



RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 20-15

PATRON: Robert W. Lazaro, Jr.
Executive Director

DATE: December 5, 2019

2020 Census Differential Privacy

WHEREAS, Northern Virginia Regional Commission's Demographer is leading a regionwide effort on 2020 Census Concerns of the Northern Virginia Demographers representing Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William counties, the City of Alexandria, the City of Fairfax; and

WHEREAS, the Census Bureau will deploy a new statistical disclosure avoidance system for the 2020 Census known as "differential privacy". This new approach is meant to precisely control the amount of randomness or data noise that will be added to the 2020 Census data to protect privacy. The Census Bureau's mission is to serve as the nation's leading provider of quality data about its people and economy; and

WHEREAS, given the nature of tradeoff between data privacy and data accuracy, balancing these requires deliberate decisions supported by the data users; and

WHEREAS, the region's Demographers have significant concerns about the availability and accuracy of the 2020 Census data. Details of the concerns are found in the document entitled "Summary Sheet: Differential Privacy and the 2020 Census"; and

WHEREAS, on October 29, 2019, the Census Bureau released data tables demonstrating the proposed disclosure avoidance procedure. Upon initial evaluation, the demonstration products show much needed data would no longer be available at small geographies within counties. Initial evaluation also shows significant differences in the 2010 population, race, and age demographics of jurisdictions and small areas within jurisdictions when compared to the original 2010 Census published data. The Census Bureau is requesting feedback and suggested refinements to the proposed method, and will give greater consideration to feedback that is received sooner rather than later; and

WHEREAS, less accurate and less available data for counties and areas within counties will have long lasting, negative impacts on the usability of census data for local government planning and program efforts;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Northern Virginia Regional Commission authorizes the Chair of the commission or the NVRC Executive Director to communicate the region's concerns to the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia and U.S. legislators representing the Commonwealth of Virginia; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Chair of the commission or the NVRC Executive Director recommend to the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, state legislators and U.S. legislators representing the Commonwealth of Virginia, state legislators, that an official request be made in December to the U.S. Census Bureau to not adopt the proposed differential privacy methodology released on October 29th. Request that the U.S. Census Bureau refine the methodology to provide a better balance of privacy and accuracy without sacrificing the availability and accuracy of data at the census block and block group level that local governments need. It is recommended that the U.S. Census Bureau provide local and regional governments the same sets of data that were available in 2010 Census, at the same geographic level, and indicate a measure of noise infused.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission on December 5, 2019.



ROBERT W. LAZARO, JR., CERTIFYING OFFICER

