



# Seattle City Council

March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**The Honorable Wilbur Ross**

Secretary

Department of Commerce

1401 Constitution Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross,

We, members of the Seattle City Council, on behalf of over 700,000 residents of our great city, are writing to express our grave concerns regarding the suggested changes to the 2020 Census. The City of Seattle relies on the Census for a myriad of policy decisions impacting our communities. Census data informs and determines funding for many public health response and prevention programs, critical services such as hospitals and schools, funding for affordable housing, workforce development, economic development strategies, and reporting for state and federal agencies. Census data impacts almost every area of City policy-making, and impacts our workforce, businesses, non-profits and citizens even further. We all have an interest in ensuring full participation in the decennial Census, and in a Federal Government that is committed to a full, fair and accurate 2020 Census.

We stand in opposition to any changes that would weaken the 2020 Census process, exacerbate distrust with the government, or harm our ability to serve our population's needs. The Seattle City Council respectfully requests that the Secretary immediately act upon the following:

1. **Remove the Citizenship Question.** The U.S. Constitution requires that all persons be counted in the Census. Your announcement today that the 2020 Census will include a new citizenship question will have a chilling effect on participation. Including a citizenship question is likely to discourage many communities from participating in the Census, including citizens and non-citizens, immigrants and communities of color, and urban and rural communities. This question would have a devastating impact on participation rates in the 2020 Census, leading to an undercount of people residing within our country. Further, as the citizenship question has not been included in field testing, we do not have adequate information on positive data yields from the question.
2. **Add LGBTQ Demographic Questions.** The 2010 Census was the first time when the Census Bureau extrapolated information about gender and relationships between household members to produce information about same-sex households. The 2020 Census should include questions about the LGBTQ community, including questions about sexual orientation and trans-inclusive gender. Without accurate information about the LGBTQ community, city policies and non-profit outreach on issues that disproportionately impact the LGBTQ community are difficult, if not impossible, to act on.
3. **Supplement Online-Preferred Participation with In Person Follow-Up.** Conducting the Census electronically creates barriers for low-income, elderly and immigrant communities. Isolation during participation can lead to confusion for communities who speak non-English languages. Access to computer and wireless internet requires many to travel, be available during specific times and calendar out their participation. Such factors

---

City Hall, 600 Fourth Avenue, Floor 2, PO Box 34025, Seattle, Washington 98124-4025  
(206) 684-8888 Fax: (206) 684-8587 TTY: (206) 233-0025

<http://www.cityofseattle.gov/council>

An EEO employer. Accommodations for people with disabilities provided upon request.

need to be considered in identifying hard-to count communities and planning in-person follow up. While proper use of administrative records can reduce costs and improve the accuracy of the Census, substantial in-person follow up needs to be conducted in hard to count communities and administrative records should not be a substitute for needed in-person follow-up to Census counts.

4. **Fully fund the 2020 Census.** Adequate outreach funding for Census counts is imperative. With new, predominantly electronic, methods for responding to the Census questionnaire and heightened concerns that many have about participating, it is especially important to ensure that community-based, government-based and online outreach on the Census is adequately funded. This must also include additional funding for community organizations on the ground to conduct comprehensive outreach. While the current omnibus spending bill brings Census Bureau appropriations to an adequate level, Census counts will still be negatively impacted by unmet funding requests over the past several years and potential underfunding in Fiscal Year 2019 and onward.

In writing our letter, we join hundreds of groups and municipalities across the country who have expressed similar concerns around the 2020 Census, including the Los Angeles City Council, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Population Association of America. We urge you to carefully consider and adopt our recommendations to ensure full participation in the 2020 Census.

Sincerely,



Council President Bruce A. Harrell



Councilmember Sally Bagshaw



Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda



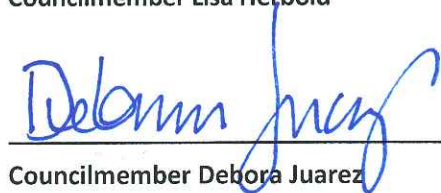
Councilmember M. Lorena González



Councilmember Lisa Herbold



Councilmember Rob Johnson



Councilmember Debora Juarez



Councilmember Mike O'Brien



Councilmember Kshama Sawant