

April 12, 2018

The Honorable Trey Gowdy  
Chairman  
House Committee on Oversight and  
Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Elijah Cummings  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Oversight and  
Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2471 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Gowdy and Ranking Member Cummings:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to hold oversight hearings promptly on Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross's decision to include a new citizenship question on the 2020 decennial census. We believe that Secretary Ross, who previously expressed concerns to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform about adding untested questions, must explain his decision, which was made despite widespread objections from stakeholders, former Census Bureau directors, and career staff at the Census Bureau. We share the Secretary's stated goal of a fair and accurate census; however, the addition of an untested citizenship question after years of careful, and costly, research, testing, and planning will compromise preparations for the 2020 Census, thereby jeopardizing the accuracy of the count in all communities—an outcome that the nation will have to live with for the next ten years.

We believe Secretary Ross must explain why he disregarded the advice of Census officials, including six former Census Bureau directors from Republican and Democratic administrations, who stated in a January 26<sup>th</sup> [letter](#) to the Secretary, "We strongly believe that adding an untested question on citizenship status at this late point in the decennial planning process would put the accuracy of the enumeration and success of the census in all communities at grave risk." What gives us further cause for concern are [reports](#) that the Commerce Department overruled the advice of career officials at the Census Bureau. Officials rightly worried that adding a citizenship question to the decennial census could depress response rates and lead to an undercount. These officials worked throughout the decade to understand the intricacies of the census and how asking certain questions can affect response rates, data collection methods, truthfulness of responses, and overall willingness to be counted in the census. Their advice should not be disregarded, especially for an issue that Secretary Ross himself acknowledged was "a big and very controversial request."

In addition, Secretary Ross must explain why he believes the citizenship question was "well-tested," as stated in his memo explaining the decision, when in fact the question has never been tested in a contemporary census-like environment. While the American Community Survey includes a citizenship question, as did the census "long form" before it, the question has not been asked on the census form that goes to all households since 1950. As the former census directors highlighted, every census is different, and the environment in which a census occurs is a significant factor. Small changes to the order of questions, wording, and instructions can have significant and often unexpected consequences for response

rates and the quality and truthfulness of answers. The consequences of adding a citizenship question to the 2020 Census on data quality and census accuracy, therefore, are completely unknown.

We also believe that Secretary Ross must explain how the inclusion of the question will impact the Bureau's ability to reach and count all communities equally well, especially in the current contemporary environment of fear. It is not, as Secretary Ross asserts, the responsibility of stakeholders to demonstrate that including a citizenship question will depress response rates. Rather, it is the Secretary's job to ensure through rigorous research and testing that the question will not affect the level of responses. The Census Bureau noted, in a presentation in November 2017, that there was growing fear and reluctance to fill out the census in the current political climate. A citizenship question is likely to exacerbate those fears. Secretary Ross must explain and document with objective scientific evidence why he believes this would not be the case.

Finally, we believe that Secretary Ross must satisfy the committees of legislative jurisdiction that political motivations did not improperly taint the decision to add a citizenship question. On March 19<sup>th</sup>, the Trump reelection campaign sent an email to supporters saying, "The President wants the 2020 United States Census to ask people whether or not they are citizens." The campaign followed up on March 28<sup>th</sup> with an email celebrating the Secretary's decision. The decennial census is not a political function; it is a constitutionally mandated process to count every person in the United States. Since 1790 every census has included citizens and non-citizens alike. The Constitution vests Congress with the responsibility for overseeing the enumeration and achieving that goal. While the census—as the basis for political apportionment and equal representation—has political consequences, the conduct of the census must be strictly nonpartisan and non-political.

We urge the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to conduct oversight hearings on the Commerce Secretary's decision to add a citizenship question to the decennial census as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration of our views. Please feel free to contact John Foti at (202)-730-7157 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

18MillionRising.org

9to5 WI

9to5, National Association of Working Women

AcademyHealth

ACCESS

Access Now

Action Ridge, A social action group in Park Ridge, Illinois

Adhikaar

Advancement Project California

Advocates for Children and Youth

Advocates for Children and Youth (Maryland)

AFL-CIO  
African American Ministers In Action  
AgeOptions  
AJC (American Jewish Committee)  
Alianza Americas  
Alliance for Climate Education (ACE)  
American Anthropological Association  
American Association for Public Opinion Research  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Foundation for the Blind  
American Library Association  
American Planning Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Society on Aging  
American Sociological Association  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee  
Anti-Defamation League  
APACEvotes  
APANO (Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon)  
Arab American Institute  
Archivists Roundtable of Metropolitan New York (ART)  
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families  
Arkansas United Community Coalition  
Asia Pacific Cultural Center  
Asian American Federation  
Asian American Organizing Project  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Chicago  
Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote  
Asian Community Alliance Inc  
Asian Community Development Council (ACDC)  
Asian Law Alliance  
Asian Pacific American Caucus  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance  
Asian Pacific Community in Action  
Asian Pacific Development Center  
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence  
Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association, Austin TX Chapter

Asian Services In Action, Inc.  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations  
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs  
Association of Population Centers  
Association of Public Data Users (APDU)  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
AZ AAPI Democratic Party Caucus  
AZ Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote Table  
Bend the Arc Jewish Action  
Berkeley Media Studies Group  
Breakaway Research Group  
California Calls  
California Calls Education Fund  
Cambodian Women Networking Asso.  
Campaign for Youth Justice  
Campaign Legal Center  
Center for Democracy & Technology  
Center for Media and Democracy  
Center for Popular Democracy  
Center for Urban and Racial Equity  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers  
Child Care Aware of America  
Children's Advocacy Alliance - NV  
Children's Defense Fund  
Chinese Community Center, Houston  
Chinese for Affirmative Action  
CIRC  
Claritas  
CLASP  
CLC  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)  
Coalition for the Peoples Agenda  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Colorado Children's Campaign  
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition  
Common Cause  
Communications Workers of America (CWA)  
Community Action Against Rape DBA The Rape Crisis Center  
Community Catalyst  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces  
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes  
Congregation Rodeph Sholom

Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Constitutional Accountability Center  
Cook Inlet Housing Authority  
Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER)  
CREDO  
Crescent City Media Group  
CYR & Assoc. Human Services Consulting  
Daily Kos  
Data You Can Use, Inc.  
Decision Demographics  
Defending Rights & Dissent  
Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families  
Democracy Forward Foundation  
Democracy Initiative  
Demos  
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)  
End Domestic AbuseWI  
Equal Justice Society  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Equality California  
Equality North Carolina  
Every Child Matters  
Faith in Public Life  
Families USA  
Family Focused Treatment Association  
Feminist Majority  
FIRM (Fair Immigration Reform Movement)  
Florida Asian Services Center  
Food Research & Action Center  
Forum for Youth Investment  
Franciscan Action Network  
Free Press Action Fund  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Friends of the Earth - United States  
Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance  
Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials (GALEO)  
Government Information Watch  
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.  
Hep Free Hawaii  
Hepatitis Education Project  
Herd on the Hill  
Hispanic Federation  
Hispanic Organization for Leadership & Action (HOLA)

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters - USA-JPIC  
HOPE For Nevada  
Human Impact Partners  
Human Rights Watch  
Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Impact Fund  
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda  
Indivisible Baltimore  
International Children Assistance Network  
International Rescue Committee  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
John H. Thompson, Director of the U.S. Census Bureau - August 2013 to June 2017  
Justice in Aging  
Kansas Action for Children  
Kansas Appleseed  
Kansas Center for Economic Growth  
KIDS COUNT in Delaware  
Kids Forward  
Lambda Legal  
Laotian American National Alliance  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
Latinx Voice WI  
Laurin Associates  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
Layton Boulevard West Neighbors, Inc.  
LCLAA  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
Let America Vote  
Lisa Gibson, Indivisible Hawaii  
Los Angeles LGBT Center  
MA Voter Table  
MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund)  
Maxfield Research and Consulting LLC  
Mi Familia Vota  
MinKwon Center for Community Action  
Minnesota Council on Foundations  
MomsRising  
Musikanten  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
NAACP  
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.  
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund

National Action Network  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Law and Economic Justice  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (CAPACD)  
National Coalition for the Homeless  
National Consumers League  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Education Association  
National Employment Law Project  
National Employment Lawyers Association  
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)  
National Health Law Program  
National Hispanic Media Coalition  
National Human Services Assembly  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP)  
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium  
National League of Cities  
National LGBTQ Task Force  
National Network for Arab American Communities  
National Urban Indian Family Coalition  
National Urban League  
National WIC Association  
National Women's Law Center  
Nazareth Housing Services  
NC Child  
NC Counts  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
New America - Public Interest Technology  
New Mexico Asian Family Center  
New Mexico Voices For Children  
New York Immigration Coalition  
North Carolina Asian Americans Together (NCAAT)  
NY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TABLE  
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates  
OFA\_WI  
Ohio Voter Rights Coalition  
One Wisconsin Now  
Organizing for Action

Our Wisconsin Revolution  
Partnership For America's Children  
Pennsylvania Council of Churches  
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children  
People For the American Way  
PFLAG National  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
PolicyLink  
Poligon Education Fund  
Population Association of America  
positively kids  
Prison Policy Initiative  
Progressive Hmong American Organizers  
Project On Government Oversight  
ProLiteracy  
Public Citizen  
public health  
Public Health Institute  
Public Justice Center  
Purdue Marion & Associates  
Research Advisory Services, Inc.  
Research Allies for Lifelong Learning  
Revolving Door Project  
Ribbon Demographics, LLC  
Rid Racism Milwaukee  
RLS Demographics, Inc.  
Rock the Vote  
San Francisco AIDS Foundation  
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law  
SEIU 32BJ  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN)  
Sierra Club  
SIKH AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND  
Sinsinawa Dominican Peace and Justice Office  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership  
Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of New York  
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York  
Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, IA  
Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
Sisters of the Holy Cross  
Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, New Windsor, NY  
SiX Action  
Society of American Archivists



SocioEnergetics Foundation  
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)  
SOUTH ASIAN NETWORK  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
Southeast Michigan Census Council  
Southern Coalition for Social Justice  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
Srs. of Mary Reparatrix  
State Innovation Exchange (SiX)  
State Voices  
Sunlight Foundation  
Tangible Consulting Services  
Texas Civil Rights Project  
Texas Progressive Action Network  
The Arc of the United States  
The Census Project  
The Data Center  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)  
The New Florida Majority Education Fund  
The Resurrection Project  
The Sikh Coalition  
The United States Conference of Mayors  
Theresa Nowlin  
Transformative Justice Coalition  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Methodist Women  
United Neighborhood Houses of New York  
Urban and Regional Information Systems Association  
URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America  
Vermont State Data Center  
Virginia Civic Engagement Table  
Voices for Progress  
Voting Rights Institute  
West Side Campaign Against Hunger  
Wisconsin Democracy Campaign  
Wisconsin Voices  
World Without Genocide at Mitchell Hamline School of Law  
YWCA Southeast Wisconsin  
YWCA USA  
ZERO TO THREE

cc: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform