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2020 Census

The census is a vital part of our democracy, which is why it is enshrined in the Constitution. Accurate census data is critical to ensuring fair, proportional voting representation. Federal agencies use census data to determine funding for health care, education, housing, food and income security programs; they also use census data to monitor discrimination and implement civil rights laws that protect voting rights, equal employment opportunity, and other major civil rights issues.

Advocates have been deeply concerned at the inclusion of a question on citizenship status, the first time this question has been included in the decennial census since 1960. Our concern is that, in this time of aggressive immigration enforcement and animosity, the inclusion of a question on citizenship will severely depress the response rate in immigrant communities throughout the country.

Even without the inclusion of this question, communities of color, low-income households, and especially immigrants were all at risk of being missed by the census at disproportionately high rates. In the 2010 Census, minority heavy areas of Massachusetts were already considered “hard to count”, meaning they had a response rate of below 73% (see www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us). For example, in the state’s 7th Congressional District, encompassing large parts of Boston, 492,638 people live in hard to count tracts. Large portions of our state’s Asian (31.4%), Hispanic (54.5%), and African American (57.6%) populations live in hard to count tracts. This compares with an average of 23% of the state’s total population. Of the 50 states, MA has the 3rd largest percentage of our Hispanic and African American populations living in hard to count tracts and 7th largest percentage of Asians living in hard to count tracts.

Undercounts place already vulnerable populations at greater risk of being deprived of fair representation and community resources. Adding a citizenship question to the census threatens to further marginalize our communities and reduce critical federal funding.

On June 8, the Census Bureau published a Notice of Proposed Information Collection in the Federal Register, which provided a detailed plan for the procedures that the Bureau will follow to ensure a complete and accurate count of the US population. Publication of the Notice kicked off a 60 day public comment period, *ending August 7*. Massachusetts currently receives over \$16 billion in federal funding, and a census undercount would lead to reductions in vital programs such as education, food and income security, healthcare, and housing assistance.

Basic Data about Massachusetts Immigrants

- 1 in 6 Massachusetts residents in foreign-born: 1.1 million people or 16.5% of the population. More than half of whom (53%) are naturalized US citizens.
- 28.5% of children in Massachusetts have at least one immigrant parent. This includes 208,000 US citizen children.
- 1 in 5 workers in the Commonwealth was born in another country.
- Massachusetts immigrant and refugee households pay \$3.5 billion in state and local taxes as well as \$8.4 billion in federal income taxes.

Census Impact on Massachusetts

- In Fiscal Year 2015, Massachusetts contributed \$ 108 billion in federal taxes. At nearly \$16,000/person, MA ranks as the fifth highest state for per capita tax contributions and ninth overall for total tax contributions.
- Massachusetts receives over \$16 billion in federal funding that could be impacted by a census undercount. **For each person missed in the census, the Commonwealth could lose \$2,372 in federal funding per year.**
- The state allocation of funds for dozens of programs is determined by census data, including:
 - Medicaid
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Medicare Part B
 - Highway Planning and Construction
 - Pell Grants
 - National School Lunch Program
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
 - Section 8 Housing
 - Local Education Grants
 - Special Education Grants
 - Head Start

Undercounting in Massachusetts would impact grant allocations for all residents of the state.

- In 2010, Massachusetts lost a Congressional seat due to the census, reducing our voice in DC. An undercount in the 2020 Census could result in the loss of another Congressional seat.

MIRA is encouraging organizations and individuals to submit comments opposed to the citizenship question. For more information and to submit comments, please visit www.miracoalition.org/census2020.

For questions, contact Sarang Sekhavat, Federal Policy Director, at ssekhavat@miracoalition.org.