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August 3, 2018

Honorable Wilbur L. Ross  
Secretary of Commerce U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) strongly urges the Department of Commerce to deny the request to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census. Adding such question would have harmful and negative consequences for all Californians, especially poor and low-income communities, families, seniors and children.

For over 25 years, CFPA has been the leading statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. In this mission, the Census is a vital tool in assessing and improving community stability and outcomes. Local, state and federal programs rely on Census data to serve communities and to allocate our collective resources to the communities and individuals that are most in need. If Census counts are inaccurate and undercount households, it will severely impact our ability to accurately gage and respond to these needs, and could result in the reallocation of resources away from crucial programs and funding.

As such, we are very concerned that the untested citizenship question will depress response rates within immigrant-rich communities, including households with naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents, and mixed-status families. Undercounting foreign-born residents has an impact on entire communities and regions. Low census response rates of California's population may lead to a detrimental decline in resources for infrastructure, education, public health, and food and nutrition programs. In addition, unreliable census counts threatens communities to lose vital government representation .

The potential harm of the proposed citizenship question would have an undue impact on California due to our large population of foreign-born residents. An inaccurate census count in

California will have a universally negative impact upon the distribution of resources, thereby impacting the overall population.

For example, an undercount in California would result in decreased funding allocations for vital nutrition programs, such as the Women Infants and Children (WIC) program. If the citizenship question is added to the 2020 Census and the state loses population-based discretionary funding appropriated for WIC, young children's early development and health will be at risk for the next decade. An entire generation of young children will grow up with increased poverty, hunger and deprivation- which only limits their potential to contribute to our future society and externalizes the cost burdens to other programs and services.

An accurate census count is important to ensure that federal programs receive equitable resources per capita to specific populations that need them. When households do not complete the Census for fear of harm to their families and neighbors, we all lose. CFPA is concerned about the impact of a Census undercount and the impact that will have on California families and communities for the next 10 years- and beyond.

We believe the proposed addition of the citizenship question to the Census threatens the ongoing work to eliminate hunger and mitigate poverty in the California communities we serve. The addition of this question is short-sighted and harmful: it is bad for the Census, bad for our communities, and bad for the health and well-being of our country. For these reasons, we strongly oppose this major change to census policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Beatriz Sosa-Prado". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Beatriz Sosa-Prado  
Policy Advocate  
California Food Policy Advocates