March 17, 2008
The Honorable Carlos M. Gutierrez
Secretary of Commerce
Washington, DC 20230

Mr. Secretary,

As a member of your panel I have had a thorough review on March 14, 2008 of the information presented by the Barron Task Force and the Harris Corporation as well as exemplary background material provided by your staff, detailing previous testimony and review of the risk surrounding the 2010 Decennial Census. Various discussions around the table also provided valuable input to my thinking. This meeting was well run and productive.

As a result of these briefings and subsequent analysis, I have summarized my recommendations as follows:

Implement the recommendations of the Barron Report. Alternative 2 offers the lowest risk scenario possible for this component of the 2010 Census. At this point the risks are unacceptable due to the lack of a fallback plan. While alternative 2 is thoroughly described in the Barron Report, it is highly probable that additional risk elements will be identified as the baseline programs for the remaining components of the FDCA program are defined. Alternative 2 offers the least risk among options available for a situation already at substantial risk.

This is a difficult recommendation to make, given the amount of work and funds previously expended in this endeavor. This recommendation is even more difficult, given my background and experience in large scale systems and technology projects. I am shocked and disappointed by the apparent facts that indicate all parties involved have allowed an innovative and useful technology program to come to this point. It is with these concerns that I offer the rest of my recommendations and observations to enhance the outcome of this project.

Time is our single most important enemy. Every step, every decision and every action going forward must result in steady and focused progress to lead to a successful outcome.

I am concerned that the selection of alternative 2 will result in the current program leadership believing that the major risks have been removed and will lower the current sense of urgency. This can result in the lack of a focused program management and governance systems necessary to complete the FDCA component as well as the successful integration and management of the other major programs.

The past performance of all parties involved indicates a severe lack of a professional and experienced program management and governance environment necessary to drive these programs to a successful completion. The substantial increase in cost coupled with the current high risk environment demands a dramatic change in the way the bureau is

currently managing these projects. I firmly believe that an independent inspection of the entire program will reveal serious problems in synchronization, integration and end-to-end testing and operations. Towards this end, I recommend the following detailed steps to be considered.

1. Form a dedicated centralized program management office staffed with the best technical leads in the department. This PMO must have total oversight of the program, with key leaders from each organizational unit involved, including procurement and the CIO. This will reduce vertically focused organizational resistance, speed up decision making and help finalize and stabilize all future requirements.

2. An additional project team should be immediately formed to validate and agree on all requirements which should be "frozen" to allow systems and processes to be scoped, designed, implemented and tested under a disciplined change management process.

3. A satellite PMO should be imbedded in the Harris organization and the other vendors if program review warrants it.

4. An overall integrated view of all components must be created and monitored with each component project having its own base line plan.

5. This program must be managed on an overall milestone based project plan at a high level on a weekly basis. Problem lists, follow up and proactive management of issues must be pursued relentlessly. All necessary decisions must be forced by management on a weekly basis.

6. This PMO must be accountable to both the head of the Census Bureau and to the Secretary. It must be lead by an experienced Census Bureau executive who understands all aspects of the program and its technology. To move the program forward, this leader should be a person with a sense of urgency, ability to produce consensus rapidly, make the best decisions possible in the lack of consensus and have the experience and courage to forge ahead without having 100% of the facts necessary to make quick decisions. Speed is imperative.

7. This PMO should be supplemented with seasoned, experienced individuals from outside the agency who have large scale information technology and systems experience. They must be willing to work in a low profile manner to ensure the success of the PMO and its leaders. These outside experts should have backgrounds in large scale data base management, data center operations, software development, systems integration, vendor management, strategic planning and governance. They should be deployed across the organization and work expeditiously and independently across the bureau. By

blending their experience with the bureau heads and leading from behind, they will ensure success for the bureau heads and their programs.

I believe these recommendations should be implemented because I am convinced that there is an insufficient depth of experience and leadership in large scale systems, technology and software project management inside the bureau to implement the various component projects given the time remaining and the level of risk determined to date.

Furthermore I would like to suggest that given the amount of work and money that has been expended to date on the current handheld technology by Harris, that as we adopt alternative 2 and turn many parts of this program off, we give serious thought to maintaining some amount of work and research going forward on the handheld device in order to make it into the product that was envisioned at the beginning.

Hopefully with a small amount of funds, this work could continue on a small scale and lead to the completion of a device that would be of great value in the coming years. It would be unfortunate not to use the experience and work to date.

While I am aware that technology will change over the next few years, the underlying physics of this handheld device will not. The processes, ergonomics, ease of use issues and other important needs could be better understood and solved in the future years. This could put the bureau substantially ahead of their requirements.

I thank you for the opportunity to present these thoughts and I am available to discuss and answer any questions you may have.

Ron J. Ponder