June 7, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

As members of The Census Project (www.thecensusproject.org), a broad-based, nonpartisan group of stakeholders who rely on accurate, timely, and comprehensive data produced by the U.S. Census Bureau and support data-driven decision making, we write to urge the prompt nomination of a new Census Bureau Director.

With Census 2020 only three years away, it is imperative that the Bureau have a highly qualified and respected director in place as soon as possible. As you know, preparations for Census 2020 are well underway with less than one year before a critical “dress rehearsal” of all decennial census innovations and procedures occurs in three areas of the United States. Failure to fill this vacancy quickly could jeopardize the success of this 2018 End-to-End Readiness Test, delay final design decisions and impair preparations for the 2020 Census. The Census Director also must oversee the conduct of the 2017 Economic Census, the source of all baseline data for our economic indicators and national income accounts, as well as efforts to strengthen and streamline the American Community Survey (ACS), which updates the census throughout the decade. Simply put, the need for strong, decisive leadership at the Census Bureau, particularly at this juncture, cannot be overstated.

The Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011 requires that the Census Bureau Director have “demonstrated ability in managing large organizations and experience in the collection, analysis, and use of statistical data.” As census stakeholders, we feel strongly that the next director should also be someone with visibility and stature in the statistical community, who has an ability to interact effectively with Congress, the Administration, and census stakeholders in the public and private sectors, and possess a thorough understanding of the National Academies’ Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency.

Decennial census data are central to our democracy, affecting not only apportionment and redistricting, but also the distribution of approximately $600 billion in federal assistance to states and localities each year. Given the significance of the Bureau’s mission and the data it produces, the process for selecting for the next Director should continue the tradition of respecting the agency’s political independence, both in reality and perception, and to guard against diminished public confidence in the census process and outcome.
Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for considering our views. All of our organizations are happy to serve as resources to the Administration as you consider candidates to serve as the next U.S. Census Bureau Director.

Sincerely,

Alaska Community Action on Toxics
American Educational Research Association
American Planning Association
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Asian Americans Advancing Justice -AAJC
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users
Center for Data Innovation
Claris\tas Ithaca NY
Community Home Trust Chapel Hill NC
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Cornell Program on Applied Demographics NY
Council for Community and Economic Research
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics DC
Insights Association
Laotian American National Alliance
League of United Latin American Citizens
MACS 2020 - Minnesotans for the American Community Survey and 2020 Census MN
Minnesota Council on Foundations MN
Minnesota State Demographic Center MN
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association for Business Economics
National Association of Home Builders
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Housing Conference
National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP)
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA)
Nazareth Housing Services Pittsburgh PA
New York City Department of City Planning New York City NY
Nielsen
PathWays PA Holmes PA
PeopleForBikes
Population Association of America
Prison Policy Initiative
Ramsey County, MN
Research Advisory Services
St. Paul MN
RLS Demographics, Inc.
Phoenix AZ
Southeast Michigan Census Council
Detroit MI
State Voices
Tangible Consulting Services
Minneapolis MN
Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA)
Virginia Civic Engagement Table

cc: The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., Secretary of Commerce
The Honorable Ron Johnson, Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs
The Honorable Claire McCaskill, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs