

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2019

Dr. Steven Dillingham
Director
United States Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Dr. Dillingham,

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) respectfully requests a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss time-sensitive matters related to the 2020 United States Census. As you may know, Hispanics have been undercounted for decades, disadvantaging our families, communities, and neighborhoods. The CHC would like to discuss decisions by the Bureau that we believe may result in reduced participation among Hispanic communities. Namely, that you are moving forward with June field tests that include the controversial citizenship question – a question that the U.S. Supreme Court has yet to rule on its constitutionality. Additionally, we are concerned that current outreach plans may fall short in maximizing Hispanic engagement given noted distrust of the federal government, especially among immigrant communities. Moreover, we would like to discuss the current status of a proposal to change how the Latino population is counted by possibly presenting “Hispanic or Latino” as an option for both race and ethnicity. We look forward to finding a mutually convenient time in May, so we can ensure that the 2020 Census is best positioned to count every person living in the United States.

The CHC has repeatedly condemned the addition of a citizenship question because we strongly believe that it will jeopardize the accuracy of the census. Naturally, we question the Bureau’s decision to move forward with field tests that include a question that has yet to be determined as constitutional by the highest court in the land. On April 23rd, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments on whether asking the citizenship question would violate the Constitution’s call for “actual enumeration” of all people, not just citizens. The court will also consider whether Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross’ decision to add a citizenship question is arbitrary and capricious under federal law. A decision is expected by the end of June, so questionnaires can be printed on time. Therefore, the CHC believes that the Census Bureau should not move forward with June field tests that include the citizenship question because the Supreme Court is expected to make a final ruling on its addition the same month.

The CHC is also concerned that planned outreach efforts may fall short in adequately engaging Hispanic communities. Given the political context and the Trump administration’s immigration agenda, it is imperative that the Bureau enact an aggressive outreach and advertising plan to ensure full Hispanic participation. In the accompanying House Report 115-704 to the *Consolidated Appropriations Act 2019* (Pub. L. 116-6), the House directed the “Census to increase outreach activities to historically undercounted communities...” We respectfully request a detailed summary of the actions the Bureau has taken to comply with this language. We would also appreciate you sharing the number of partnerships initiated for Hispanic outreach efforts and how much funding is dedicated to this initiative. Furthermore, the Senate directed in the accompanying S.Rpt. 115-275, the

“Census Bureau to ensure that the impact of new enumeration methods do not negatively affect demographic groups identified...as undercounted and directs the Bureau to provide a report within 60 days of enactment of this act providing the measures that are being taken to ensure potential undercounts of these groups are appropriately mitigated.”

We understand that the Bureau has yet to submit this report to Congress. We respectfully request that the Bureau submit this report as soon as possible. Absent the report, the CHC asks you to share with us the measures that are being taken to ensure that the potential undercount of Hispanics is being appropriately mitigated.

Finally, the CHC would like to hear a status update on the proposal to combine the race and ethnicity questions into one, with "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish" as an option for both race and ethnicity. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which sets the standards for race and ethnicity data for federal agencies, would need to approve the change. If approved, it would significantly change how the Latino population is counted. OMB has yet to release any decision on this proposal. The CHC asks for a status briefing on this proposal and a summary of interagency actions related to this change.

Dr. Dillingham, you pledged to lead an agency culture independent from improper influences. The CHC urges you to continue your efforts in upholding this noble pledge. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and discuss your efforts to ensure that the repeated undercounting of Hispanic communities ends with the 2020 Census. You are well aware of the consequences our communities would pay with another undercount, including minimized influence on national policy and less federal dollars to support our neighborhoods. We hope to meet with you in the month of May to mark a fruitful partnership in ensuring that our Hispanic communities are rightfully counted, pursuant to the Constitution.

Please contact Congressional Hispanic Caucus Executive Director Alma Acosta at alma.acosta@mail.house.gov for any questions.

Sincerely,



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CHC Chairman



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