Remarks of John M. Abowd, Chief Scientist and Associate Director for Research and Methodology
Accepting the 2022 EPIC Foundation Champions of Freedom Award (September 21, 2022)

I want to begin by thanking my family, especially my wife Janet, but also my children Kate, Maryclaire and Danny, and their spouses Anton, Mostafa and Naina. Janet and some of the rest of my family are here. I'm going to ask them to stand up so you can thank them too. *[pause]*

Next, I want to emphasize that I am accepting this award on behalf of hundreds of dedicated civil servants, contractors, and external Census Bureau stakeholders. They moved the agency squarely into the 21st Century: First, by acknowledging the massive shift in the information landscape that has occurred since the methods that statistical offices use to protect confidentiality were first invented in the 1970s and implemented in the two decades that followed;

Second, by working diligently, indeed feverishly, over the last six years to implement confidentiality protections supported by the best available science—the framework known as differential privacy.

These people are the champions of freedom, and I would not be standing here without their unflinching and continuing dedication to the American public.

I can't list hundreds of names, but a few merit special mention:

Ron Jarmin, currently the Deputy Director and Chief Operation Officer, but twice the acting director during this period, has been a professional colleague for 25 years and has provided the senior leadership that motivated our commitment to implementing modern privacy protection. He chairs the two committees that give resources (the Operating Committee) and policy guidance (the Data Stewardship Executive Policy Committee) to these efforts.

Tori Velkoff, the Associate Director for Demographic Programs, leads the team that adapted population statistical reports to the new disclosure avoidance system.

Al Fontenot, the Associate Director for Decennial Census Programs, leads the entire 2020 Census effort and has been a thoughtful and consistent supporter of modernizing our disclosure avoidance systems while respecting commitments made to stakeholders.

Cynthia Hollingsworth, the program manager for 2020 Census data products and dissemination, manages the global schedule and leads the teams that implemented the new publication systems.

James Whitehorne, Chief of the Census Redistricting and Voting Rights Data Office, worked tirelessly to educate the stakeholders using the data we affectionately call “PL 94-171.”

My science team since 2016: Dan Kifer, Simson Garfinkel, Philip Leclerc, Ryan Cumings-Melon, Rolando Rodríguez, Nathan Goldschlag, Pavel Zhuralev, William Sexton, Robert Ashmead, Ashwin Machanavajjhalla, Gerome Miklau, Michael Hay, and Lars Vilhuber; *their managers over the years:* Rob Sienkiewicz, Gary Benedetto, Mike Walsh, and Teresa Sabol; *the communications team that supports them:* Michael Hawes and Michele Hedrick; *the demographic metrics team:* Jason Devine, Matt Spence, and Aleksandra Krause; *my assistant director*, John Eltinge, *and my executive assistant*, Sara Sullivan, who had my back over many months of attention to the disclosure avoidance modernization.

I’d also like to acknowledge the hundreds of Census Bureau stakeholders—fans and critics of DP alike—whose voices, suggestions, and critiques improved our product immensely.

Finally, my deepest thanks to the EPIC Foundation for their constant efforts to strengthen the effective right to privacy that is a hallmark of our democratic republic.