



**Statement Of  
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**Hearing On  
Preparations for the 2020 Decennial Census**

**House of Representatives  
Committee on Oversight and Reform**

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Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC (Advancing Justice | AAJC) submits this written testimony to the House of Representative’s Committee on Oversight and Reform in connection with its January 9, 2020 hearing regarding preparations for the 2020 Decennial Census, including the Census Bureau’s efforts to reach hard-to-count communities and other issues. With the next decennial census officially beginning later this month, Advancing Justice – AAJC remains concerned about the Census Bureau’s ability to reach and encourage traditionally hard-to-count communities, such as Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (AANHPIs) in the aftermath of the ill-advised and failed attempt to add a citizenship question to the decennial census and in light of the inconsistent and unsure funding the Bureau has faced leading up to the 2020 Census, all of which could ultimately result in an unfair and inaccurate count – i.e., one that does not count all communities equally.

**ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND**

Advancing Justice | AAJC is a national nonprofit, non-partisan organization founded in 1991. Our mission is to advance the civil and human rights of Asian Americans and to build and promote a fair and equitable society for all. Advancing Justice | AAJC considers the census, including the American Community Survey (ACS), to be the backbone of its mission. Advancing Justice | AAJC maintains a permanent census program that monitors census policy, educates policy makers, and conducts community outreach and education on the surveys conducted by the Census Bureau. Advancing Justice | AAJC has also served as a member of numerous advisory committees to the Census Bureau since 2000, including most recently, the National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations, for which we served our second three-year term through August 2019. Additionally, Advancing Justice | AAJC currently co-chairs the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights’ Census Task Force.

Advancing Justice | AAJC is also an affiliate of Asian Americans Advancing Justice (Advancing Justice), a national affiliation of five independent nonprofit organizations dedicated to serving our nation’s most rapidly growing racial minority community and who actively works to ensure a fair and accurate count during the census because of the importance of census data to

AANHPIs. The Advancing Justice affiliation is comprised of our nation’s oldest Asian American legal advocacy center located in San Francisco (Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus), our nation’s largest legal and civil rights organization for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders located in Los Angeles (Advancing Justice – Los Angeles), the largest national Asian American policy advocacy organization located in Washington D.C. (Advancing Justice – AAJC), the leading Midwest Asian American advocacy organization (Advancing Justice – Chicago), and the Atlanta-based Asian American advocacy organization that serves one of the largest and most rapidly growing Asian American communities in the South (Advancing Justice – Atlanta). Together, Advancing Justice has been working to eliminate the barriers that have historically resulted in the undercounting and underreporting of AANHPIs in federal data collection and analysis efforts, particularly in the decennial census count. Advancing Justice has conducted extremely successful national, state, and local outreach and educational projects focused on the AANHPI communities for Census 2000 and Census 2010, and is collectively doing so again for Census 2020. In addition to local and state campaigns, Advancing Justice is the 2020 Census national resource hub for the AANHPI community, with a community engagement and communications toolkit, translated factsheets in 23 AANHPI languages, webinars and more available at [www.CountUsIn2020.org](http://www.CountUsIn2020.org).

### **IMPORTANCE OF CENSUS TO AANHPIs**

Census data are critical for a functioning society as they allow for the distribution of over \$1.5 trillion federal funds annually to states,<sup>1</sup> informs effective and efficient policy and planning decisions, and are used to reapportion political representation and to redistrict at all levels. Without an accurate count of AANHPIs, these decisions will not address the needs of growing AANHPI communities.

Census data are even more important for AANHPIs as it is the most comprehensive set of socioeconomic data points on AANHPI communities, particularly for detailed subgroups (e.g. Chinese, Vietnamese, Samoan, and Bangladeshi), who are among our nation’s fastest growing and most diverse racial groups.<sup>2</sup> Often viewed as homogenous, these communities include more than 50 detailed subgroups that can differ dramatically across key social and economic indicators. Among Asian Americans, only 6% of Filipino Americans nationwide live below the poverty line, compared to 26% of Hmong Americans.<sup>3</sup> Among Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (NHPIs), about 49% of Marshallese Americans live below the poverty line, compared

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Reamer, George Washington University Institute of Public Policy, COUNTING FOR DOLLARS 2020 The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds Brief 7: Comprehensive Accounting of Census-Guided Federal Spending (FY2017) Part A: Nationwide Analysis (2019), <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/Counting%20for%20Dollars%202020%20Brief%20A%20-%20Comprehensive%20Accounting.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Chappell, *Census Finds A More Diverse America, As Whites Lag Growth*, NPR (June 22, 2017), <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/06/22/533926978/census-finds-a-more-diverse-america-as-whites-lag-growth>; Press Release U.S. Census Bureau, , 2010 Census Shows Asians are Fastest-Growing Race Group (March 21, 2012), [https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010\\_census/cb12-cn22.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb12-cn22.html).

<sup>3</sup> Asian Pacific American Legal Center & Asian American Justice Center, *A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011*, 36 (2011), [http://www.advancingjustice.org/pdf/Community\\_of\\_Contrast.pdf](http://www.advancingjustice.org/pdf/Community_of_Contrast.pdf) [“Asian American Report”].

to only 5% of Fijian Americans.<sup>4</sup> Roughly 73% of Taiwanese Americans hold a bachelor's degree, yet only 12% of Laotian Americans do.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, while almost 18% of NHPI adults overall have a bachelor's degree, only 3% of Marshallese Americans do.<sup>6</sup> Another example is pay equity. While AANHPI women are paid an average of 86 cents for every dollar a white man is paid, disaggregated data demonstrate that, for example, Native Hawaiian women are paid only 66 cents for every dollar a white man is paid; for Vietnamese, Laotian, and Samoan American women, 61 cents; for Burmese American women, 53 cents; and for Bhutanese American women, only 38 cents.<sup>7</sup> Without accurate data by detailed subgroup, some of the most disadvantaged in our communities are rendered invisible to policymakers, leaving their critical needs unmet.

Detailed data are also critical to our ability to break down the stereotype of the “model minority,” which has been used to erase the history of exclusion and discrimination against Asian Americans. This stereotype is also used to obscure our concerns—failing to recognize critical differences and priorities between Asian American subgroups—and therefore to excuse the lack of government resources and philanthropic investments in our communities. Finally, the lack of disaggregated data and the “model minority” myth create a wedge between Asian Americans and other communities of color by pitting the so-called “model minority” against communities that are “not models.” To combat the “model minority” stereotype and to provide sufficient information for policymakers to address the priorities and concerns of the Asian American community, the data collected and reported for Asian Americans must be disaggregated by ethnicity as much and as often as possible. Only then can we build the solid foundation necessary for public policy, ensure that the right programs are reaching the right communities, and dismantle the conscious and unconscious beliefs that there is a racial hierarchy in our nation.

Exacerbating the situation is the fact that data sets or surveys developed by private, academic and other governmental entities often underrepresent AANHPIs. One way in which AANHPIs are underrepresented is by being lumped into the “Other” categories, making it impossible to determine the impact on AANHPIs for that particular topic, whether it is health care, educational drop-out rates, or some other important issue. AANHPIs are also underrepresented where only aggregated data is provided for the entire AANHPI community. Because of the community's diversity across cultures and languages, aggregated data often mask problems and concerns for particular sub-ethnic groups. For example, AANHPIs as a whole are often portrayed as wealthy and well-educated, but disaggregated data for subgroups reveal a wide range of incomes, poverty rates, and levels of educational attainment — from those doing very well to those struggling on multiple fronts. As one of the few entities that collect and report data at the disaggregated level for AANHPI sub-ethnic groups, an inaccurate

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<sup>4</sup> Asian Americans Advancing Justice & Empowering Pacific Islander Communities, *A Community of Contrasts: Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the United States*, 2014, 18 (2014), [http://empoweredpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/A\\_Community\\_of\\_Contrasts\\_NHPI\\_US\\_2014-1.pdf](http://empoweredpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/A_Community_of_Contrasts_NHPI_US_2014-1.pdf) [“NHPI Report”].

<sup>5</sup> Asian American Report at 31.

<sup>6</sup> NHPI Report at 11.

<sup>7</sup> Miriam Yeung, American Association of University Women, *Overcoming the “Model Minority” Myth: AAPI Women Are Not Paid Equally* (Mar. 15, 2016), <http://www.aauw.org/2016/03/15/aapi-equal-pay-day/>.

census count of AANHPIs would mean that many of our communities, and their attendant needs, would be rendered invisible and neglected.

### **HISTORY OF UNDERCOUNT OF AANHPIs**

While a fair and accurate count is recognized as a critical goal of the census, it is important to note that, historically, certain communities have been missed, or “undercounted,” from census to census. Since the Census Bureau started to measure its ability to accurately count people in America in 1940, first through Demographic Analysis and more recently with a separate coverage measurement survey, people of color were missed by the census more often than non-Hispanic whites (the “differential undercount”). Duplicate responses lead to overcounts, while omissions, or missed persons, lead to undercounts.<sup>8</sup> Subtracting overcounts from undercounts results in a net undercount or overcount for each census. From 1940 to 1980, the national net undercount, the net undercount for specific population subgroups, and the differential undercount were reduced for each decennial census. The 1990 Census was the first census that was less accurate than the one prior since the Bureau began scientific measurements of coverage, with the highest differential undercounts ever recorded. In 2000, while the results from the final coverage measurement, the Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation (Revision II) (“A.C.E. Revision II”), showed a net national overcount of about one-half a percent, the Census Bureau lacked confidence in its measures of census accuracy in 2000 due in part to concerns about its methodology.<sup>9</sup> An expert National Academy of Sciences panel concluded that while undercounts among traditionally hard-to-count communities such as communities of color were likely lower in the 2000 Census than in previous censuses, there continued to be a differential undercount of racial minorities.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the 2010 Census saw a net overcount of 0.01 percent, which was not statistically different from zero, as well as the continued differential undercount of communities of color.<sup>11</sup>

AANHPIs are among those who have historically experienced a differential undercount. The undercount of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community<sup>12</sup> in the 1990 Census was

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<sup>8</sup> There are two ways to miss a person, thereby attributing to the undercount. First, the Census Bureau could miss a whole housing unit because they do not have the address or they have an incorrect address. Thus, none of the people at the housing unit will be counted. The second way to miss people is for the Census Bureau to fail to capture other people who are within a responding household. These people can be missed for a variety of reasons, including fear of government and outsiders, limited knowledge of English, mobile people and households, and irregular household members such as households with two or more separate families residing there.

<sup>9</sup> See Committee on National Statistics, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences, *The 2000 Census: Counting Under Adversity* 240-241, 253 (2004), <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/10907/the-2000-census-counting-under-adversity> (The A.C.E. Revision II estimated 33.1 million mistakes of all types, including 17.2 million erroneous overcounts (which primarily includes duplications and people counted in the wrong place) and 15.9 million undercounts (e.g. people missed). The report says there were a minimum of 9.8 million duplications).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> Press Release, U.S. Census Bureau, “Census Bureau Releases Estimates of Undercount and Overcount in the 2010 Census” (May 22, 2012), [https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010\\_census/cb12-95.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb12-95.html).

<sup>12</sup> Prior to the 2000 Census, Asian Americans and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders were reported together as one category as required by the Office of Management and Budget at that time. U.S. Census Bureau, *The Asian Population: 2010* (2012), <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-11.pdf> (“Asian 2010 Report”).

2.36%.<sup>13</sup> The 2000 Census yielded a slight overcount nationally for Asian Americans and a 2.12% undercount for the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) community.<sup>14</sup> Of course, even a net national overcount/undercount of around zero masks a much larger counting problem, with some AANHPI subgroups believing they are undercounted. For example, the Cambodian population in Long Beach, California believes they have been undercounted over the last several decades.<sup>15</sup> The 2000 U.S. Census counted about 17,000 Cambodians in Long Beach, while informal estimates from local groups indicate a population closer to 50,000.<sup>16</sup> The 2010 Census had a relatively "accurate" count for AANHPIs, with a net undercount rate of 0.08% for Asian Americans and 1.34% for NHPIs.<sup>17</sup> While statistically insignificant, the 2010 Census, in fact, missed hundreds of thousands of Asian Americans – a problem that was offset, at the national level, by double counting or other mistaken enumerations.<sup>18</sup> The proportion of Asian Americans who should have been counted but were not during the last census was higher than that of non-Hispanic Whites, with 5.3% of Asian Americans not counted as compared to 3.8% for non-Hispanic Whites.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, almost 100,000 NHPIs were missed, representing a higher proportion who should have been counted but were not at 7.9%.<sup>20</sup>

### **VESTIGES OF THE ILL-ADVISED FAILED ATTEMPT TO ADD A CITIZENSHIP QUESTION TO THE DECENNIAL CENSUS**

The fight against the decision by Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross to add an untested and unnecessary question on citizenship to the 2020 Census questionnaire lasted over a year and, despite our success in beating the decision back, it still looms large in the minds of those least likely to participate in the census.

As documented by the Census Bureau back in 2017, residents are fearful of responding to government surveys because of the current anti-immigrant environment. Noting "a recent increase in respondents spontaneously expressing concerns about confidentiality," Census Bureau researchers found "an unprecedented ground swell in confidentiality and data sharing concerns, particularly among immigrants or those who live with immigrants" across communities and geographies.<sup>21</sup> More specifically, Census Bureau researchers "heard

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<sup>13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Coverage Measurement Estimation Report: Summary of Estimates of Coverage for Persons in the United States 15 (2012), [https://www.census.gov/coverage\\_measurement/pdfs/g01.pdf](https://www.census.gov/coverage_measurement/pdfs/g01.pdf) ("2010 CCM Report").

<sup>14</sup> Id. The 2000 Census was the first census that separated Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders from Asian Americans, as required by the Office of Management and Budget's 1997 Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicities. See Asian 2010 Report.

<sup>15</sup> Greg Mellen, Press-Telegram, "Long Beach Cambodians want to be counted" (Sept. 30, 2009, updated Sept. 1, 2017), <http://www.presstelegram.com/2009/09/30/long-beach-cambodians-want-to-be-counted/>.

<sup>16</sup> Id.

<sup>17</sup> 2010 CCM Report at 15.

<sup>18</sup> Id. at 17.

<sup>19</sup> Id.

<sup>20</sup> Id.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum from the Center for Survey Measurement (CSM) to Associate Directorate for Research and Methodology (ADRM) on Respondent Confidentiality Concerns (Sept. 20, 2017) (on file with U.S. Census Bureau), <https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2017-11/Memo-Regarding-Respondent-Confidentiality-Concerns.pdf>.

respondents express new concerns about topics like the ‘Muslim ban,’ discomfort ‘registering’ other household members by reporting their demographic characteristics, the dissolution of the ‘DACA’ (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival) program, repeated references to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE),” and so forth.<sup>22</sup> In one case, an immigrant respondent stopped responding to questions about citizenship during a survey interview and walked out of their own apartment, leaving the interviewer alone.<sup>23</sup>

The Census Bureau also noted that “several Chinese-speaking focus group respondents stated that the Chinese community’s main fear or concern was immigration status and how the data are used. They also expressed concern about opening the door to a government official and not wanting to be ‘investigated.’”<sup>24</sup> This aligns with what was learned in focus groups of Asian Americans conducted by the Census Bureau prior to the 2010 Census.<sup>25</sup> In that research, many focus group participants found the census confusing, invasive, and potentially threatening, with the misguided belief that the census was linked to immigration enforcement or the IRS. Despite living in the U.S. during the 2000 Census, very few had previously participated in the census, citing language barriers, lack of interest, and misunderstanding about who could participate (believing only citizens could participate) as reasons for not participating.<sup>26</sup>

The Census Bureau’s 2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes and Motivators Study (“CBAMS”) research further highlights the harm from the attempt to add a citizenship question. As the CBAMS Focus Group Final Report notes “the [citizenship] question may impede participation among audiences with recent immigration history. The significance of this barrier will likely vary with individuals’ beliefs about the question’s purpose, their trust in the government to keep their information confidential, and beliefs about whether their ethnic group is the subject of politically motivated targeting. The barrier was highest among those individuals who believed that the purpose of the question is to find undocumented immigrants, that their information will be shared across agencies—potentially leading to deportation—and that their ethnic group is facing an inhospitable political environment.”<sup>27</sup> In particular, in the Chinese, NHPI and Vietnamese focus groups, many of the participants had limited experience with the census and expressed privacy concerns, particularly as it relates to concerns about government sharing information between agencies.<sup>28</sup> The report further finds that even when those with legal status and who did not feel targeted were less likely to be unwilling to participate, they

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<sup>22</sup> Id.

<sup>23</sup> Id.

<sup>24</sup> Id.

<sup>25</sup> Image Megia Servs., Inc. & WBA Mkt. Research, U.S. Census Bureau, Ethnic and Racial Sub-Population Focus Group Research 58 (2007), <http://www.phila.gov/phillycounts/pdfs/Ethnic%20and%20Racial%20Sub-Population%20Focus%20Group%20Research%20-%20Asian%20&%20Arab%20Americans.pdf> (“Asian Focus Groups Report”).

<sup>26</sup> A number of participants mistakenly confused the census questionnaire with other telephone or mail surveys conducted by private businesses or government agencies. Id.

<sup>27</sup> Sarah Evans et. al., U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study (CBAMS) Focus Group Final Report (2019), <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/final-analysis-reports/2020-report-cbams-focus-group.pdf> (“2020 CBAMS Focus Group Final Report”).

<sup>28</sup> Id.

acknowledge that rather than impede “their own participation... the citizenship question would simply deter them from including people in their household who were not citizens.”<sup>29</sup>

Asian Americans are particularly harmed by the attempted addition of the citizenship question. The research to date has shown that our communities, as well as immigrant communities, are distrustful and fearful of sharing data with the federal government, particularly as it relates to citizenship. Additionally, Asian Americans are significantly immigrant, with over two-thirds of the population being foreign-born (*See Table below*). More than a quarter of Asian Americans are not citizens, and of those Asian Americans born outside of the U.S., about a quarter immigrated to this country on or after 2010, which means that they likely have never participated in a decennial census. Furthermore, different Asian American subgroups are more immigrant than others, with those communities being even more susceptible to being missed due to residual concerns about citizenship question.

**Table: Asian American Immigrants<sup>30</sup>**

	<b>Total population</b>	<b>Foreign-born</b>	<b>Not a Citizen</b>
<b>Asian American</b>	<b>17,556,935</b>	<b>66.2%</b>	<b>27.7%</b>
Asian Indian	3,813,407	71.3%	37.1%
Bangladeshi	175,592	74.7%	34.8%
Burmese	153,262	82.5%	59.3%
Cambodian	259,554	54.2%	13.3%
Chinese	4,214,856	69.3%	30.6%
Filipino	2,811,885	65.1%	19.5%
Hmong	278,871	36.2%	8.0%
Indonesian	76,516	73.6%	45.0%
Japanese	789,830	41.7%	28.3%
Korean	1,438,915	71.6%	27.3%
Laotian	205,131	56.8%	12.8%
Nepalese	155,573	85.2%	65.0%
Pakistani	460,515	66.3%	25.3%
Thai	202,744	76.9%	33.1%
Vietnamese	1,803,575	67.4%	16.3%

*Source: American Community Survey*

<sup>29</sup> Id.

<sup>30</sup> The data presented here is for the "alone" population. In presenting data on race, the Census Bureau provides three conceptual groups. First, people who reported only one race (or subgroup) are referred to as the "alone" population. The alone population can be viewed as the minimum number of people reporting as that group. Second, individuals who chose more than one of the six race categories are referred to as the race in combination population. Third, the maximum number of people reporting Asian is reflected in the Asian "alone-or-in combination" population, which represents those who reported Asian alone and those who reported Asian in combination with one or more other races.

**Table: Percentage of Asian American Immigrant Population Who Are Recent Immigrants**

	<b>Percentage of Population Born Outside of the U.S. who arrived in 2010 or later</b>
<b>Asian American</b>	<b>24.6%</b>
Asian Indian	32.9%
Bangladeshi	37.5%
Burmese	51.8%
Cambodian	10.5%
Chinese	27.1%
Filipino	16.1%
Hmong	7.4%
Indonesian	19.4%
Japanese	30.8%
Korean	14.9%
Laotian	7.0%
Nepalese	56.2%
Pakistani	26.5%
Thai	23.5%
Vietnamese	15.8%

*Source: American Community Survey*

As we suspected, the harm that derived from the attempted addition of a citizenship question has been exacerbated by the current political climate and the public’s perception of the government and where its priorities lie. Immigrant communities already have been shown to fear the census.<sup>31</sup> In fact, we have seen reports of immigrants shunning common activities out of fear of reprisal from the government. For example, journalists have noted stories of parents “keeping their children home from school [and] ... suspend[ing] after-school visits to the public library”<sup>32</sup> as well as immigrants avoiding attending church service.<sup>33</sup> This climate exacerbates immigrants’ fear of contact with government agencies, including the Census Bureau. Undocumented immigrants, legal permanent residents, and even U.S. citizens who live in households where family members have varying immigration status, were already disinclined to answer the Census prior to this decision.<sup>34</sup> The anti-immigrant climate today, coupled with the last-minute attempted addition of a citizenship question has harmed

<sup>31</sup> Christina Isabelli, Yuling Pan & Stephen Lubkemann, III. Wesleyan Univ., Observing Census Enumeration of Non-English Speaking Households in the 2010 Census: Spanish Report (2012), <https://www.census.gov/srd/papers/pdf/rsm2012-06.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Ray Sanchez, *After ICE Arrests, Fear Spreads Among Undocumented Immigrants* (Feb. 12, 2017), <http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/11/politics/immigration-roundups-community-fear/>.

<sup>33</sup> The Associated Press, *Immigrants Wait in Fear Over Raids; Trump Takes Credit* (Feb. 12, 2017), <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/immigrants-wait-in-fear-over-raids-trump-takes-credit/>.

<sup>34</sup> MAYA Advert. & Commc’ns & Garcia Research Assocs., Preparation for the 2010 Census Hispanic Community Focus Group Qualitative Research Report (2007), <http://www.phila.gov/phillycounts/pdfs/Hispanic%20Community%20Focus%20Groups%20Qualitative%20Research%20Report.pdf> (“Latino Focus Groups Report”).



confidence in the confidentiality of the Census and promoted the belief among many residents that the Bureau will use the information they provide in a detrimental manner.

In fact, the Census Bureau’s July 2019 Census Test, which was a “nationally representative randomized experiment designed to study the potential impact on self-response of including a citizenship question on the 2020 Census questionnaire,” indicated that a citizenship question would have had a negative impact on certain subgroups. While there was no statistically significant difference in overall self-response between questionnaires that had the citizenship question compared to those that did not, tracts that had more noncitizens, Latinos and Asian Americans were less likely to respond when a citizenship question was included.<sup>35</sup> In particular, self-response rates for questionnaires with the citizenship question were statistically significantly lower in areas where the percent of Asian American resident were between 5 and 20 percent.<sup>36</sup> The July 2019 Census Test also found that there was a statistically significantly higher rate of online respondents exiting the survey before completing it for the form that included a citizenship question, with the breakoff occurring at a higher rate with the demographic questions (and the citizenship question specifically in the forms with the question).<sup>37</sup>

Additionally, it is important to note that these findings occurred even without a) proper language support for Asian Americans or b) a non-response follow-up component to the test. While the 2019 Census Test provided some language support, it was insufficient to properly assess the full impact of the citizenship question on Asian American communities due to the glaring lack of an internet survey response option in any Asian language. Offering only telephonic language support for Asian languages was insufficient. Our own research found that Asian Americans are most likely to complete the survey either online or on paper, with only 16% interested in utilizing the toll-free number to complete their form in-language. This is consistent across the groups that received only telephonic language support during the 2019 Census Test:

	Preferred Method of Response (% very likely to use)		
	Telephone in Language	Online in Language	Paper
<b>Chinese</b>	14%	46%	57%
<b>Filipino</b>	15%	51%	53%
<b>Korean</b>	16%	53%	48%
<b>Vietnamese</b>	15%	40%	46%

Additionally, the July 2019 Census Test was looking solely at the impact of the citizenship question on the self-response rates of respondents. Without a non-response follow-up component to the test, the full ramifications of a citizenship question on a decennial census

<sup>35</sup> U. S. Census Bureau, 2019 Census Test Report (2020), <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/census-tests/2019/2019-census-test-report.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> Id.

<sup>37</sup> Id.

questionnaire cannot be truly understood. Immigrants, limited-English proficient persons, and persons of color are traditionally those hardest to count. They would generally be less likely to self-respond and thus more likely to be in the universe for non-response follow-up. Stated another way, those that self-responded during the July 2019 Census Test were likely those more pre-disposed to participate. The July 2019 Census Test tells us nothing about the impact of a citizenship question on the willingness for those hardest to count to eventually participate. What we do know is that even without adequate language support and even without understanding the willingness to eventually respond to the census, it is clear that the attempted citizenship question would have a negative impact on the willingness of Asian Americans to participate.

### **OTHER CENSUS POLICY GAPS AND CONCERNS**

Even though there will not be a citizenship question on the 2020 decennial census, the added distrust created by the ill-advised attempt to add a citizenship question at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour means the Census Bureau must go above and beyond with their education and outreach efforts, their communications campaign, and their field infrastructure. With the AANHPI population in the United States larger than it has ever been in our nation's history, this is particularly important for the AANHPI population in order to overcome its cultural and linguistic barriers. According to the Census Bureau's 2017 Population Estimates, there are over 22 million Asian Americans and nearly 1.6 million NHPI living in the United States. Our communities are the fastest growing in the country, with most of that growth attributable to immigration: the nation's Asian American and NHPI populations grew 25.5% and 17.3% respectively between 2010 and 2017.<sup>38</sup> Our communities are fast growing as well as growing in new areas of the country, and as such need both linguistically- and culturally-appropriate efforts to effectively encourage participation in the upcoming census. Unfortunately, there exists gaps in the Census Bureau's efforts to reach AANHPIs for the 2020 Census.

#### **Language Support Program**

One way in which the Census Bureau could begin to address some of these concerns would be through a robust language support program. Unfortunately, while the 2020 Census Language Support Program has incorporated improvements relative to 2010, such as a lower threshold to trigger language support for certain facets of the 2020 Census, there remain considerable gaps in the current plan. Among racial groups, Asian Americans have among the highest levels of limited-English proficiency; over a third of Asian Americans and 13.5% of NHPI are Limited English Proficient (LEP).<sup>39</sup> Rates of limited-English proficiency are particularly high among some Asian American and NHPI ethnic groups: Burmese (72.5%), Vietnamese (51.8%), Nepalese (51.7%), Chinese (45.9%), Bangladeshi (44.4%), Thai (43.2%), Korean (42.9%), Cambodian (41.1%), Indonesian (35.5%), Laotian (38.7%), Hmong (37.3%), Micronesian (22.8%), and other

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<sup>38</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 Population Estimates.

<sup>39</sup> Horikoshi & Minnis, RISE for Boys and Men of Color, Asian American and Pacific Islander Boys and Men: The Risk of Being Missed in the U.S. 2020 Census 5, <http://www.risebmoc.org/issues/post6>.

groups must grapple with disproportionately high language barriers.<sup>40</sup> Failure by the Census Bureau to provide adequate language assistance to Asian American and NHPI respondents will decrease response rates and increase the amount of missing and inaccurate responses to the 2020 Census, resulting in a misleading portrait of our growing communities that has serious consequences for federal, state, and local funding, access to services, and civil rights protections.

While the Census Bureau's current plan supports an online questionnaire and Census Questionnaire Assistance (telephonic support) in 12 non-English languages (Spanish, Chinese (Simplified), Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Japanese),<sup>41</sup> one of the serious shortcomings of the 2020 Census Language Support Program is the failure to provide paper questionnaires in any language other than English and Spanish. Messaging research completed by Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC indicated that many Asian American community members have a preference for completing the 2020 Census in a paper format or online – but not by telephone. Thus, while the Census Bureau telephonic support will also now allow respondents to fill out their census form over the phone, it is not a preferred method of response for the AANHPI community. The decision to not provide the paper questionnaire in languages other than English and Spanish is disproportionately burdensome for the low-income language minority communities that have lower levels of internet connectivity and limited access to the online form available in 12 languages.

Other gaps in the Census Bureau's Language Support Program are failures to:

- Prioritize language minority communities with a high incidence of LEP; that is, the Census Bureau should have considered not only the number of speakers, but also smaller language communities that can only respond in their own language.
- Incorporate trusted community-based organizations in reviewing all non-English materials, including, but not limited to, any glossaries, non-English mailing materials, and the Census Questionnaire, while allowing sufficient time and appropriate vehicles for organizations to provide input on cultural appropriateness and translation quality prior to finalizing translations and materials.
  - For example, during the 2010 Census, a translation in Vietnamese was used by the Census Bureau for “census” that was culturally inappropriate and highly problematic for some in the community. During a review of an early version of the glossary in Vietnamese for the 2020 census, community partners were able to flag that the original translation for “hotel” needed to be changed as the original translation could be taken as profanity. Luckily the Census Bureau changed that translation in the final version of the glossary. Community reviews are helpful to catch these types of errors.

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<sup>40</sup> Id.

<sup>41</sup> Jennifer Kim, U.S. Census Bureau, Update on Language Services Operation (June 14, 2018), <https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2018-06/kim-language-services.pdf>.

- Provide the census questionnaire online in traditional Chinese.
  - The decision to provide an internet self-response option in only simplified Chinese will likely have a negative impact on the participation of older Chinese Americans, since they're more likely to have been educated in, and thus able to read, traditional Chinese. This will also likely be a problem for Chinese Americans from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South East Asia where the Chinese characters may still be taught in traditional/classical characters. It would be important to provide both simplified and traditional options much as their Telephone Questionnaire Assistance (TQA) will be available in Cantonese and Mandarin. As was realized in 2010, different waves of Chinese immigrants utilize different dialects and written formats, and it is critical the Census Bureau reaches the different subsets of Chinese Americans.

AANHPI CBOs, Congressional offices, and the NAC have weighed in on the importance of strengthening the language support program. In October 2018, a community-based letter with 136 sign-ons from organizations across the country serving AANHPIs was sent to the Census Bureau expressing its concerns about gaps in the language support program for the 2020 Census and offering recommendations to ensure a fair and accurate count of AANHPIs in 2020.<sup>42</sup> In December 2018, a bicameral letter from the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, led by CAPAC Chair, Congresswoman Judy Chu and Senator Brian Schatz with 22 signatories, was sent to the Census Bureau highlighting their concerns about the deficiencies in the language support program regarding support for AANHPIs.<sup>43</sup> A letter from seven Senators, led by Senator Schatz, was also sent in December that highlights the gaps in language support for AANHPIs as well as American Indians and Alaska Natives.<sup>44</sup> All the letters highlighted the issues above as well as the complete lack of support for NHPI languages for the 2020 Census.

Unlike for the 2010 Census, when the Census Bureau provided language assistance guides in several NHPI languages, the Bureau plans on providing no language support in any NHPI language for the 2020 Census. Advancing Justice – AAJC’s own census messaging research found that among NHPIs, knowledge about the upcoming 2020 Census was low (27%), participation in past census was low (53%), and there was strong interest in filling a form online in their language of choice. Our research also showed that 1 in 3 NHPIs are misinformed about who should participate in the census, with 33% believing only U.S. citizens are supposed to fill out the form. The Census Bureau’s own CBAMS research showed that NHPIs had many barriers to participation in the 2020 Census: confidentiality and privacy concerns; lack of knowledge or understanding of purpose; apathy toward the census and lack of efficacy; inclusion of citizenship question; fear of repercussions; online data security concerns; concerns about fraud

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<sup>42</sup> Letter from Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community-based organizations raising language support concerns is available at <https://www.advancingjustice-aaajc.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/AANHPI%20Census%20Language%20Support%20Program%20Letter%20October%202018%20Final.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Bicameral CAPAC letter is available at <https://capac-chu.house.gov/press-release/capac-members-send-bicameral-letter-us-census-bureau-urging-adequate-language-support>.

<sup>44</sup> Senate letter raising concerns about language support program is available at <https://twitter.com/hansilowang/status/1075886626864357376>.

and scams; and language barriers.<sup>45</sup> The CBAMS focus group final report notes, “Participants with limited English proficiency said they would need enumerators to be fluent in their language and census forms to be in their language or bilingual. Otherwise, many reported they would have to ask a family member for assistance, and if that failed, forgo the census all together.”<sup>46</sup> Further, while we appreciate that the language selection process was a data driven one, we believe that the singular focus on data does a disservice to the efforts by the Census Bureau to provide language support. The Census Bureau’s research noted that “NHPI participants did mention language barriers, especially among older members of the community” and that having assistance in language would be useful for the community. For example, 43.0% of Samoan elders, 63.6% of Tongan elders, 30.0% of Micronesian elders, and 63.9% Marshallese elders are LEP.<sup>47</sup>

Making the situation even more frustrating is the Census Bureau’s response to community organizations’ request to provide language assistance guides for the NHPI languages previously supported. In essence, the Census Bureau, in merely offering “templates” for communities to create their own guides, is placing the burden on these communities that are already among the hardest to count and the most consistently underserved. And even these templates were delivered months later than initially noted – putting even further stress and drain on the overworked and under-resourced CBOs to try to scramble and produce what the government is refusing to produce.

### Importance of the partnership program and the media to engaged with hard-to-count Asian American communities

The census partnership and outreach programs for both the 2000 Census and the 2010 Census were critical to achieving some of the most accurate counts for many of our hard-to-count communities. In addition to improving accuracy, partnerships with hard-to-count communities reduce non-response follow-up costs. This was achieved through government leaders, school leaders, faith-based leaders, and other community leaders directly communicating with their members about the importance of participating and how the community benefits. Respondents interacting with trusted leaders, rather than with a stranger representing the federal government, are more willing to participate. But to reap the benefits of a partnership program, proper planning and funding are necessary to ensure effective implementation.

### *Gaps with the Partnership Program*

Partnership materials are only being translated into the 12 non-English languages supported for the online and telephonic self-response options. Not only does this leave many AANHPI communities without linguistically-appropriate partnership materials, it is also a step back from

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<sup>45</sup> 2020 CBAMS Focus Group Final Report.

<sup>46</sup> Id.

<sup>47</sup> Elders is defined here as 65+. U.S. Census Bureau, B16004: AGE BY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME BY ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH FOR THE POPULATION 5 YEARS AND OVER - Universe: Population 5 years and over, 2011-2015 American Community Survey Selected Population Tables.

what was provided for the 2010 Census. The 2010 Census saw In-Language Fact Sheets, Posters and Key Dates produced in the following 27 languages<sup>48</sup>:

- Arabic/ عربي
- Armenian/ Հայերեն
- Bengali/ বাংলা
- Chinese/ 中文
- Farsi/ فارسی
- French/ Français
- German/ Deutsch
- Greek/ ελληνικός
- Haitian Creole/ Kreyòl Ayisyen
- Hindi/ हिन्दी
- Hmong/ Hmoob
- Italian/ Italiano
- Japanese/ 日本語
- Khmer/ Cambodian
- Korean/ 한국어
- Laotian/ ພາສາລາວ
- Polish/ Polski
- Portuguese/ Português
- Puerto Rico
- Russian/ Русский
- Spanish/ Español
- Tagalog/ Tagalog
- Thai/ ไทย
- Ukrainian/ Український
- Urdu/ اردو
- Vietnamese/ Tiếng Việt
- Yiddish/ יידיש

These factsheets included FAQs, confidentiality flyers and posters, how people are counted brochures, and countless other in-language resources. Of the 12 Asian languages supported in 2010, only five are supported for 2020. This decrease is occurring just as distrust in government is at an all-time high, coupled with an extensive lack of understanding about the census generally AANHPI communities.

Additionally, when the Census Bureau has been pressed about its lack of support for NHPI languages, they have responded that the partnership program will “take care of it.” Specifically, the Census Bureau noted that in addition to templates they would provide of the glossary and

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<sup>48</sup> See Partners Materials from the 2010 Census, available at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2010/partners/>.

the language assistance guide, they “will hire field enumerators and partnership specialists with bilingual abilities to assist limited-English-speaking households with responding to the census. In 2010, [they] hired staff with capabilities in 145 different languages and will continue to hire bilingual staff for 2020.”<sup>49</sup> However, the Census Bureau has not provided any further information about what language capacity they are seeking, what language capacity they currently have onboarded, and how they plan to utilize the language capacity they have. For example, if there is a partnership specialist in California that has a language ability in an NHPI language and a need arises in Arkansas for that language, it is not clear whether the area census office or regional census center for Arkansas will be able to access that partnership specialist in California to assist them. And if it is not the case that the partnership specialist in California can provide that assistance, then the Census Bureau response to our concern about the lack of NHPI language support rings rather hollow with respect to working as a true solution to their failure to provide assistance in NHPI languages as they did in 2010.

### *Communications Campaign*

#### *Importance of Media Engagement*

In addition to the partnership program, the communications campaign played an important role in reaching hard-to-count communities in the 2000 and 2010 Censuses. Media is an important tool in communicating with hard-to-count Asian American communities. In particular, utilizing ethnic media<sup>50</sup> is the most effective way to reach a substantial part of Asian American communities. A 2009 study on ethnic media penetration conducted by New American Media found that ethnic media reaches almost 3 in 4 Asian Americans, with 57 percent reached by ethnic television, 43 percent by ethnic newspapers, and 25 percent by ethnic radio.<sup>51</sup> Not surprisingly, there are differences across various ethnic groups with respect to reliance on ethnic media.<sup>52</sup>

Online media is a particularly ripe opportunity for reaching Asian Americans. According to several studies, Asian Americans make up the largest online audience of any ethnic group in the

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<sup>49</sup> Response letter from Census Bureau to the October 2018 letter from AANHPI CBOs raising concerns about the language support program (on file w/ author).

<sup>50</sup> See New America Media, National Study on the Penetration of Ethnic Media in America (2009), [http://media.namx.org/polls/2009/06/National\\_Study\\_of\\_the\\_Penetration\\_of\\_Ethnic\\_Media\\_June\\_5\\_2009\\_Presentation.pdf](http://media.namx.org/polls/2009/06/National_Study_of_the_Penetration_of_Ethnic_Media_June_5_2009_Presentation.pdf) (media directed toward a specific ethnic group and often written or broadcast in a language native to the group (e.g., Chinese-language newspapers or Asian television stations)) (“New American Media Study”).

<sup>51</sup> Id. at 11, 19 (73 percent of Asian Americans are reached by ethnic media). A study of Asian American registered voters for the 2016 election showed that a third of registered voters relied on ethnic media for political information. The same study also showed that they were most likely to rely on the internet and social media as their news source, with two-thirds doing so. Karthick Ramakrishnan, Janelle Wong, Taeku Lee, and Jennifer Lee, Asian American Voices In The 2016 Election Report On Registered Voters In The Fall 2016 National Asian American Survey (2016), <http://naasurvey.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NAAS2016-Oct5-report.pdf> (“NAAS Report”).

<sup>52</sup> The New American Media Study saw 59% of Chinese, 61% of Koreans, 83% of Vietnamese, 84% of Filipinos and 85% of Asian Indians relying on ethnic media. NAM Study. The NAAS Report also saw differences between groups: 52% of Vietnamese, 45% of Chinese and 43% of Korean relied on ethnic media as a news source for political information while only 11% of Asian Indians, 19% of Filipinos, and 8% of Japanese and do the same. See New American Media Study and NAAS Report.

country. For example, Asian Americans spend a total of 19.1 hours online a week on a computer, smartphone, or tablet, which is 0.8 hours a week more than the average U.S. population.<sup>53</sup> In-language websites are also popular for the Asian American community. English accounts for just over a third of the total online population, with Chinese being the 2nd most popular language at 13.7%, Japanese the 4th most popular language at 8.4%, and Korean the 7th most popular language at 3.9%.<sup>54</sup> Social media can also be utilized to connect with Asian Americans. For example, 42% of Asian Americans communicate with friends in an Asian language half of the time or more on Facebook.<sup>55</sup>

Despite these figures indicating online media's potential to reach many Asian Americans, it is equally important to note that many Asian Americans, particularly those in hard-to-count communities, are not internet proficient and lack access to computers. For example, for older Asian Americans, their internet consumption is lower than that of those in other groups.<sup>56</sup> Less than 10% of the Asian American online population are older than 55 years old.<sup>57</sup>

While these are channels by which Asian Americans can be reached, because Asian Americans vary generationally, spanning from recently arrived immigrants to those with roots in the community for more than one hundred years, any communications or marketing plan must be multi-faceted to address the needs of the various ethnic groups, various languages, and various generations. Each individual Asian American sub-ethnic group has intrinsic characteristics that require customization in messaging, treatment, and media vehicles based on particular nuances. In addition, there are multiple factors that pose additional challenges for reaching the especially hard-to-count Asian American communities. For example, while a majority of Asian Americans are concentrated in metropolitan areas, there are Asian American segments located in remote rural and urban areas that are not known to be Asian-dominant. In addition, migrant communities often have cluster presence as opposed to a significant mass composition. Another factor is that there are limited media vehicles available for some Southeast Asian segments comprised mostly of migrants. This is partly because of high illiteracy levels amongst Hmong, Laotian, and Mien communities. In fact, a significant portion are from oral societies that do not utilize written language. For example, a majority of the Hmong community did not read and write as late as the 1950s, and many had never seen books or even held pencils. It has also been reported that in some provinces of Laos in the 1970s, the rate of Hmong who did not read or write was as high as 99 percent, while a 1986 study of Hmong refugee families in the U.S. indicated that 80 percent of those surveyed could not read or write Lao, and 70 percent could not read Hmong.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, urban and rural isolation insulates communities, and

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<sup>53</sup> Facebook IQ, Digital Diversity: A Closer Look at Asian Americans in the US (Mar. 5, 2015), *available at* <https://www.facebook.com/iq/articles/digital-diversity-a-closer-look-at-asian-americans-in-the-us> ("Facebook Asian American Article").

<sup>54</sup> See Media Preferences Article.

<sup>55</sup> See Facebook Asian American Article.

<sup>56</sup> For example, only 8 percent of Asian Americans in the 45 to 54 age group are online, compared to 21 percent of white users in this age range and 15 percent of black users. See Media Preferences Article.

<sup>57</sup> Id.

<sup>58</sup> Center for Applied Linguistics, The Hmong: An Introduction to Their History and Culture (2004), *available at* <http://www.culturalorientation.net/content/download/1373/7978/version/1/file/The+Hmong%2C+Culture+Profile.pdf>.



there can be little to no incentive to speak or learn English. This isolation is especially true with elderly and older adults.

### *Gaps in Communications Campaign*

One major gap in the communications campaign is the failure to support media buys in South Asian languages or with South Asian media outlets. While Asian Americans were the fastest growing group in the country during the last census, South Asian Americans were the country's fastest growing Asian American ethnic group, with the Bangladeshi and Pakistani American populations doubled in size.<sup>59</sup> The South Asian population is currently approximately 5.4 million, a 54.3 percent increase from the 3.5 million counted in 2010.<sup>60</sup> Many South Asians speak a language other than English at home, including 92 percent of Bangladeshi, 86% of Pakistani, and 77% of Asian Indians.<sup>61</sup> Many South Asians are also limited-English proficient, including 46% of Bangladeshi, 28% of Pakistani, and 22% of Asian Indians. In order to effectively reach this fast-growing community, it is imperative that the communications campaign, and specifically the media buys, include South Asian languages and media outlets.

Another major gap in the communications campaign is the failure to support targeted communications outreach to English-speaking AANHPIs and simply lumping them into the Diverse Mass audience. Though English-speaking, AANHPIs will look to their own ethnic media publications as their initial source of information or to verify information seen in major media outlets. If their ethnic media is not sharing the same information, it is more likely the AANHPI population will discount it as information not crucial to our communities.

It appears that the subcontractors are being utilized only for in-language advertising and targeting for their particular community. For example, it appears that the Asian subcontractor is tasked not with reaching Asian Americans for the 2020 Census but rather specifically with reaching Chinese-speaking Chinese people, Korean-speaking Korean people, and so on for the Asian languages covered by the Internet and TQA response options. The community campaign classifies other Asian American communities, as well as English-speaking members of the covered language groups, under the "Diverse Mass" campaign/media buys. This is problematic.

Further adding to the problem is the handling of the diverse mass request for proposals process that occurred in April 2019. The RFP process was not widely publicized to ethnic media. U.S.-based media vendors were invited to submit a proposal for the 2020 Census Paid Media Campaign for consideration. The Y&R team handling the RFP process refused to consider proposals for any languages not covered under the current campaign. Thus, when having a chance to broaden their diverse mass media mix and outreach with more ethnic media participation, they chose to keep it insular. Only the media proposals that supported the current languages under the campaign were evaluated.

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<sup>59</sup> Asian American Report at 9.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from Representative Grace Meng to Census Bureau, [https://meng.house.gov/sites/meng.house.gov/files/Meng%20Letter\\_6.pdf](https://meng.house.gov/sites/meng.house.gov/files/Meng%20Letter_6.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> Asian American Report at 25

Asian Americans can be hard to count for many reasons, including language barriers. But they can also be hard to count because they are Asian American, and experience being Asian in America. CBAMS found that Asian Americans are the least likely to participate.<sup>62</sup> Subcontractors should be addressing the community holistically, including, but not limited to, addressing the language needs.

### Field Infrastructure

The Census Bureau plans to hire about half the number of temporary workers as it hired for the 2010 Census. With this decrease in staffing, it is even more critical that the Census Bureau recruit and hire people who are “indigenous” to the communities where they will be working because of the knowledge these workers bring – from local knowledge of language usage to local knowledge of neighborhood and culture. It will be important for the Census Bureau to promote its recruitment program through a multitude of avenues, such as job fairs, paid advertising, and partner organizations (including faith institutions), as well as utilizing more creative and unconventional methods to recruit and hire census workers for the 2020 Census, including making better use of technology, removing financial disincentives to work for the Census Bureau, enhance the incentives, and increasing local advertising related to census job opportunities. Hiring protocol that prioritizes community experience and skills would significantly improve the staffing for the 2020 Census and the Census Bureau’s ability to effectively engage hard-to-count communities.

We have heard that there is a backlog in hiring for the field offices, from partnership specialists onward. As suspected, there has been confusion with the online recruitment and application process. For example, while the Census Bureau has announced that they would be willing to hire work-eligible noncitizens if a citizen with needed language skills cannot be hired, their online application process does not indicate that noncitizens could be potentially considered. The online postings indicate that only U.S. citizens should apply. This lack of clarity leaves both applicants and CBOs seeking to assist with recruitment for census positions confused and unsure of how to proceed. Even when community members have been able to apply, they have faced an onerous application process and an unduly long hiring process, leading some to forego an employment opportunity for the 2020 census.

Additionally, while we are heartened to see the increase in staffing and advertising to fill these temporary census positions during this competitive economic period of relatively low unemployment, we are disappointed that there hasn’t been more transparency and clarity with respect to the Census Bureau’s hiring efforts. For example, it is not clear what the Bureau’s targets are with respect to language diversity, racial and ethnic diversity, and specific regions or neighborhoods. Nor has the Bureau provided specific details about their hiring efforts to date, making it difficult for partners to assess any potential gaps in order to assist in trying to fill

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<sup>62</sup> Kiley McGeeney et. al., U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study Survey Report, <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/final-analysis-reports/2020-report-cbams-study-survey.pdf>.

those gaps. For example, the Census Bureau shared at its last National Advisory Committee meeting in Fall of 2019 that almost 20% of their current applicants are bilingual, representing primarily Spanish-speakers but also other languages, totaling 400 plus languages or dialects.<sup>63</sup> Again, while this information is encouraging, without understanding what languages are represented and where these applicants are, as well as whether they are actually being hired (and where), we cannot be as helpful to the Census Bureau as we could be in assisting them in trying to recruit for 2.7 million applicants to hire half a million temporary workers. When more specific information is shared, we can flag where gaps exist. For example, during the Community Partnership and Engagement Program presentation at the Fall 2019 National Advisory Committee meeting, the Census Bureau shared the languages spoken by the partnership specialists, 30% of who are bilingual. With this information, we were able to flag that there continues to be a gap in language support for the NHPI community. Of the 88 languages spoken by partnership specialists in the different regions (representing 47 distinct languages beyond English), not one represented an NHPI language.<sup>64</sup> This is particularly disappointing as the refrain we kept receiving from the Census Bureau when raising our concern about the lack of language support for NHPis was that the partnership specialists would fill that gap.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Census Bureau has taken steps to improve the count in 2020, but there are still many areas the Census Bureau needs to address in order to meet the challenges facing a fair and accurate count in 2020 and ensure full participation by the American public. Their task has been made exponentially harder with the last-minute attempted addition of an untested question on citizenship. A fair and accurate count in 2020 is still possible but only if there is proper funding coupled with strategic, proactive, and nimble efforts to fill the gaps outlined in this testimony.

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<sup>63</sup> See page 51 of the transcript from day 1 of the Fall 2019 National Advisory Committee meeting, <https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2019-11/transcript-day-1.pdf?#>.

<sup>64</sup> Willette Allen, U.S. Census Bureau, Community Partnership and Engagement Program Presentation, slide 5, <https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2019-11/allen-community-partnership-engagement-program.pdf?#>.