

The Unity Council Meeting (California)

Director's Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

November 1, 2022

INTRODUCTION

- Good afternoon, everyone. It's an honor to be here in my role as your director of the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Yes, I did say *your* director. Not just because I'm a fellow Latinx, but because this position serves the public... it serves our nation. And that's how I'm approaching my role as a public servant who happens to be in a leadership position.
- But first let me return to my original statement, that it's an honor to be here with you today.
- As we all know, the pandemic challenged our society and impacted our most vulnerable communities.
- When the pandemic's grip on society was strongest, the Census Bureau still had to deploy a sizeable field force to knock on doors across our nation.
- And we did just that, but we didn't do it alone. Without the support of our partners, we could not have achieved the measure of success we attained. We recognize and deeply appreciate that. And we learned from it.
- That's partly why I'm here today. Not just to thank you for helping during an enormously challenging period, but to sustain and strengthen a continuous partnership.

VISION FOR THE CENSUS BUREAU

- So, in the spirit of strengthening our partnership, let me tell you a little about how I am leading the Census Bureau.
- First, I think my roots as a statistician, a policy researcher, a fellow stakeholder, and a person of color offer me a unique perspective in leading the Census Bureau.
- I'm a leader who champions diversity, equity, and inclusion—DEI. I've lived them over a 40-year career and seen firsthand that innovation and excellence are advanced by embracing DEI principles.
- An important part of our DEI effort includes seeking out and listening to diverse voices. That certainly includes listening to our partners and stakeholders, which of course includes you.
- Now, I believe that we promote excellence by embracing equity, diversity, and inclusion in our workforce, in our policies and practices, as well as in how we engage stakeholders.
- We're committed to producing data that reflect an accurate portrait of America. Census Bureau data are valuable assets that can be used by policymakers and the public to advance equity.
- In 2021, President Biden announced a federal agenda to advance equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.
- Because this goal "requires a systemic approach to embedding fairness in decision-making processes," we need quality data about our people and economy to advance equity.

- And it so happens that the Census Bureau is the leading provider of quality data about the nation's people and economy.
- In fact, we're continually striving for excellence. And that can be challenging in our current environment. But even in the face of challenges, I believe that we can find new ways to collect data that are more accurate, relevant, and most of all have utility, as in fit for use.
- Let me talk a little more about how we're doing that:
 - **First, we're committing to data equity.** We created an Equity Data Working Group to assemble Census Bureau data that can help explore disparities and inequities in our society. Check out our webpage called Advancing Equity with Data on < census.gov >.

Also, we're working with the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to revise racial-ethnic reporting standards; and we're hoping that we can work with OMB on sexual orientation and gender identity. **I'll talk more about that in a minute. (Optional—talking points on the OMB process at the end of these remarks.)**
 - **Second, we're incorporating diversity and inclusion in our workplace.** Diverse voices are catalysts for innovation, critical thinking, and excellence around issues of who we are as a nation. This results in better data quality, data relevance, as well as advancing equity.
 - **Third, we're engaging with the full diversity of our stakeholders, including you.** The idea is to create continuous partnerships that build trust and communicate the value of Census Bureau data.
- Next, I'd like to mention the issue of transparency and its role in communicating data quality. The Census Bureau will continue to be transparent about the quality and reliability of the statistical data we release. As you know, no statistical product is ever perfect; all are subject to various degrees of uncertainty and even error.
- All our products undergo extensive quality checks and reviews to reduce errors. That way, results are fit for their intended uses such as apportionment and legislative redistricting with 2020 Census data.
- Thus far, we've released several 2020 Census quality assessments, and some are ongoing. They include reports on operational metrics, a demographic analysis, and the Post-Enumeration Survey. We've also hosted three independent studies by outside expert groups.
- This information facilitates a better understanding of the data quality of our products. And make no mistake—knowing the strengths and limitations of any census product actually increases the value of the data, because you know where to be careful with your analysis and how to better interpret results.
- Another aspect of data equity is ensuring that our data are an accurate reflection of the nation. We are working to develop new ways to collect data that are more accurate, timely, relevant, and, most of all, meet the needs of the public. We continuously engage in improving how we measure equity and diversity.
- We are constantly assessing how we can improve our statistical programs to better serve and represent underserved groups. We continuously research strategies for improving respondent understanding of questions we ask and the accuracy of the data we produce. And as I mentioned, we are conducting ongoing engagement and discussions about our research and findings with stakeholder groups.

2030 FEEDBACK

- All of these strategies will help us with planning an even better decennial census in 2030. And another reason I'm here today is to ask for your help with the 2030 Census.
- In August, we issued a Federal Register Notice seeking public comment on the 2030 Census. It is very important to receive public input early in the decade and to hear from as many people and communities as possible. Of course, we will keep talking to communities as we progress, but now is the time to get input into our research and our operational design.
- As we get closer to 2030, we'll be much more limited in what we can change. Once we have an operational design—in 2024—we will dedicate our efforts to building and procuring the infrastructure to support, test, and refine it. Now is the best and most impactful time to hear from you.
- We welcome all feedback that can help us provide a better experience responding to the 2030 Census. We're especially interested in learning what we can improve for 2030—and ways we can boost participation in communities of color, rural communities, and tribal lands.
- The deadline for submitting input is November 15. You can find more information on the Federal Register Notice, including information on how to respond on <Census.gov/2030Census>. We'll also be holding workshops—both in person and virtual—where you can provide feedback. You can find more information on those at <Census.gov/partners>.

OPTIONAL: Review and revision of OMB's federal race and ethnicity statistical standards

- I want to mention another engagement opportunity that's occurring right now, around the collection of race and ethnicity data by the U.S. government.
- As you may know, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) maintains governmentwide standards for federal race and ethnicity data. The Census Bureau, and every other federal agency, uses these standards that ensure our ability to compare information and data, and also to understand how well federal programs serve a diverse America.
- In June 2022, the Chief Statistician of the United States, Dr. Karin Orvis, identified updating the standards as a top priority and announced that her office would begin the process of revising the standards.
- The statistical standards are being reviewed and revised using tried and true processes, by an Interagency Technical Working Group with experts from across the federal government reviewing the standards, along with critical feedback and input from nongovernmental stakeholders and the public.
- Ultimately, this will help ensure the standards better reflect the diversity of the American people.
- The working group, through OMB, will solicit public input on its initial proposal for revisions to the statistical standards through a Federal Register Notice.
- The working group is holding virtual, bimonthly listening sessions to hear directly from members of the public. These sessions are for interested members of the public to present their experiences, thoughts, and opinions on the federal race and ethnicity data standards. These listening sessions began in September 2022.
- If you have questions about the revision process; want to be notified when the Federal Register Notice is published; or would like to schedule a listening session, I encourage you to e-mail OMB at <Statistical_Directives@omb.eop.gov>.
- The Chief Statistician will consider the working group's recommendations and public input and deliver her recommendations to OMB leadership. OMB has the goal of completing the revision no later than summer of 2024.

CONCLUSION

- Thank you again for having me, and for helping to get information on the 2022 Economic Census out to your members. Your participation and cooperation are really important in helping us to maintain the excellent data quality that we provide.
- We at the Census Bureau stand ready to help you access our wealth of data in any way we can.
- That concludes my remarks this afternoon. Thank you again for your engagement, and invaluable help getting information on the 2020 Census out in California. I look forward to our discussion today.