

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 5, 2017

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

As you continue your preparations for the 2020 census, we urge you to revise the standards in Statistical Policy Directive No. 15, Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting, to allow implementation of a single combined question on race and ethnicity for the 2020 Census. Doing so will allow the Census Bureau to collect the most complete and accurate data on race and ethnicity in the 2020 Census and will ensure that Census data collection produces reliable insights that advance economic development and the fair allocation of public resources.

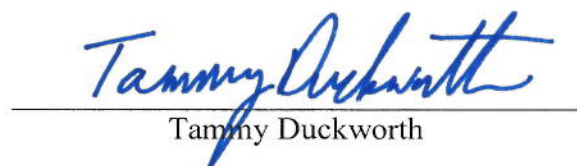
The Census Bureau and many of its stakeholders support adoption of a single-question format with detailed checkboxes. The Alternative Questionnaire Experiment and the National Content Test research have rendered empirical data to support that this design captures the highest volume of accurate, self-reported data. This results in the greatest reduction in burden and cost to the Bureau, which must interpret or impute data for non-conforming or missing responses. Unless you revise the current format of government survey questions about race and ethnicity, the frequency with which Census participants provide vague or no answers at all is likely to increase, and the effort and expense required to maintain the data is also likely to increase.

As such, we urge you to take immediate action to revise the standards in Statistical Policy Directive No. 15 for the 2020 census. By law, the Census Bureau must submit the final questions for the 2020 Census to Congress by March 31, 2018; therefore, your immediate action is required to ensure a complete and accurate count for every person in the United States. Adopting the combined question format is cost-effective and allows the Bureau to collect the most complete and accurate data on race and ethnicity in the 2020 Census.

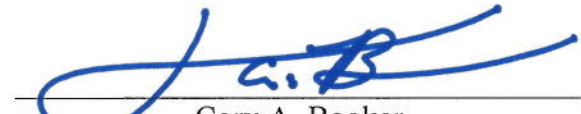
Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the 2020 Census is successful and provides an accurate count of the entire U.S. population.

Sincerely,


Robert Menendez


Tammy Duckworth


Richard Blumenthal


Cory A. Booker


Kirsten Gillibrand


Richard Durbin


Tom Udall


Mazie Hirono


Kamala D. Harris


Dianne Feinstein


Michael F. Bennet


Martin Heinrich


Jeff Merkley


Gary C. Peters