

Ms. Jennifer Jessup
Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer
Department of Commerce
Room 6616
14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

RE: Comments on Proposed Information Collection on 2020 Census, Docket No. USBC-2018-0005

Dear Ms. Jessup:

On behalf of the Saint Paul City Council, we write to offer comments on the 2020 Census proposed information collection. We strongly oppose the addition of a citizenship question on the 2020 Census form and urge the Department of Commerce to remove the untested and unnecessary question, as it will jeopardize the accuracy of the census—an outcome that the nation will have to live with for a decade.

All residents of Saint Paul have the legal right to be counted as part of the census, as provided in the United States Constitution. Yet we live in a political climate in which many non-citizens are in fear of being targeted by the administration. The citizenship question is unnecessarily intrusive and will raise concerns in all households—native- and foreign-born, citizen and non-citizen—about the confidentiality of their personal information and how government authorities may use that information. This could have a chilling effect on participation in the Census.

Should a decrease in participation occur, Saint Paul residents stand to lose in their voting strength, political influence and representation. Minnesota could lose both one-tenth of its members of Congress in the upcoming decade and see its voting strength in the electoral college diminished by 10%. Additionally, Saint Paul would not receive the representation in the state legislature to which its population size entitles it, beginning in 2023. We are also concerned that US-born residents who have voting rights would decide not to register and vote out of fear of disclosing to the government the residence of family members who are not yet US citizens.

Additionally, the federal government uses census-derived data to direct at least \$800 billion annually in federal assistance to states, localities, and families. The data also guide important community decisions affecting schools, housing, health care services, business investment, and much more. Saint Paul stands to lose needed and deserved assistance if there is an undercount.

We want to ensure that Saint Paul residents are not deterred from participating. Young people, who also tend to be low-income, are most easily dissuaded from participating in civic activities by unnecessary procedural requirements. For example, nationwide in the 2016 presidential election, 61% of all voting age persons voted, yet only 43% of voters under the age of 25 did so. Similarly, 80% of voters in households with an annual income above \$100,000 voted in 2016, but only 52% of voters with an income between \$20,000 and \$30,000 cast a ballot. Saint Paul is a college town; more than 35,000 city residents are college students, comprising approximately 12% of the total population of the city. It is essential that the census be conducted in a manner that reaches out to these residents and encourages their participation.

A full, fair, and accurate census is absolutely critical for our community. For the reasons discussed above, we strongly oppose asking about citizenship status in the 2020 Census and urge the Department of Commerce to remove the proposed citizenship question from the data collection forms.

Sincerely,

Amy Brendmoen, President

Rebecca Noecker, Vice President

Samantha Henningson

Jane Prince

Dai Thao

Chris Tolbert