

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 27, 2016

Director John H. Thompson  
US Census Bureau  
4600 Silver Hill Road  
Washington, DC 20233

Director Thompson,

We write to ask the Census Bureau to build upon its efforts to support LGBT people by including questions regarding sexual orientation and gender identity on the American Community Survey (ACS). The current lack of population-based data on the LGBT community inhibits the creation of sound public policy as well as the delivery of effective programs and services to all Americans. Expanding and improving data collection and analysis about LGBT people is essential to better understanding the issues affecting our communities and to improve the health and well-being of all of our families.

We recognize the Census Bureau's role as a leader in addressing the needs of the LGBT community. We applaud your continued responsiveness to improving the way relationship status is assessed amongst the population, particularly with respect to Americans' increasingly diverse family and relationship configurations.<sup>1</sup> We also applaud your leadership in joining the interagency working group on LGBT data collection that was convened by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). We look forward to this group's progress in enhancing the capacity of federal statistical agencies to collect and analyze urgently-needed information about the LGBT population.

As you know, the Census Bureau collects, analyzes, and disseminates a vast array of data on our nation's population. These data concern everything from health and living arrangements to employment and income, and they directly influence policy and the annual allocation of federal funds. Many federal data collection instruments gather respondents' race, ethnicity, sex, marital status, and other personal demographic information. However, most of these instruments do not include direct measures of respondents' sexual orientation or gender identity. As a result, there is limited, if any, data with which to examine the demographic, economic, health, geographic, and other characteristics of the LGBT population. Further, ensuring full inclusion of the LGBT population in our nation's data collection efforts is indispensable to addressing the discrimination against, and the general economic and social vulnerabilities facing LGBT Americans.

Some federal surveys have started to ask questions about sexual orientation and/or gender identity, which demonstrates the feasibility of collecting this information. At the U.S.

---

<sup>1</sup> Interagency Working Group on Measuring Relationships in Federal Household Surveys (MRFHS), "Improved Measurement of Household Relationships in Federal Surveys," (2014). Available online at [http://fcsmsites.usa.gov/files/2014/04/MRFHS\\_StatisticalPolicyWorkingPaper201408.pdf](http://fcsmsites.usa.gov/files/2014/04/MRFHS_StatisticalPolicyWorkingPaper201408.pdf)

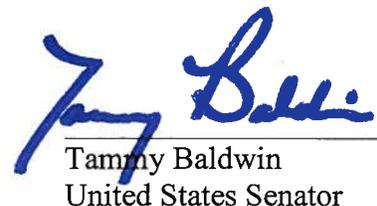
Department of Health and Human Services, for example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has developed a sexual orientation and gender identity question module that more than 25 states and territories<sup>2</sup> are now using on the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, the largest federally supported health survey. The Bureau of Justice Statistics has successfully piloted the addition of sexual orientation and gender identity measures to the National Crime Victimization Survey, and, we understand, is planning the full implementation of those measures in that survey this year. Finally, the Department of Labor has collected data on the sexual orientation of respondents' in the Family and Medical Leave Act Survey, a critical measure for assessing the availability of family leave for same-sex couples.

In order to make further progress toward understanding the LGBT population (including its economic, racial, and geographic diversity), we strongly believe the Census Bureau should measure ACS respondents' sexual orientation and gender identity. The ACS is the key, ongoing, federally supported survey sent to roughly 3.5 million addresses every year to gather critical information about the United States as a nation and the people who call America home. Adding sexual orientation and gender identity questions to the ACS will allow us to have the information we need to strengthen policies and programs that will improve the lives of LGBT people and their families.

We look forward to working with you on this important issue. To the extent that you identify any obstacles to adding sexual orientation and gender identity measures to the ACS, we request that you provide alternative plans to collect and analyze population-based data about the LGBT community and its economic and demographic characteristics.

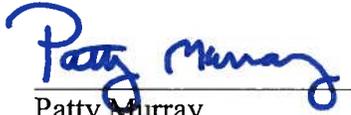
Sincerely,

  
Raul M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

  
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

---

<sup>2</sup> Kellan Baker and Margaret Hughes, "Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data Collection in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System," Center for American Progress (2016).

  
Patty Murray  
United States Senator

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

  
Al Franken  
United States Senator

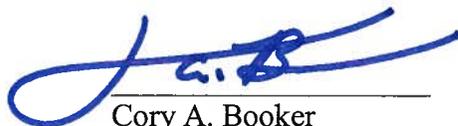
  
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

  
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

  
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

  
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

Rubén Hinojosa

Rubén Hinojosa

Barbara Lee

Barbara Lee

Hank Johnson

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.

Jackie Speier

Jackie Speier

Carolyn B. Maloney

Carolyn B. Maloney

Eleanor Holmes Norton

Eleanor Holmes Norton

John Conyers, Jr.

John Conyers, Jr.

Ted Deutch

Ted Deutch

Lucille Roybal-Allard

Lucille Roybal-Allard

José E. Serrano

José E. Serrano

Nydia M. Velázquez

Nydia M. Velázquez

Gwen Moore

Gwen Moore

Jan Schakowsky

Jan Schakowsky

Adam B. Schiff

Adam B. Schiff

Charles B. Rangel

Charles B. Rangel

Jerrold Nadler

Jerrold Nadler

Mike Quigley

Mike Quigley

Steve Israel

Steve Israel

Elijah E. Cummings

Elijah E. Cummings

Chellie Pingree

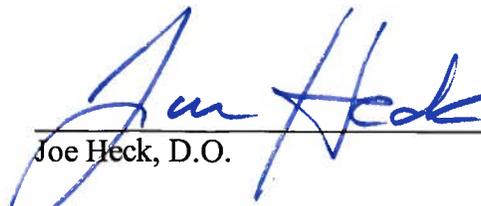
Chellie Pingree

Peter A. DeFazio

Peter A. DeFazio

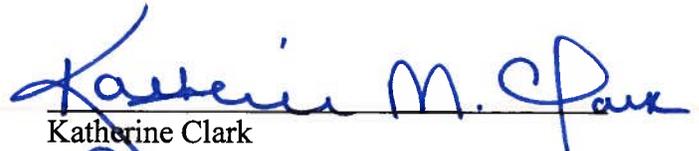
Peter Welch

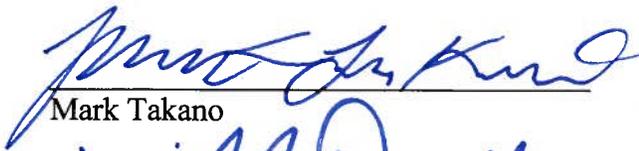
Peter Welch

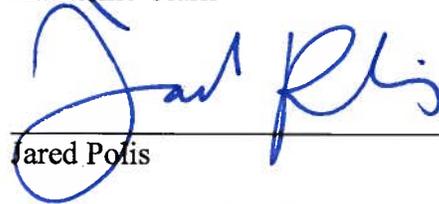
  
Joe Heck, D.O.

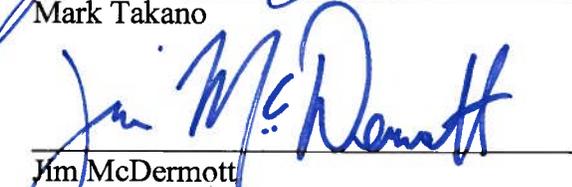
  
Sam Farr

  
Ted W. Lieu

  
Katherine Clark

  
Mark Takano

  
Jared Polis

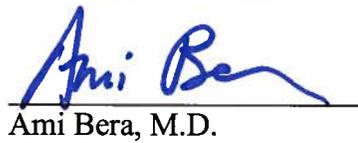
  
Jim McDermott

  
Michael M. Honda

  
Tony Cárdenas

  
Raul Ruiz, M.D.

  
Earl Blumenauer

  
Ami Bera, M.D.

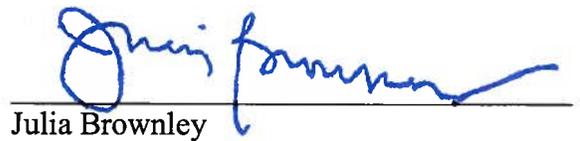
  
Ruben Gallego

  
Grace F. Napolitano

  
Bill Foster

  
Lois Frankel

  
Seth Moulton

  
Julia Brownley

  
Kyrsten Sinema

  
Derek Kilmer

  
Jared Huffman

  
Niki Tsongas



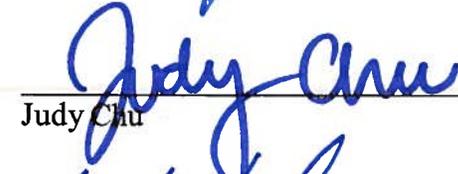
Brian Higgins



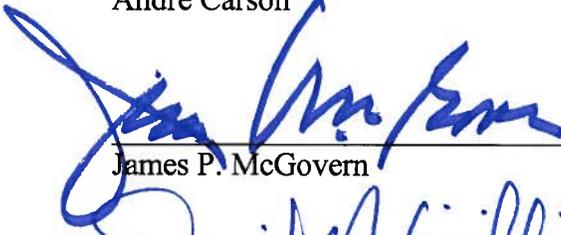
Sheila Jackson Lee



André Carson



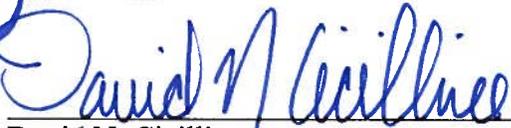
Judy Chu



James P. McGovern



Filemon Vela



David N. Cicilline



Alan Lowenthal



Eric Swalwell



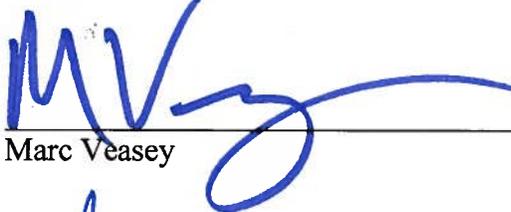
Dan Kildee



Mark Pocan



Dina Titus



Marc Veasey



Michelle Lujan Grisham



Suzan DelBene



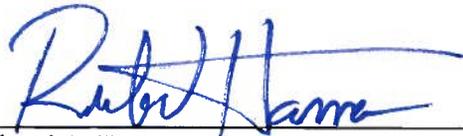
Alan Grayson



John Yarmuth



Ann Kirkpatrick



Richard L. Hanna



Donald S. Beyer Jr.



Jim Langevin



Bonnie Watson Coleman



---

Scott H. Peters



---

Sean Patrick Maloney



---

Donna F. Edwards



---

Chris Van Hollen