

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20515

March 13, 2020

Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dr. Steven Dillingham
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, D.C. 20233

Dear Secretary Ross and Director Dillingham:

We write to express our concerns regarding the impact of the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) on participation and operations for the 2020 Census, particularly as it presents an increased risk of an undercount. We understand that the Census Bureau is actively monitoring the situation in order to adapt operations to ensure a complete and accurate count. As you develop contingency plans, we urge you to consider how historically marginalized communities, people experiencing homelessness, and communities with low broadband access will be reached.

As Members of Congress, we have been working with local, state, and non-government stakeholders to ensure my constituents have adequate opportunities to respond to the 2020 Census. We have secured Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Centers (MQACs) in communities, organized Census job fairs, and coordinated outreach events. By working with trusted community partners, constituents have access to language and technical assistance when completing the Census. Unfortunately, many of these activities involve members of the community coming together.

Due to recent developments around COVID-19, there is increased concern and uncertainty about attending any community events. As a result, large and small events across the country have been canceled. It may seem simple to encourage everyone to respond online. However, this method is not an option for thousands of people.

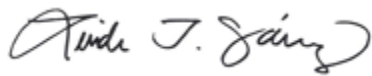
While we appreciate your work to build a robust online infrastructure, simply pointing people to the online form is insufficient. We urge you to consider alternative options including but not limited to: extending the enumeration period for non-response follow up and for people experiencing homelessness. We believe these steps are necessary to protect public health while ensuring a complete and accurate count.

In order to provide adequate resources to constituents, please provide written responses to the following questions by March 27, 2020:

1. What steps is the Bureau taking to develop contingency plans for the 2020 Census during the current pandemic?
 - a. How will contingency plans address the needs of people with little to no access to broadband?
 - b. How will people living in non-traditional housing be reached?
 - c. How will people experiencing homelessness be reached?
 - d. How will individuals who have been quarantined as a result of COVID-19 be reached?
 - e. How will individuals residing in skilled nursing facilities and nursing facilities be reached? Individuals residing in Department of Veterans Affairs Community Living Centers (VA Nursing Homes)?
2. How will the Census Bureau ensure the health and safety of enumerators?
3. What guidance will you provide to operators of Mobile Questionnaire Centers?
4. What safety precautions is the Census Bureau taking to ensure the health and safety of those staffing and visiting MQCs? How quickly will community partners be expected to adapt to changes set in place by the Bureau as a result of the pandemic?
5. When will the Bureau issue guidance to local, state, and non-government partners that are hosting community events?

Thank you in advance for your responses to these critical questions. We appreciate your efforts to ensure a complete and accurate count.

Sincerely,



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Harley Rouda
Member of Congress



Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress



Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Silvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



TJ Cox
Member of Congress



Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



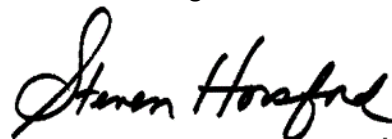
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



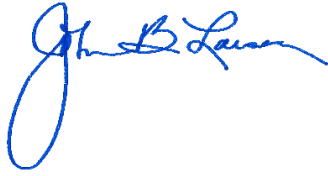
Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford
Member of Congress



John Larson
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Member of Congress



Susie Lee
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress



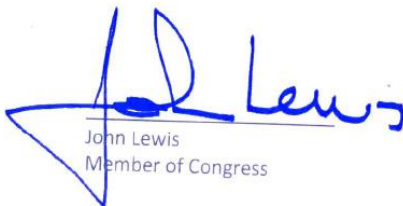
Deb Haaland
Member of Congress



Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



Member of Congress



John Lewis
Member of Congress



Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
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Jan Schakowsky
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Jimmy Gomez
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