



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY BOARD

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MEMBERS

KATIE CRISTOL

CHAIR

CHRISTIAN DORSEY

VICE CHAIR

July 26, 2018

Re: Proposed Information Collection
2020 Census

Ms. Jennifer Jessup
Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer
Department of Commerce, Room 6616
14th and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Ms. Jessup:

On behalf of the Arlington County Board, I wish to express Arlington County, Virginia's opposition to the inclusion of the citizenship question on the 2020 Census. The question is divisive in nature, is unnecessary and will result in an undercount of residents.

Inclusion of the citizenship question will undermine the goal of the 2020 Census "to count everyone once, only once and in the right place." Raising the question of citizenship could result in some residents, particularly those without legal status, to avoid responding to the survey.

Many of these residents have escaped repressive, authoritarian regimes where the governments cannot be trusted. Providing assurances that federal law prohibits a census taker from sharing an individual's response and citizenship status with other federal agencies will not allay their fear of deportation. This fear is not unrealistic given recent federal immigration enforcement actions.

Not only might a citizenship question generate fear and anxiety among Arlington residents, the County is concerned that the resulting undercount may adversely affect future apportionment of legislative districts and population-based formulas used by the federal government to distribute domestic assistance. The undercount could be particularly significant in urban areas like Arlington, with large immigrant and ethnic communities, where it may result in an unfair reduction of the County's representation within the Virginia General Assembly and the U.S. Congress and reduce its share of future federal assistance.

The undercount would also have a financial impact on the County, because all our residents receive services, including fire and police protection. It is only fair to include all residents in the count.

Finally, the rationale provided for including the citizenship question, to help enforce Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, is fundamentally flawed. Voting rights advocates maintain that the more comprehensive American Community Survey, which is conducted annually but at fewer households,

already includes a question on citizenship. The data this survey generates is sufficient for purposes of Voting Rights Act enforcement.

With residents who speak more than 100 languages and hail from 146 countries, Arlington is one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the Commonwealth of Virginia. New residents move to Arlington from abroad at a rate of 14 persons a day. We pride ourselves on being a welcoming community to all our residents and attribute our success to fulfilling our vision statement that:

Arlington will be a diverse and inclusive world-class urban community with secure, attractive residential and commercial neighborhoods where people unite to form a caring, learning, participating, sustainable community in which each person is important.

Inclusion of the citizenship question moves Arlington County and this nation in the opposite direction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Cristol". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katie Cristol
Chair
Arlington County Board