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ASIAN AMERICAN SERVING NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS SLAM DECISION TO ADD CITIZENSHIP QUESTION TO CENSUS

Decision will negatively impact response rates, create more fear in immigrant communities

Organizations vow to increase outreach efforts to improve response rates in hard to reach communities, despite new challenges

Flushing, NY – New York nonprofits serving the Asian American community gathered at the MinKwon Center to denounce the White House’s decision to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census and said that this decision would harm response rates and ultimately harm New York’s rich Asian American and immigrant communities. Today’s press conference was organized by Asian Pacific Americans Voting and Organizing to Increase Civic Engagement (APA VOICE). APA VOICE is a non-partisan, pan-Asian collaboration of more than 18 organizations seeking to increase civic engagement in the Asian American community. APA VOICE coalition members were joined by partner organizations serving the Asian American community.

On February 14, 2018, APA VOICE sent a letter urging Treasury Secretary Wilbur Ross to reject a citizenship question. As they wrote at the time, “the goal of the census is for an accurate and inclusive count of all United States residents, regardless of immigration status, and adding this question will disproportionately harm response rates from immigrant communities.”

Undercounting is a serious concern for the Asian American population. Asian Americans are the fastest growing ethnic group in the country, and nearly two-thirds of Asian Americans are foreign-born. Furthermore, 20 percent of Asian Americans live in linguistically isolated households, defined as nobody over the age of 14 speaks English very well.

Despite the addition of a citizenship question, it is critical for Asian Americans and immigrants to respond to the census. As organizations that have demonstrated experience reaching hard to reach Asian American communities, APA VOICE promised to increase their outreach efforts to ensure an accurate count in their communities. Many APA VOICE members, including MinKwon Center for Community Action, are also part of the New York Immigration Coalition’s (NYIC) New York Counts 2020 Coalition to ensure a fair and accurate census.

An undercount can lead to decreased federal funding for communities and the loss of representation in Congress through the process of reapportionment. New York lost two Congressional seats after the 2010 census. At the time, City officials claimed census workers had misclassified housing units,

vacancies, and basements utilized as separate apartments. There were also fears that many immigrants and limited English proficient residents did not return Census questionnaires.

“A citizenship question will make members of our Asian American community fearful and impact our ability to get an accurate count during the 2020 Census,” said **John Park, Co-Director of the MinKwon Center for Community Action**. “An accurate census ensures our state and democracy are working as it should. The citizenship question is a purely politically motivated barrier designed to reduce response rates that will disproportionately affect immigrant communities. An undercount in the 2020 Census could mean the loss of billions in federal funding for the public schools, hospitals, and housing services immigrant communities need, and MinKwon will do everything in its power to ensure the government conducts the 2020 Census fairly and our community members are counted.”

“CACF strongly opposes the inclusion of a citizenship question on the 2020 U.S. Census,” said **Vanessa Leung and Anita Gundanna, Co-Executive Directors of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families**. “The Asian American community continues to struggle to have our community needs and concerns accurately represented through data. Including a citizenship question will only serve to instill more fear and discourage the APA community from filling out the Census, further compromising our community's voice.”

“AALDEF will fight this politically motivated effort to suppress the accurate reporting of immigrant communities,” said **Margaret Fung, Executive Director of Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund**. “The harm to immigrant communities is real, and we will use all legal options at our disposal.”

“The inclusion of a citizenship status question in the 2020 Census will have a chilling effect for immigrant communities and communities of color,” said **Wayne Ho, President & CEO of the Chinese-American Planning Council**. “This will have negative, long-term effects on not only the communities we serve but also all New Yorkers. We urge the New York Congressional Delegation to pass legislation to remove the citizenship status question and ensure our state has proper electoral representation and federal resources.”

“This is very troubling. ICA did an incredible amount of work for the 2010 Census, but it still only resulted in a 42% response rate. This will likely lower the response rate for the 2020 Census—which is counterproductive,” said **Suzanne Mahadeo, Director of the Indo-Caribbean Alliance**. “We need to be able to welcome and count everyone on the Census; adding a citizenship question is missing the mark on how to initiate people to get them to fill out the Census; please remove the citizenship question or else many people will completely avoid it.”

“This is an ill-advised, unnecessarily intrusive census question that will hurt the various ethnic communities, especially the Asian American Pacific Islander community,” said **Chi Loek, President of OCA-NY**. “More than ever, OCA-NY will need to work with our coalition partners, community-based organizations, businesses, and civic leaders to overturn this disastrous decision.”



ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICANS VOTING & ORGANIZING TO INCREASE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

About APA VOICE

APA VOICE is a non-partisan, pan-Asian collaboration of more than 18 organizations seeking to increase civic engagement in the Asian American community. APA VOICE consists of Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Asian Americans for Equality, Adhikaar, Bangladeshi American Community Development and Youth Services, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, Chhaya Community Development Corporation, Chinese American Planning Council, Chinese Progressive Association, Charles B. Wang Community Health Center, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, Indo-Caribbean Alliance, MinKwon Center for Community Action, OCA-NY, Shetu, South Asian Council for Social Services, Pilipino American Unity for Progress, United Chinese Association of Brooklyn, YWCA of Queens

About MinKwon Center for Community Action

The MinKwon Center for Community Action was established in 1984 to meet the needs and concerns of the Korean American community through immigrant rights and political empowerment. The MinKwon Center has emerged as a leading organization in building a sustained community for marginalized individuals, including recent immigrants, minorities, low-income residents, limited English proficient persons, elderly and youth.