



September 17, 2018

Karen Battle, Chief, Population Division
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road 6H174
Washington, D.C. 20233

Re: Soliciting Feedback From Users on 2020 Census Data Products, Docket number
180608532-85737-01

Dear Ms. Battle,

On behalf of the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC), we write to offer comments on the notice soliciting feedback on 2020 census data products. As an organization advocating for Southeast Asian refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, SEARAC relies solely on census data to give an accurate picture of our community's population size, educational attainment, poverty rates, use of SNAP/food stamps, and health care coverage. **We are able to get this information primarily through the American Community Survey tables B01003- Total Population and S0201- Selected Population Profile. Because of this, we urge you to prioritize the release of these data products as they are instrumental to our advocacy and understanding of our community's needs.**

As the largest refugee community to ever resettle in the United States, Southeast Asian Americans (SEAAs) face unique barriers that lead to low education rates and high poverty rates that are often masked when data on Asian Americans are not disaggregated. Census is the only comprehensive tool that allows us the ability to examine national data disaggregated by race. This informs and strengthens our ability to be able to advocate for more programs and resources to support this underserved community.

Because of these census data products, we know that SEAAs total nearly 2.7 million across the nation.¹ We also know that SEAA communities experience poverty at higher rates than the general public, with more than 12% of Lao families, 13% of Vietnamese families, 18% of Cambodian families, and 27% of Hmong families still living below the poverty line, compared with 11% of U.S. families overall.² As such, 11.7% of Vietnamese,

¹ [American Community Survey \(ACS\) - U.S. Census Bureau](#), 2013 3-year estimates

² Asian Americans Advancing Justice. A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the Northeast, 2013

14.8% of Lao, 21.8% of Cambodian, and 30.1% of Hmong immigrants rely on SNAP, while 28.5% of Lao, 32.1% of Vietnamese, 35.9% of Cambodian, and 46% of Hmong immigrants depend on Medicaid to survive.³ Finally, we know that educational attainment continues to be a challenge that many SEAA communities face. 34.3% of Lao, 38.5% of Cambodian, 39.6% of Hmong, and 30.2% of Vietnamese American adult populations do not have a high school diploma, compared to 14.4% of U.S. adults.⁴

In summary, the population profile is critical in its data about the following:

- Total population
- Sex and Age
- School Enrollment
- Educational Attainment
- Place of birth, citizenship and year of entry
- Employment status
- Occupation
- Income in the past 12 months
- Health insurance coverage
- Poverty rates for families and people whom poverty is determined
- Language spoken at home and ability to speak English

This information would be nearly impossible for SEARAC to collect without access to accurate data from American Community Survey tables B01003- Total Population and S0201- Selected Population Profile. We urge the U.S. Census Bureau to prioritize the release of these data products.

Sincerely,



Quyen Dinh
Executive Director
SEARAC

³ American Community Survey (ACS) - U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 1-year estimates

⁴ American Community Survey (ACS) - U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 3-year estimates