

March 22, 2018

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary, United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

As American business leaders, we write to express our deep concern about the Department of Justice's request that the Census Bureau include an untested question about citizenship in the 2020 Census questionnaire.

The decennial Census provides critical data that informs decision-making in both the private and public sectors. As you know, businesses rely on accurate, complete census data to analyze demographic and economic trends required for business strategy. Businesses use census data to determine where to locate stores and facilities, find qualified workers, and market products and services.

Adding a new question this late in the decennial Census process could reduce the accuracy of the 2020 Census. We know from the science of survey design that adding questions to an established questionnaire essentially creates a new questionnaire that needs to be validated. Every question and the order of questions affect how respondents answer the other questions. When a change is made to a standardized questionnaire that has already been tested, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire are potentially affected, requiring the survey to be re-tested.

Adding a new question would incur additional delays and costs, and waste taxpayer dollars that have already been spent on designing and planning the 2020 Census. The Census Bureau has completed its multi-year, multi-million-dollar research and testing phase for the 2020 Census, and its end-to-end test in Rhode Island is underway. And the schedule is already tight. Instead of spending more money and time on altering the questionnaire, additional taxpayer dollars would be better directed to addressing ongoing challenges around deploying mobile technology that will yield a more accurate Census.

We appreciate your leadership and are pleased that the Census Bureau is utilizing your business acumen to execute the nation's most comprehensive population count. We respectfully request that the Census Bureau refrain from adding any untested questions -- on citizenship or otherwise -- that could undermine the integrity of this critical data collection tool.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Blanco

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Note: Signatories named above sign as individuals. Organization or company names are included for identification purposes only, and do not imply company endorsement.

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