

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2021

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

Dear Acting Director Fairweather:

We write to express our concerns about the recommendations from the Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Area Standards Review Committee (Committee) published in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on January 19, 2021.¹ We strongly oppose the recommended reclassification of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This change will result in 8 cities in West Virginia losing their MSA designation along with 136 areas in 44 states and Puerto Rico.

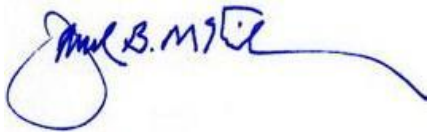
As you are aware, when the original MSA designation was created, a threshold of 50,000 was set as the minimum population level necessary for an urban area to be considered an MSA. Though OMB periodically reviews its criteria used to delineate Census Bureau data and determine the standards of categorizing MSAs. The recent recommendation by the Committee to increase the minimum population to 100,000 would be detrimental to Huntington, Charleston, Martinsburg, Beckley, Parkersburg, Morgantown, Weirton, and Wheeling's economy.

While we realize that the Committee does not take federal policy into consideration when offering its recommendations. We would highlight that many federal programs incorporate the MSA designation into the decision-making structure of how federal dollars are spent. From the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), to the Office of Personnel Management's Locality Pay Program for General Schedule Employees, and the Department of Health and Human Service's Medicare payment system for hospital inpatients, the definition of what constitutes an MSA is critically important to communities across the country. Losing an MSA designation would mean communities could lose tens or hundreds of millions of dollars in federal grant money.

¹Recommendations 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. 86 FR 5263. <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2021-00988>

While we appreciate the Committee's work, we urge the Office of Management and Budget to reject the proposal. Adhering to this recommendation has the potential to harm communities across the nation, which we hope you take into account while considering these proposed recommendations.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of David B. McKinley in blue ink, featuring a large loop at the start and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Shelley Moore Capito in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

Shelley Moore Capito
U.S. Senator

Handwritten signature of Joe Manchin III in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

Joe Manchin III
U.S. Senator

Handwritten signature of Alex Mooney in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

Alex Mooney
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Carol D. Miller in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

Carol Miller
Member of Congress