U.S. Conference of Mayors Resolution on the 2020 Census

WHEREAS, in two years, the 2020 Census -- our nation’s largest, most complex peacetime undertaking — will be fully underway, with a “Census Day” of April 1, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the nation’s mayors stand ready to work with the U.S. Census Bureau and other stakeholders to achieve a full, fair and accurate count of every person residing in our local communities; and

WHEREAS, for municipalities across our nation, it is hard to overstate the importance of a successful decennial census because it provides critical data that will be used to:

- determine how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funds are distributed to state and local communities annually for transportation, housing, education, hospitals and many other vital services; and
- determine the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives for the next ten years; and
- draw political districts at the federal, state and local levels.

WHEREAS, to achieve a fair and accurate count, the Census Bureau must receive adequate funds to implement effectively a range of data collection methods, including new Internet and telephone response options, and a traditional paper questionnaire; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Conference of Mayors is concerned that the Administration’s budget request does not include any additional funding for the Integrated Partnership and Communications program, which are essential to keeping long-term census costs in check, given the growing barriers to a successful census, and for an expanded field presence in light of the lower projected self-response rate; and

WHEREAS, mayors across the nation are alarmed that the U.S. Department of Justice has requested that a question about citizenship be added to the census questionnaire, which undoubtedly will threaten the Census Bureau’s ability to conduct an inclusive enumeration that accurately and fully reflects the diverse fabric of America and meets the constitutional mandate of counting all persons residing in the United States; and

WHEREAS, changes to the census form at this late stage of the 2020 Census planning will jeopardize the validity of the operational tests that already have been conducted, put into question the outreach and partnership strategies that have been designed around different content, and would require changes in training and execution of operations; and

WHEREAS, mayors are also concerned that the Census Bureau Director job remains vacant and the President has not put forth a nominee who meets the statutory requirements of significant scientific and management experience, and without regard to partisan affiliation, to lead the Census Bureau at this critical time; nor has the Administration considered a qualified, experienced, and nonpartisan candidate to serve as Deputy Director; and
WHEREAS, the Census Bureau has long benefited from exceptional leadership, helping the agency carry out its mission of serving as the leading source of quality data about the nation’s people and economy; and

WHEREAS, the American people must have confidence that the Bureau’s leaders will uphold its core principles of protecting confidentiality, sharing expertise, and conducting its work openly and fairly, without regard to partisan interests, and be guided by a commitment to scientific objectivity and excellence and research-based innovation.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that The U.S. Conference of Mayors urges the Administration to work closely with Congress to ensure a minimum funding level of $4.735 billion for the Census Bureau for FY 2019, to provide for more Partnership Specialists who will engage, educate, and mobilize states, localities, and community-based organizations in support of the census; an expanded communications campaign that targets harder-to-reach communities, includes more ‘in-language’ advertising, and addresses growing public fears about cyber-security; and an expanded field “footprint” through 20 percent more local census offices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The U.S. Conference of Mayors urges the Secretary of Commerce to reject the Department of Justice’s request to add a citizenship question to the census questionnaire.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The U.S. Conference of Mayors urges the Administration to nominate and appoint candidates for the Census Bureau Director and Deputy Director who will continue the tradition of nonpartisan, experienced and strong leadership.