

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-3213**

March 29, 2018

The Honorable Trey Gowdy  
Chairman  
Oversight Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Gowdy,

I am writing to urge you, as Chairman of the House Oversight Committee, to reject the inclusion of the citizenship question on the 2020 Census, hold a hearing on the negative effects of inclusion of this question, and to consider bills introduced to the Committee on this topic. I am gravely concerned that the inclusion of such a question will undermine the integrity and accuracy of the Census. The Constitutionally-mandated Decennial Census is one of the most consequential responsibilities of the federal government. Every decade, the Census enumeration is carefully considered by leaders in both the private sector and federal, state, and local government bodies. The Decennial Census is the backbone to providing fair and full representation in our government and further informs funding and resources provided to Congressional districts across the country. Ensuring a reliable and accurate count in the 2020 Census must be a top priority for Congress, and the inclusion of a citizenship question jeopardizes this Constitutional duty.

The inclusion of a citizenship question could dramatically reduce the response rate, particularly among already undercounted minority and immigrant communities. The lower response rate would not only mean that these communities do not receive adequate funding and representation based on the Census enumeration, but that the Bureau would have to expand its Nonresponse Follow-up operation, incurring an even greater cost for the 2020 Census enumeration while undermining its accuracy. A drastically diminished response rate is counter to the Constitutional mandate of the Census, which is to count every individual living in this country – leading to the possibility that the inclusion of a citizenship question could violate many thousands of Americans' Constitutional rights to be counted and to equal protection under the law.

Furthermore, questions on the Census go through a rigorous testing and review process, and the citizenship question has not been tested in the slightest. The Census Bureau conducts multiple tests every decade to ensure optimal results and methods, and the final 2018 Census Test is already underway – without the inclusion of a citizenship question.

That this question has been completely untested, and has not been included in the Decennial Census since 1950, demonstrates an utter lack of preparedness for the introduction of such a question.

The addition of a citizenship question could greatly jeopardize the accuracy and reliability of the 2020 Census, raising costs and lowering response rates, directly harming already undercounted minority communities. The rationale for inclusion of this question is dubious at best, and the result of its inclusion could raise serious Constitutional concerns. For this reason, I urge you, as Chairman of the House Oversight Committee, to (1) reject the inclusion of a citizenship question on the 2020 Census; (2) hold a hearing on the effects of a citizenship question on the 2020 Census; and (3) consider legislation regarding the inclusion of a citizenship question in the 2020 Census.

Sincerely,



Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress  
13<sup>th</sup> Congressional District