



Minnesota State Legislature

June 26, 2023

Robert L. Santos, Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Director Santos:

As members of the Minnesota Asian Pacific Caucus, we write to you not only as representatives of the constituents who elected us to office, but also on behalf of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across Minnesota, the Midwest, and the country. We know that you and U.S. Census Bureau (Bureau) staff have been diligently working to process and share findings from the 2020 Census. We are writing with concern regarding multiple instances of misclassification of Asian ethnic groups in upcoming 2020 Census products and request a meeting with you and Bureau staff to consider recommendations, and chart a path forward for future stakeholder outreach.

We are concerned that there are various misclassifications of many different Asian American ethnicities in upcoming 2020 Census data products. Hmong community groups and other communities reached out after the release of last year's [2020 Census State Redistricting File \(Public Law 94-171\)](#) where [technical documents](#) showed many Asian ethnic groups had been misclassified into incorrect regional groups. The below is not an exhaustive list, but are just some examples which community groups have brought to our attention:

1. Hmong as "East Asian" when it should be categorized as "Southeast Asian"
2. Urdu as "Other Asian" when it should be "South Asian"
3. Lahu as "Other Asian" when it should be categorized as "Southeast Asian"
4. Tai Dam as "Other Asian" when it should be categorized as "Southeast Asian"

As policy makers, we rely on accurate data to make good policy decisions. This is why we are especially concerned about the impact this misclassification will have in 2020 Census Data Products, including the upcoming Demographic and Housing Characteristics products. We understand that this is the first time that the Bureau is publicly sharing products with regional classification, and so we hope that you will consider our recommendations.

To rectify the misclassification of multiple Asian ethnicities in 2020 products, we are requesting that the Bureau work with Asian American community groups, state demographers who regularly work with Asian American communities, and other stakeholders. Specifically, we are requesting that the Bureau takes the following steps:

- 1) expeditiously recategorized the four ethnicities identified above, and work with Asian American community groups and stakeholders to ensure accurate coding of all other ethnicities

2) discontinue the coding matrix the Bureau is currently using.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on how we can best address our concerns about the current misclassification of Asian ethnic groups in 2020 Census products that will be released. We are eager to also work on future coding lists to ensure that every population is properly coded in future Census Bureau products.

Sincerely,



Representative Liz Lee



Representative Kaohly Her



Senator Susan Pha



Representative Samantha Vang



Representative Samantha Sencer-Mura



Representative Ethan Cha



Senator Fong Hawj

Cc: Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, Co-Chair, White House Initiative and the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders

Ambassador Katherine Tai, Co-Chair, White House Initiative and the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders

Krystal Ka'ai, Executive Director, White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders

Nicholas A. Jones, Director and Senior Advisor of Race and Ethnic Research and Outreach, Population Division

Rachel Marks, Chief, Racial Statistics Branch, Population Division