliciting the assistance of the state education agencies (SEAs) in providing data centrally for their public school systems. The

letter officially announces the opening of the collection period and requests administrative data, such as estimated date of submission, changes to reporting format from prior year, and updated contact information for the state coordinator. Census Bureau staff use the response to this letter to plan for the processing of state education agency data submissions. The form (F-33) contains the elementary-secondary education finance items.

In practice, this form serves more as a data processing guide rather than as a data collection instrument. The Census Bureau relies heavily on collecting this public school system finance data centrally from state education agencies. All states provide significant amounts of these data centrally to the Census Bureau via the Internet using File Transfer Protocol (FTP). Supplemental forms are sent to school systems in states where the state education agency cannot provide information on assets (F-33-L1), indebtedness (F-33-L2), or both (F-33-L3).

The Census Bureau facilitates central collection by accepting states' data in one of two formats. Currently, 21 states provide the Census Bureau electronic copies of state-specific detailed education finance data files. The Census Bureau maintains programs for

converting these data from the state agency format to the Census Bureau F-33 format.

Thirty states reformat state-specific data files into the Census Bureau's format prior to submitting the data electronically to the Census Bureau.

The education finance data collected and processed by the Census Bureau are an essential component of the agency's state and local government finance collection and provide unique products for users of education finance data.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) uses data from the survey to develop figures for the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). F-33 data items specifically contribute to the estimates for National Income and Product Accounts (NIPA), Input-Output accounts (I-O), and gross domestic investments. BEA also uses the data to assess other public fiscal spending trends and events.

The Census Bureau's Government Finances program has disseminated comprehensive and comparable public fiscal data since 1902. School finance data, which comprised 33.6 percent of all local government spending in 2012, is currently incorporated into the local government statistics reported on the Annual Surveys of State and Local

Government Finances. The report contains benchmark statistics on public revenue, expenditure, debt, and assets. They are widely used by economists, legislators, social and political scientists, and government administrators.

The Census Bureau makes available detailed files for all school systems from its Internet Web site, www.census.gov/govs/school. That Web site currently contains data files and statistical tables for the 1992 through 2012 fiscal year surveys. Historical files and publications prior to 1992 are also available upon request for data users engaged in longitudinal studies. In addition to numerous academic researchers who use F-33 products, staff receive inquiries from state government officials, legislatures, public policy analysts, local school officials, non-profit organizations, and various Federal agencies.

The NCES use these annual data as part of the Common Core of Data (CCD) program. The education finance data collected by the Census Bureau are the sole source of school district fiscal information for the CCD. NCES data users utilize electronic tools to search CCD databases for detailed fiscal and non-fiscal variables. Additionally, NCES uses F-33 education finance files to publish annual reports on the fiscal state of education.

Affected Public: State, local, or Tribal government.

Frequency: Annually.

Respondent's Obligation: Voluntary.

Legal Authority: Title 13 U.S.C., sections 8(b), 161 and 182; and title 20 U.S.C., sections 9543-44.

This information collection request may be viewed at www.reginfo.gov. Follow the instructions to view Department of Commerce collections currently under review by OMB.

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to

OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov or fax to (202) 395-5806.

Dated: August 24, 2015.

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BILLING CODE: 3510-07-P.

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