



SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS
Friends Committee on National Legislation
A Quaker Lobby in the Public Interest

August 7, 2018

Ms. Jennifer Jessup
Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer
Department of Commerce
Room 6616
14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

RE: Comments on Proposed Information Collection on 2020 Census, Docket No. USBC-2018-0005

Dear Ms. Jessup,

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) is a non-partisan, faith-based organization that lobbies Congress and the administration to advance peace, justice, opportunity, and environmental stewardship. Founded in 1943 by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), FCNL works with a grassroots network of tens of thousands of people across the country to advance policies and priorities that promote peace and justice. FCNL seeks to live our values of integrity, simplicity, and peace as we build relationships across political divides to move policies forward.

On behalf of FCNL and our nationwide network of grassroots lobbyists, I write to offer comments on the 2020 Census proposed information collection. The U.S. Census is a critical mechanism for ensuring that all people are counted as it pertains to political representation, community assistance programs, and federal grants. **FCNL urges the Department of Commerce to remove the citizenship question from the 2020 Census form.**

It is gravely concerning that so late in the process the administration would choose to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census. Not only does this untimely decision cost millions more dollars to implement, but amid this climate of heightened immigration enforcement it will also jeopardize the accuracy of the count. Immigrants in our communities may already be hesitant to engage in the Census out of fear their data would be used against them or their communities. The inclusion of a citizenship question in a climate of fear and mistrust can only heighten suspicions and would have a major chilling effect for participants from mixed status families and communities.

An inaccurate 2020 Census will skew the projections of needed resources and programs away from the communities that need them most, and would most affect those at a greater risk of being undercounted: immigrant households, children under five, communities and people of color, and low-income rural and urban residents. The end result is all communities being short-changed over a decade. A full, fair, and accurate Census that collects objective data on the nation's people and communities is vitally important. The federal government uses data from the Census to direct at least \$800 billion



annually in federal assistance to states, localities, and families¹. Federal data also dictates community decisions affecting schools, housing, health care services, and much more. This is just one example of how a fair and accurate Census is essential for many, if not all, basic functions of our society.

As a Quaker organization, we advocate that no individual or community should be disenfranchised by federal policy, and that programs, resources, and benefits should be available to those most in need.

We believe that every person counts and should be counted. A primary purpose of the Census is to determine political representation. Elected officials are to represent *all* constituents, regardless of immigration status or citizenship or eligibility to vote. Adding a question on citizenship in no way furthers this purpose, and actually undermines it. The federal government must honestly consider the needs of all people in our nation and do everything in their power to assure immigrant families that they will not face criminal prosecution or deportation for truthfully participating in the 2020 Census.

In sum, adding a question about citizenship status in the current climate of fear and mistrust would depress response rates, cost additional taxpayer money, skew resources away from those who need them the most, harm those communities who are already historically disenfranchised, and thwart an accurate and inclusive 2020 enumeration. **We strongly urge the Department of Commerce to remove the citizenship question from the 2020 Census form.**

Sincerely,



Diane Randall
Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

¹ Reamer, Andrew. George Washington University. <<https://gwipp.gwu.edu/counting-dollars-2020-role-decennial-census-geographic-distribution-federal-funds>>