

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 30, 2018

The Honorable Mick M. Mulvaney
Director
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Director Mulvaney and Secretary Ross:

We write to express our disappointment and register our concerns regarding the Administration's recent announcement that the 2020 Decennial Census will not include a new designated category for all those who identify as Middle Eastern or North African (MENA). To that end, we request a detailed accounting of how this decision was reached, and, considering the implications this has for many across the country, we also urge you to reconsider your decision and include a separate MENA category as an ethnicity in the 2020 Census questionnaire.

Since our founding, we have deployed enumerators far and wide to accurately count the U.S. population. The count, a requirement under the U.S. Constitution, is a key element of determining our representative democracy, as well as helping to understand the makeup of district constituencies, redistricting, and distributing more than \$675 billion¹ in federal funds. By not including a MENA category we jeopardize a full and accurate count, creating real consequences for vulnerable populations.

For over three decades now, community organizations and advocates have been working tirelessly to be properly counted on the decennial census under a separate MENA designation. The January 28, 2018, announcement² not to include MENA was a disappointing setback for these groups as well as an invalidation of the time, research, and stakeholder consultation that has been undertaken by the seasoned demographers at the U.S. Census Bureau. The addition of a MENA category would mean many undercounted communities will no longer be overlooked; overall data collection accuracy on the U.S. population will improve; policymakers will be more informed; our ability to uphold important civil rights laws and prevent discrimination will increase; and we will have greater access to MENA-specific health statistics and better allocation of educational grants.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Commerce. *What We Do*. Retrieved March 26, 2018, from <https://www.census.gov/about/what.html>

² U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Commerce. (2018, January 26). *Census Bureau Statement on 2020 Census Race and Ethnicity Questions* [Press release]. Retrieved March 26, 2018, from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/2020-race-questions.html>

This decision is specifically concerning since the U.S. Census Bureau announced this week it would also include an untested question on citizenship that would be destabilizing to the overall decennial process this late in the cycle, as noted by many key stakeholders. The U.S. Census Bureau has exhaustingly researched the use of a MENA category on decennial census surveys, finding that its inclusion would actually improve the accuracy of census data and that it would be both appropriate and beneficial for the 2020 Census.³ These results, combined with the overwhelming support of MENA stakeholders for the inclusion of the category as an ethnicity⁴, makes the decision not to include it all the more irresponsible.

We should strive to improve census data collection each decade to ensure the count is accurate and inclusive for future generations—it is in the best interest of every American and a responsible government to have a detailed and accurate understanding of its people. Thank you in advance for your attention and consideration of this timely request. We urge you to reconsider and look forward to receiving a full and detailed response to understand the decision not to include a MENA category for the 2020 Decennial Census.

Sincerely,



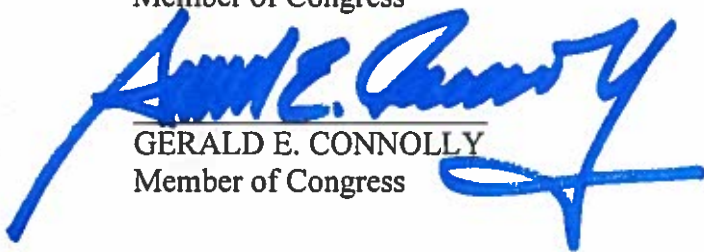
DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress



GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress



DARREN SOTO
Member of Congress



GERALD E. CONNOLLY
Member of Congress



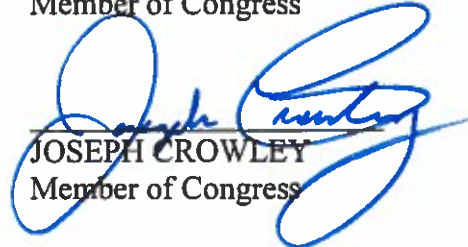
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS
Member of Congress



ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress



BILL PASCRELL, JR.
Member of Congress



JOSEPH CROWLEY
Member of Congress

³ U.S. Census bureau, Department of Commerce, (2016, October 3). 2015 National Content Test: Preliminary Results on Race and Ethnicity. Retrieved March 26, 2018 from <https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2016-10/2016-nac-jones.pdf>

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Commerce. (2018, January 26). 2020 Census Quarterly Program Management Review [Transcript]. Retrieved March 26, 2018 from <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/pmr-materials/01-26-2018/transcript-2018-01-26-pmr.pdf>