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Opening Statement of Chairman Jamie Raskin (MD-08)

Hearing of the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties on “Beyond the Citizenship Question: Repairing the Damage and Preparing to Count ‘We the People’ in 2020”

July 24, 2019

Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming today, and welcome to our Subcommittee hearing on the status of the 2020 Census. Before I make my remarks, I want to thank our witnesses for their ongoing cooperation with our Subcommittee. Mr. Goldenkoff, Mr. Marinos, you and your staff have been excellent partners in this oversight process.

Dr. Dillingham, I also want to thank you for your work preparing for the 2020 Census. I learned from my district staff that, earlier this month, you toured Silver Spring and Langley Park, both of which are very diverse, high-density areas with a high concentration of immigrants where a variety of languages are spoken. My District Director Kathleen Connor also met with your staff this month and was greatly encouraged by the Bureau’s preparation. So, I want to thank you and your staff for your hard work on the Census.

That work, of course, is ongoing, and we have a lot to accomplish before 2020. We have spent much of the last year embroiled in a battle over the Administration’s citizenship question. **Now that it has been forced to stand down by Congress and the Supreme Court, the Bureau must devote all available resources to repairing the continuing damage of this blunder, getting back on track, and conducting a complete and accurate count in 2020.**

Although the move to impose the citizenship question has been rejected by the courts as arbitrary and capricious, I fear that it may still be endangering the 2020 count. **The Bureau must take aggressive steps to repair the damage caused by the Administration’s ill-considered campaign.**

Every ten years, the Bureau struggles to count everyone. Some communities, including immigrant communities and people of color, are chronically undercounted. These communities then do not receive their fair share of government resources in everything from representation in

The Bureau has been chronically underfunded by Republicans for years. Now that it has been granted a healthy budget, it is refusing to spend it. Outreach for the Census should be fully funded now.

Finally, **the Bureau should improve its processes for tracking and implementing security recommendations to safeguard data and avoid missing key deadlines.** I am alarmed to hear that the Commerce Inspector General recently found that the Bureau's IT systems "contained fundamental security deficiencies that violated federal standards," indicating that the Bureau is behind schedule in developing its systems for 2020. This is a common theme. GAO has noted that the Bureau is behind schedule on resolving 104 high-risk or very high-risk security vulnerabilities, and that it has no schedule or process for implementing security recommendations from the Department of Homeland Security. That is simply unacceptable. The Bureau is home to one of the largest databases of identifiable personal information on the American public. The security of the data is paramount not only to a well-run Census, but to the public's confidence in the system.

I trust that GAO has recommendations for the Bureau to get back on track, and I look forward to hearing its plans for that today.