

Opening Statement by Senator Scott P. Brown

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Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security

U.S. Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee

"Census: Learning Lessons from 2010, Planning for 2020"

Thank you, Chairman Carper, for holding this hearing on a topic as important as the Census.

As required by the Constitution, our country has conducted a Census every ten years since 1790. The Census is a vital undertaking as the results are utilized for apportioning seats to the House of Representatives, redistricting and determining the annual distribution of more than \$400 billion dollars in federal and state funds.

While we must strive to ensure every person is counted, we simply cannot afford the out of control cost of conducting the Census as it has been done for the past forty years. The cost of counting each housing unit has escalated from an average of around \$16 in 1970 to around \$98 in 2010. As I have learned in my brief tenure here, we simply cannot continue to do things the way we always have and expect a different result.

For the most part the basic model of Census taking has not changed since the 1970 Census, including relying on the mailout and mailback of Census questionnaires. Yet, as everyone knows, this country has experienced an information technology revolution during that time with an array of internet based technologies like e-mail that are threatening age old communication methods like mail. Unfortunately, even though

we are a world leader in inventing and commercializing technological innovation we are lagging behind other countries like Canada in integrating the internet into the Census. I am convinced that we can break this vicious cycle of escalating costs by making the 2020 Census more efficient and cost-effective than its predecessors.

While I expect the Census Bureau to “say” the right things about reforming the Census process for 2020, I have been here long enough to know that the taxpayers and Congress have a right to remain skeptical until the needed changes and results are produced. I intend to do my part in providing the requisite oversight that is needed to ensure that the Census Bureau stays on the road to reform.

The Census, like other important government activities, should not be immune from scrutiny as we cannot afford to continue to spend more and more taxpayer dollars to achieve our objectives. Just like every other government undertaking we must do things better, smarter and more efficiently.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here today and I look forward to a productive discussion on not whether the Census process should change in 2020, but how. I also look forward to a discussion of the lessons learned from the 2010 Census and how these may be instructive for 2020.