Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 9, 2019

The Honorable Steven Dillingham
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Dr. Dillingham:

We are writing to respectfully urge you to include Khmer, Hmong, and Lao among the languages supported by the Internet Self-Response (ISR) and Census Questionnaire Assistance (CQA) options for the 2020 Census. Among the largest refugee populations to resettle in America in the past 50 years, these communities face unique barriers to being counted, such as poverty and limited English proficiency. A significant number of Cambodians, Hmong, and Laotian Americans and immigrants live in the United States. Offering these additional language support tools is a necessary step to ensure an accurate count of some of these hard to reach populations, which will bear upon the availability of vital public resources for local communities in the coming years.

According to the 2017 American Community Survey (Table S0201), Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian communities number nearly 780,000 in the United States. By comparison, the average Congressional District has a population of 710,000. The same ACS dataset indicates that 39.5 percent of Cambodian households, 32.9 percent of Hmong households, and 37.6 percent of Laotian households speak English less than "very well." In addition, more than 14 percent of these communities live in poverty. It is crucial that all reasonable measures be taken to reduce language barriers that might otherwise prevent an accurate count from being performed.

As you know, ISR provides respondents the opportunity to answer the Census questionnaire through the internet, and the CQA includes an option for information to be collected over the telephone. It is our understanding that the 2020 Census will offer ISR and CQA in twelve non-English languages: Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Japanese. While this is a commendable expansion from the 2010 Census, during which just five non-English languages were supported, we strongly believe that Khmer, Hmong, and Lao must be included as well.
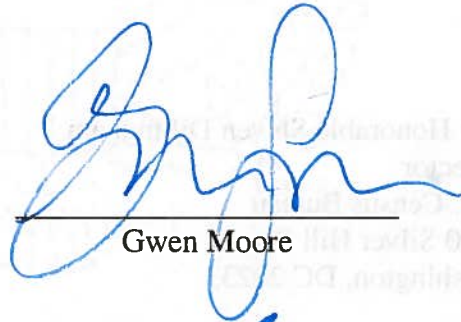
These additions may require immediate planning revisions, but the significance of this matter merits such changes without unnecessary delay. Indeed, it is our belief that these populations should receive the breadth of support tools that will be available to speakers of any other language in the United States.

We would be pleased to work with you on this urgent matter and respectfully request a formal reply at your earliest convenience.
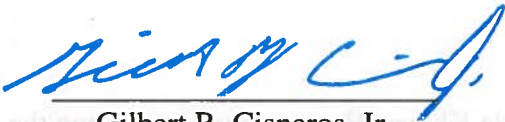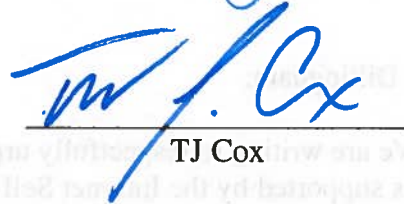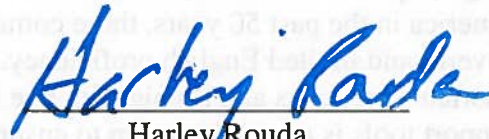
Sincerely,

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Lori Trahan

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Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.

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Ayanna Pressley

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Jimmy Gomez
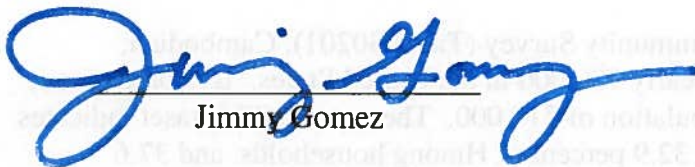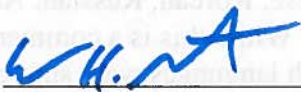
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Bonnie Watson Coleman

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Eleanor Holmes Norton

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Alan Lowenthal

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Gwen Moore

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TJ Cox

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Harley Rouda

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Ro Khanna

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Yvette D. Clarke

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Jamie Raskin
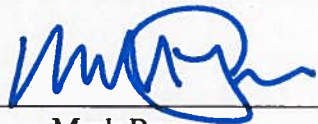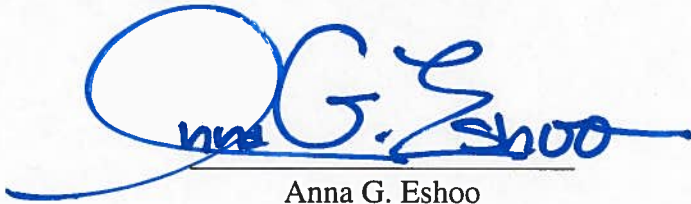
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Ilhan Omar

Mark Pocan
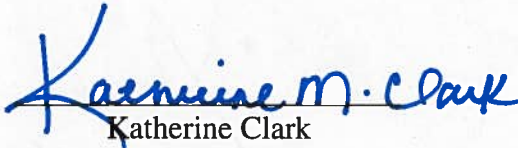
Betty McCollum
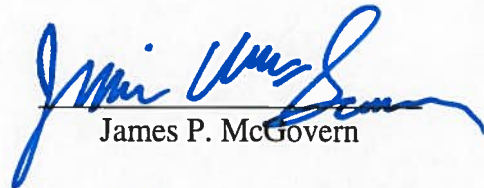
Anna G. Eshoo

Suzan DelBene

Katherine Clark
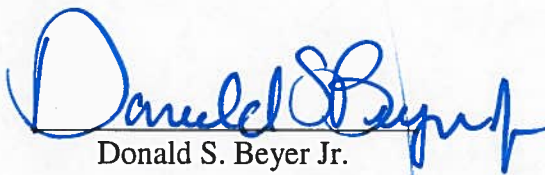
Scott H. Peters
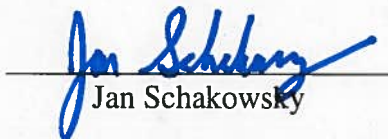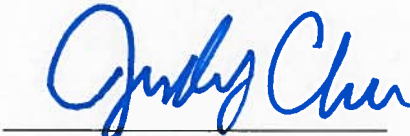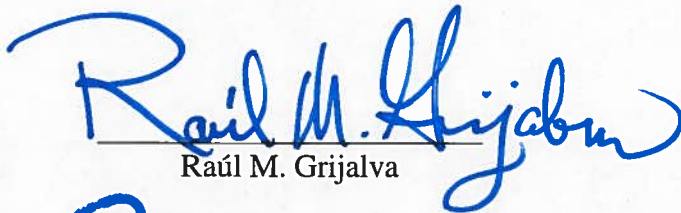
Earl Blumenauer

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

Donald S. Beyer Jr.

James P. McGovern

Jan Schakowsky

Judy Chu

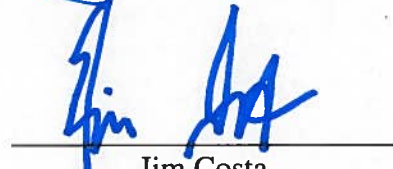Raúl M. Grijalva

Dean Phillips

Juan Vargas

Barbara Lee

Dina Titus

Jesús G. "Chuy" García

Zoe Lofgren

Grace Meng

Raja Krishnamoorthi

Jim Costa

Ron Kind