United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 8, 2019

The Honorable Steven Dillingham
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Hillcrest Heights, MD 20746

Dear Dr. Dillingham:

We are writing to respectfully urge the U.S Census Bureau to include Khmer, Hmong, and Lao among the languages supported by the Internet Self-Response (ISR) and Census Questionnaire Assistance (CQA) options for the 2020 Census.

Southeast Asian refugees from Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos comprise the largest refugee population ever to resettle in the United States.[1] Today, these communities number close to 3 million people, with the highest populations in California, Texas, Washington, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and North Carolina.[2] From the American Community Survey (ACS) data, we know that roughly 35 percent of Cambodian households, 32 percent of Hmong households, and 33 percent of Laotian households are limited-English proficient households—higher percentages than all U.S. households overall.[3] Additionally, more than 14 percent of all Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian communities live in poverty,[4] making them difficult to reach and hard to count.

The Census Bureau has diligently utilized the 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates to identify limited-English speaking households to designate for translation support through the use of language guides, glossaries, internet, and telephone response.[5] Based on ACS data, the Census Bureau has previously designated for translation support, through language guides and glossaries, communities with at least 2,000 limited-English-proficient households.[6] The Census Bureau also has designated for additional translation support, through the internet and telephone response, communities with at least 60,000 limited-English-proficient households.

We believe that ACS data that identifies the *number* of limited-English-proficient households does not capture the range of *needs* that they have. In particular, Cambodian, Hmong,

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[1] American Community Survey (ACS) - U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 3-year estimates
[2] American Community Survey (ACS) - U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 1-year estimates
[3] American Community Survey (ACS) - U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 1-year estimates
[4] American Community Survey (ACS) - U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 1-year estimates
[5] Steven D. Dillingham, US Census Bureau letter to Rep. Lori Trahan in response to additional Cambodian, Laotian and Hmong translation support for Census, June 7, 2019
[6] Steven D. Dillingham, US Census Bureau letter to Rep. Lori Trahan in response to additional Cambodian, Laotian and Hmong translation support for Census, June 7, 2019

and Lao communities face unique challenges due to their refugee experience and lack of institutional support that has resulted in decades of unaddressed intergenerational poverty, limited English proficiency, and trauma many faced during the Vietnam War making many elders and community members especially difficult to reach. They need comprehensive support to ensure they are counted, regardless of whether they meet the 60,000 limited-English-proficient thresholds. Offering additional language support tools is a necessary step to ensure an accurate count of these hard-to-reach populations, which will bear on the future availability of vital public resources for their communities.

We understand that making this additional support available may require revisions to current Census Bureau plans. But we strongly believe that the Cambodian, Hmong, and Lao populations should receive the breadth of support tools that will be available to speakers of any other language in the United States.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request. If you have any questions, please contact Satrajit (Jitu) Sardar of Senator Markey's staff at Satrajit_Sardar@markey.senate.gov.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
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