

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 2024**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 26

SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF A NEW POPULATION CATEGORY FOR SAN DIEGANS OF MIDDLE EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN DESCENT (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

The Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) communities in San Diego County face a significant challenge due to the absence of a specific ethnicity category in data collection for this population. Despite being home to one of the largest refugee settlement communities in California, San Diego County residents of MENA descent often self-identify as Caucasian/White on U.S. Census and other government forms because there is no dedicated ethnicity category for them.

On March 28, 2024, the White House Office of Management and Budget announced that new standards will be used to collect federal data on race and ethnicity, including the addition of a Middle Eastern or North African category for the 2030 Census. April is also National Arab-American Heritage Month in the United States, highlighting the importance of recognizing and celebrating the rich cultural heritage of MENA communities. Additionally, legislation (Assembly Bill 2763) is pending in the California State Legislature that would add a MENA category for demographic forms used in California.

In light of the federal changes to the collection of MENA information and the potential changes to state law regarding the collection of data for MENA groups, the County should provide for the self-identification for the MENA population living in the San Diego region. By providing a more inclusive and accurate representation of the MENA community, we can ensure that their voices are clearly heard, their needs are addressed, and their contributions are recognized.

Therefore, I recommend that the Board support my recommendation to direct County staff to offer our residents of Middle Eastern and North African descent the option of self-identifying as MENA when filling out County documents and adopt a position of support for Assembly Bill 2763, the Middle Eastern and North African Inclusion Act.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON

1. Direct the Interim Chief Administrative Officer to offer Middle Eastern and North African categories when obtaining ethnicity data during the administration of County programs and services.
2. Direct the Interim Chief Administrative Officer to express the County's support for Assembly Bill (AB) 2763, consistent with Board Policy M2.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Advocating for the inclusion of a Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) data collection category by County staff ensures equitable representation and recognition for individuals of Middle Eastern and North African descent, who currently face challenges in accurately identifying their cultural and ethnic backgrounds on federal, state and local documents. By requiring a MENA category, the County can further promote diversity, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity in our data collection processes, thus fostering a more equitable society.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposal to include a MENA category in federal, state and local data collection efforts strengthens our commitment to sustainability by ensuring that all members of our community are accurately represented and supported. By recognizing and addressing the unique needs of the MENA community, we contribute to the creation of inclusive and sustainable communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today’s item. There may be future fiscal impacts based on the recommendations from today’s action. Any such recommendation would return for consideration and approval by the Board.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ACTION:

Noting for the record that this item was heard on May 1, 2024; ON MOTION of Supervisor Anderson, seconded by Supervisor Vargas, the Board of Supervisors took action as recommended.

AYES: Vargas, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe, Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter