

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

In light of the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) newly revised "Statistical Policy Directive No. 15: Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity," we ask that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) properly categorize "Middle Eastern or North African" (MENA) as a "racial and ethnic minority group," in accordance with our "Health Equity and Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Community Inclusion Act" (S. 2899, H.R. 2730).

One of the central revisions of the new OMB data standards includes adding MENA as a new minimum category, which will allow millions of people to categorize themselves in ways that better reflect their identities. Additionally, the requirement for agencies to collect more granular data on racial and ethnic subgroups will allow for further disaggregation of data to provide more accurate health situation analysis, better understanding of each population's unique needs, improved equity monitoring, and more efficient resource targeting.

As HHS revises its Agency Action Plan to comply with OMB's updated standards, we urge you to add MENA to the list of "racial and ethnic minority groups" in order to address existing barriers to access. Organizations that represent MENA communities have often been ineligible for federal programming targeted towards historically marginalized groups, largely due to the lack of data. For example, the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) Grant Program, which serves to address health disparities along racial or ethnic lines, relies on HHS' racial and ethnic health data to award grants – data that has omitted full and proper representation for MENA communities that have long been miscategorized as "white."

We are confident that the recent OMB directive will provide a greater body of data to identify unique health trends or potential disparities in the MENA community and other minority communities. Therefore, we urge HHS to ensure that targeted federal programs critical to improving health outcomes and general quality of life are fully available to MENA populations.

We appreciate your commitment to this issue, and we look forward to working with you to ensure these standards continue to evolve to reflect the needs of all Americans.

Sincerely,



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Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



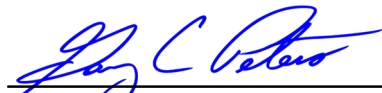
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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



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Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



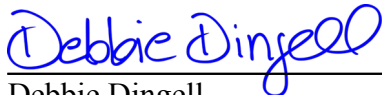
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Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



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Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



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Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress