Be Counted, Have a Voice … Support the MENA Checkbox!

Today, we need your help to address our community's concerns including access to health and social services, and expanding civil rights protections. We are asking you to support the creation of the MENA (Middle East/North Africa) checkbox as an ethnicity category on the U.S. Census and other federal forms.

In 2011, the MENA Advocacy Network was established to represent the interest of all communities from the MENA region in the U.S. Census. Since then, the Census Bureau has moved forward with testing a MENA category in time for the 2020 Census. Now, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is making its final decisions about the MENA category but needs feedback from the public. A Federal Register Notice was published in early March and requires comments before April 30th. There are five basic questions in the Notice, and we have provided draft answers to each question in the letter below. **Please do not delay, express your support for the MENA ethnic category under the provisions listed below.**

This MENA checkbox will serve us by providing visibility to our community through accurate and scientifically collected data. Because your security is very important to us, the MENA Advocacy Network, of which we are a member, met with representatives from the OMB and the Census Bureau in early April to ensure that measures will be enforced to protect your confidentiality and the information you provide on the form. Laws that are set by Congress and the Constitution, which cannot be repealed by any executive order, consider any violation of confidentiality as a federal crime with serious penalties, including a federal prison sentence of up to five years and a fine of up to $250,000.

The OMB is revising definitions on racial and ethnic statistics that were set in 1997, and we don't know if we will have another chance to expand the existing data categories. Please do not delay, send a version of the draft letter below to the OMB this week! Note: do not mail your letter; instead submit it online at: Race-Ethnicity@omb.eop.gov