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Department of Commerce
Room 6616
14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

August 3, 2018

**Public comment re: on Proposed Information Collection on 2020 Census,
Docket No. USBC-2018-0005**

Dear Ms. Jessup,

On behalf of Treatment Action Group—a member of New York Counts 2020 and an organization dedicated to promoting the rights of people affected by HIV, hepatitis C (HCV), and tuberculosis (TB)—we write to express strong opposition to the addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 Census form.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on the 2020 Census proposed information collection, as the addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 form, as directed by Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, poses a great threat to the accuracy of the census in all communities—the consequences of which our nation would have to bear for the next decade.

A fair and accurate census, and the collection of meaningful, objective data about our nation’s people, housing, economy, and communities, is critically important. The federal government uses census-derived data to direct at least \$800 billion annually in federal assistance to states, localities, and families. These data also guide important community decisions affecting health care and many other services. Accurate and complete data are only possible with full participation in the census.

That is precisely why the 2020 Census should not include a question on citizenship. Asking about citizenship status in the climate of fear and mistrust that our nation, and in particular, many of its most senior politicians have bred, can only heighten suspicions, discourage responses—especially

among hard-to-count communities, cost additional taxpayer money, and thwart accurate, inclusive data collection.

As champions of efficient and equitable public investments in health and well-being, we are extremely concerned about the potential impact of inaccurate counting, particularly in regards to the three conditions (HIV, HCV, and TB) on which we focus. Under-allocating resources to counter these infectious diseases—each of which could be ended with sufficient political will and resources—would have grave public health and individual consequences. Inequities in access to care for Americans who happen to have been born outside of the U.S. are already driving huge disparities in the HIV, HCV, and TB epidemics. A citizenship question would indubitably lead to further exclusion of some of our country's most vulnerable residents, to the detriment of not only their health and human rights, but also the broader public health and economy.

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.

If you have any questions or desire further information about our strong objections to adding a citizenship question, please do not hesitate to contact Erica Lessem, TAG's Deputy Executive Director – Programs, at erica.lessem@treatmentactiongroup.org.

Yours in concern,
Treatment Action Group, member of New York Counts 2020