

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2023

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Director, Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Young:

As your office considers changes to the 2030 United States Census questionnaire, we write in support of a Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) checkbox, specifically one that includes an Armenian subcategory checkbox. As Co-Chairs of the Congressional Armenian Caucus, we have the privilege of representing the Armenian-American community and have worked side-by-side with our Armenian-American constituents for the recognition of their history, their contributions to our country, and for the protection of their future.

The Armenian-American community currently lacks meaningful federal data as a group, while being one of the largest and most impacted groups that would fall under the proposed MENA category, according to OMB data. This has real world impacts on the representation, quality of life, and rights of Armenian-Americans in our districts and throughout the United States.

For almost thirty years, Armenian-Americans have been among the top three MENA communities in the United States in terms of population size. And yet, Armenian-Americans are still fighting for more accurate representation through the U.S. Census. Armenian-American responses on the U.S. Census have only increased in recent decades, thanks to successful community initiatives like the HyeCounts campaign — which encouraged the community to proactively provide this demographic information in the last question on the Census.

The Armenian-American community is a significant minority population that continues to be underrepresented due to lack of data, and therefore denied the rights and benefits of Census classification. Armenian-Americans currently do not see themselves accurately reflected in the U.S. Census, which shapes both federal and local categories, funding decisions, opportunity, and anti-discrimination efforts. Armenian-Americans have long histories of immigration, refugeehood, and racialization, as well as legal, educational, economic, workplace and linguistic marginalization. Representation on the U.S. Census will help right many of the historical wrongs that Armenian-Americans continue to face in the United States.

We join other elected officials, community leaders, and prominent Armenian-American and MENA organizations in calling for the checkbox, and emphasize the need for Armenian-American community input and classification within this category. Armenian-Americans are a transnational group in the MENA region whose ancestry spans and crosses current-day nation-states. Similar to other populations that are transnational groups, such as Assyrians, Armenian-Americans must be included in the MENA Census efforts, and “Armenian” must be a category for the U.S. Census data questionnaire.

We urge the Administration to include the Armenian checkbox on the next Census and stand ready to connect officials with members of the Armenian-American community in our districts. We thank the Biden administration for working to address the needs of MENA communities and appreciate the Administration's — and your — consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Adam B. Schiff in black ink.

Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Frank Pallone, Jr. in black ink.

Frank Pallone
Member of Congress