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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. Census Bureau
Office of the Director
Washington, DC 20233-0001

Ms. Terry Ao Minnis
Director of Census and Voting Programs
Asian Americans Advancing Justice
1620 L Street NW, Suite 1050
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms. Minnis:

Thank you for your cosigned email regarding your interest in the 2020 Census Language Services operation. Before we respond to your four specific recommendations, the U.S. Census Bureau would like to note that the census data are collected at the household level, and the language determinations for the 2020 Census are based on data on households that are limited-English-speaking. Languages supported by the 2020 Census Language Services operation are those that have more than 2,000 limited-English-speaking households in the United States. Limited-English-speaking households are defined as households where there is "no one 14 years or older who speaks English only or speaks English 'very well.'" This is an important distinction, as language support decisions are driven by whether there is a language barrier at the household level.

With respect to your specific recommendations, please see Census Bureau responses below.

Recommendation 1: We recommend that the Census Bureau invest the resources needed to make the paper version of the 2020 Census questionnaire available in the same languages in which it is available online.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau will develop the 2020 Census paper questionnaires in English and Spanish and will produce print language guides in 59 non-English languages that will assist respondents in filling out the paper questionnaire. Respondents from limited-English-speaking households, who choose to complete the 2020 Census paper questionnaire, will be able to do so using these print language guides in the supported languages.

In 2010, respondents requesting non-English paper questionnaires needed to call Telephone Questionnaire Assistance, requested that a non-English paper questionnaire be mailed to them, and then waited for the questionnaire to arrive at their homes. In 2020, we will eliminate these steps and allow respondents to provide their information directly to the telephone agent in English and 12 non-English languages.

Recommendation 2: We recommend, at a minimum, adding the languages supported in 2010 that are currently NOT on the 2020 Census language list: Cebuano, Chamorro, Chuukese, Marshallese, Samoan, and Tongan, as well as Hawaiian.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau used a robust, data-driven process when determining the languages for the 2020 Census. We used the 2016 ACS 5-year estimates to create tabulations of languages spoken by at least 2,000 limited-English-speaking households. This list was compared with regional and state level data to ensure that the languages with the largest need in each region and state were represented, and this analysis led to the final list of languages. Given this robust methodology, any potential additions to the list of languages would need to be determined through an analysis of the languages spoken by the next largest groups of limited-English-speaking households. However, we affirm that the 59 languages will be the final list for the 2020 Census language guides.

In order to help meet additional language needs beyond the 59, the Census Bureau will provide language guide templates. Language communities not covered by the 59 languages will be able to use the templates to create guides in other languages. In addition, we will hire field enumerators and partnership specialists with bilingual abilities to assist limited-English-speaking households with responding to the census. In 2010, we hired staff with capabilities in 145 different languages and will continue to hire bilingual staff for 2020.

Recommendation 3: We request that the Census Bureau consider using the language glossaries and language assistance guides that it plans to create in 59 languages and turn them into online versions of the 2020 Census questionnaire for some or all of those languages.

Census Bureau Response: The development of non-English versions of the Internet instrument is a complex process. Simply converting the terms found in the language guides and glossaries is not feasible, as the translated text found in each glossary comprises 1/16 of the translated text within the Internet instrument.

When developing non-English versions of the Internet instrument, additional text elements must be added and tested within the instrument. In addition to the question wording and response options, there are various text elements (e.g., help texts, instructions, error messages, edit messages, screen reader text) that must be translated by professional translators and expert reviewed by multilingual researchers. The translation file is then developed in the instrument and reviewed to ensure formatting and layout are appropriate for each language. Following this step, we conduct cognitive interviews with respondents and update the instrument based on the results.

Recommendation 4: We recommend that in all mailings to households about the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau include in-language messages that provide information to respondents about how to request a questionnaire in a non-English language, about how to get translated

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information to assist in filling out the census form on the 2020 census Website, or about the Census Questionnaire Assistance phone numbers that provide in-language assistance.

Census Bureau Response: All mailing packages will include a language assistance sheet, providing instructions in 12 non-English languages on completing the questionnaire through the Internet and Census Questionnaire Assistance. These instructions will explain how to access the non-English versions of the Internet instrument and provide phone numbers that are dedicated to each non-English language. The language assistance sheet has been tested through mid-decade testing and will be included in the 2020 Census.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Jennifer Kim, Assistant Division Chief, Decennial Census Management Division, at 301-763-1311 or by email at jennifer.kim@census.gov.

Sincerely,



Steven D. Dillingham
Director