

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 26th [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 19th, 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 28th 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