

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 18, 2021

Mr. Rob Fairweather
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Acting Director Fairweather,

We write to you regarding the notice of proposed changes to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) metropolitan and micropolitan statistical area standards. Specifically, the prospect of doubling the minimum urban area population requirement for a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) from 50,000 to 100,000 would hurt several Tennessee communities.

On January 19th, 2021, OMB published a notice and request for comment on a proposal to update the MSA designations.¹ We have serious concerns with the proposed changes, which would have a detrimental impact on economic development in these areas.

Currently, there are 392 MSAs² across the country, ranging from large metros such as Nashville, Tennessee, to smaller, regional MSAs such as Cleveland, Jackson, and Morristown, Tennessee. If enacted, 144 MSAs, including three in Tennessee, would be downgraded. Notably, several programs tie funds to census bureau statistics, and the changes contemplated by OMB would impact federal and state funding.³ These communities, which have been ravaged by the pandemic, would face increased competition among rural communities for scarce funds. Many of these areas are burgeoning manufacturing, technology, and workforce hubs, but companies may choose to invest in other MSAs if these communities were downgraded.

As we recover from the pandemic, we ask you to halt any upcoming rulemaking until the end of the pandemic and work with Congress and stakeholders to implement updated statistics as appropriate.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to a written response no later than April 2nd, 2021.

¹ "Recommendations From the Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Area Standards Review Committee to the Office of Management and Budget Concerning Changes to the 2010 Standards for Delineating Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas," Federal Register, January 19, 2021, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/19/2021-00988/recommendations-from-the-metropolitan-and-micropolitan-statistical-area-standards-review-committee>.

² "Metropolitan and Micropolitan," accessed March 8, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/metro-micro.html>.

³ "Bye, Bismarck: 144 Cities Could Lose Status as Metro Areas," accessed March 8, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/wisconsin-bismarck-census-2020-north-dakota-sheboygan-ad77e15f0f8cd13b8e398d2ca8339ca7>.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



Bill Hagerty
United States Senator



Chuck Fleischmann
United States Representative



Diana Harshbarger
United States Representative



David Kustoff
United States Representative