



January 25, 2018

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Re: Opposition to the Department of Justice's Request to Add Citizenship Question to the 2020 Census

Dear Secretary Ross:

On behalf of Northern California Grantmakers (NCG) and Southern California Grantmakers (SCG), we write to express our opposition to the Department of Justice's December 12, 2017 request to include a new citizenship question on the 2020 Census. As the single-most important population enumeration in the United States and part of the foundation of our democratic society, it is critical that the Census remains trusted and accurate. We urge you to reject the Justice Department's request to include a new citizenship question and ensure that 2020 Census is a fair and accurate count of our nation's population.

NCG and SCG are regional associations whose combined membership represents more than 500 foundations, corporate funders, philanthropic individuals and families, giving circles, and government agencies. Our members invest more than \$7 billion every year to support communities across California, the country, and worldwide. NCG and SCG bring philanthropy together to create meaningful change for communities throughout California.

Ensuring a fair and accurate decennial census is fundamental to philanthropy's long-standing commitment to advancing a democratic society. As noted by the Census Bureau, "the framers of the Constitution of the United States chose population to be the basis for sharing power, not wealth or land." This grounding principle holds true regardless of citizenship – rooting the decennial census in its count of the *entire* United States population. Any action or decision that hinders the county's ability to conduct a fair and accurate census contradicts the very principles upon which our nation is founded.

During this time of heightened partisanship, it is critical that the 2020 Census remains a trusted institution. If adopted, the new citizenship question requested by DOJ will call into question the neutrality of the Census and undermine the public's longstanding view of the census as a nonpartisan and accurate reflection of our country's population.

Northern California Grantmakers
160 Spear Street, Suite 360
San Francisco, CA | 94105
(415) 777-4111

Southern California Grantmakers
1000 North Alameda Street, Suite 230
Los Angeles, CA | 90012
(213) 680-8866



Already there are strong concerns that a citizenship question will deter many residents from participating in the 2020 Census, resulting in unreliable and untrusted data for the next decade.

Accurate census data is also critical to maximizing the investment of billions of philanthropic dollars across the nation. Our members, along with numerous other sectors including business and local government, rely heavily on the accuracy of census data to inform strategic decision-making and investments. Inaccurate or unreliable census data would be deleterious for our members, hindering philanthropy's ability to make smart investments in areas like education, child welfare, transportation, housing, and health.

The addition of an untested new citizenship question at this late stage in planning for the 2020 Census raises strong concerns regarding the reliability of the data gathered. Robust testing in a census-like environment is essential to ensure accurate data, and it is highly unlikely that a new census form could be designed, tested and evaluated in a responsible way.

For these reasons, we urge you to reject the Justice Department's request to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census. If you have any questions, please contact Karla Mercado, Southern California Grantmakers, at (213) 680-8866 x219 or Cecilia Chen, Northern California Grantmakers, at (415) 872-1016. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Essel".

Christine Essel
President and Chief Executive Officer
Southern California Grantmakers

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ellen LaPointe".

Ellen LaPointe
President and Chief Executive Officer
Northern California Grantmakers

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Freeman".

Karen Freeman
Chief Administrative Officer
Philanthropy California

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