



Testimony in Support of HJ 6

March 2, 2020

Maryland House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee House Joint Resolution 6 - Participation by Maryland Residents in the 2020 Census

**George Escobar
CASA, Chief of Programs and Services**

Honorable Members of the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee:

My name is George Escobar, I am Chief of Programs and Services at CASA, the mid-Atlantic region's largest immigrant serving organization with over 100,000 members. On behalf of my organization and our members, I urge you to vote in favor of enactment of House Joint Resolution 6, which would ensure a fair and accurate count of all Maryland residents in the 2020 US Census.

Ensuring an accurate count in this year's census is of vital importance to CASA and its members. Every 10 years, the Census provides an extraordinary opportunity for our government to provide crucial information on the composition of our communities in an unbiased, evidence based manner. The results of which are utilized in countless ways for the betterment of our own health, commerce, transportation, democratic representation, among many other benefits. It simply allows our government to be more effective in its work and mission to improve our lives. For the individual, participation in the census provides an opportunity to be a part of something enormous in scope, but also an opportunity to be recognized by our government, to be included, no matter your race, gender, identity or piece of paper you hold that designates your status. All of us are equally as important in this project, we all matter, we all COUNT. That fact, for many members of our community who live in the shadows, whether because of their immigration, housing or personal status, is a revolutionary concept and yet so fundamental to our democracy.

That is why it is incumbent upon all of us to do all that we can to ensure an accurate count of our communities in the upcoming census. We are living in an extraordinary time when our own federal government will even undermine its own efforts in its attempts to attack, scapegoat and otherize our immigrant communities. Such is the case with the 2020 Census, when the government first attempted to add a citizenship question, then under-resourced its funding for the census and now threatens to mandate that only a citizen count can be used in redistricting efforts following the census.

CASA has invested significantly in doing all it can to ensure an accurate count among the population most vilified by this administration, having launched an ultimately successful lawsuit to eliminate the citizenship question from the census, and then instituting a massive census education, engagement and assistance campaign. In addition, I am personally honored to serve alongside this bill's author on the Maryland Census Complete Count Committee working very closely with our state's department of planning staff as they work each and every day to ensure an accurate count. However, despite all these efforts we know the Trump administration continues to do all it can to undermine the purpose of the census and use it as a weapon to suppress the political power of immigrant communities as well as limit the resources they are entitled to receive under an accurate count. By targeting immigrant communities in such a way, the state of Maryland will likewise be harmed and denied both the resources and electoral influence it would merit from an accurate census count. Let us be vocal and full throated in our attempts to ensure an accurate count and mobilize all the resources necessary to combat Trump's attempt to weaponize the census and thereby injure our state. Please vote YES on Join resolution 6.

Thank you for your time



George Escobar

Chief of Programs and Services