The National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) applauds the U.S. Supreme Court decision on June 27 against the Trump administration including a much debated citizenship question in the 2020 census. Chief Justice John Roberts was correct to write that the U.S. Commerce Department provided a “contrived” reason for seeking the citizenship information in the constitutionally mandated census. The NAME sided with many other social justice and equity organizations, insisting that the citizenship question be excluded because of the severe population undercount that will result.

Roberts said the Commerce Department must provide a better explanation for including the citizenship question. The Trump administration contended that the Justice Department sought the citizenship information to enforce the Voting Rights Act. Government officials are working against a July 1 deadline to finalize census materials. In response to the high court ruling, President Donald Trump is seeking to delay the census to give officials time to come up with a better explanation.

Harvard University’s Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy determined in a recent study that adding a citizenship question would hit the nation’s Latinx community hardest. “Applying the estimated national-level treatment effect to the U.S. population, as reported by the 2010 U.S. Census (308,745,538), we estimate that asking about citizenship will reduce the number of Hispanics reported in the 2020 Census by 6,072,068 or 12.03 percent of the 2010 Hispanic population (50,477,594),” the study noted. The 2018 U.S. population was estimated to be 327.2 million people, of which about 18.1 percent were Latinos, about 13 percent were African Americans, 5.6 percent were Asian Americans and 2 percent were Native Americans.

NAME can count, too, and it is easy to see from the numbers that people of color are rapidly approaching 40 percent of the U.S. population. That would give them unprecedented ballot box clout if they trusted the government and were encouraged to be politically active on a level political playing field. But the bellicose, anti-immigrant Trump administration rhetoric and policies quite frankly have many people fearful that self-disclosure on the census documents will target them for harassment and deportation. NAME knows that fear should never be a motivator, where the census, good government and the good of the nation are concerned.

Keep in mind that the numbers from the census help determine each state’s House seats, Electoral College votes and how federal funds are distributed back to states, and yes, that includes dollars from the U.S. Department of Education. An undercount spurred by a citizenship question could cause majority-minority states such as California, New Mexico and Texas to be big losers in congressional representation, Electoral College votes and in federal funds. Cities with majority-minority populations would be big losers as well.

What’s also unsettling is that before his death last year, GOP strategist Thomas Hofeller in emails with Mark Neuman, a lead census adviser to Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, explained how adding the citizenship question would benefit the Republican Party because of the undercount in people of color, whose votes tend to favor Democratic candidates.

NAME supports the Supreme Court excluding the citizenship question to ensure that census gives an accurate count — documented and undocumented — of the people in the United States. Politics should not be the hidden hand, hurting one group in this country while favoring others.