

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051

MINORITY (202) 225-5074

<http://oversight.house.gov>

April 1, 2020

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

Dear Dr. Dillingham:

Today, we celebrate Census Day, the reference date for all the information collected in the 2020 Decennial Census. This year's Census comes at a perilous time for our nation, with a public health crisis upending daily life and creating unforeseen challenges to completing an accurate count of every person in the United States.

We are writing today to express our unwavering commitment to, and support for, a complete and accurate Census. The good news is that families across the country can fill out their Census forms right now—in the comfort of their own homes—by going online, picking up the phone, or filling out the forms they received in the mail. We encourage everyone in the United States to complete their Census forms today.

However, as a result of the coronavirus crisis, the Census Bureau has postponed crucial field operations by at least one month, delayed door-to-door counts of millions of individuals who do not self-respond, and deferred in-person counts of people experiencing homelessness and those living in group quarters, such as colleges or nursing homes.<sup>1</sup>

The Census Bureau has reported that about 36% of households have responded to the Census, but certain communities are responding at reduced rates.<sup>2</sup> For example, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials found that online response rates in many heavily Latino communities have been lower than in other communities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Census Bureau, *Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham on Operational Updates* (Mar. 18, 2020) (online at [www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/operational-update.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/operational-update.html)).

<sup>2</sup> Census Bureau, *Response Rates* (online at <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html>) (accessed Mar. 31, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> *Coronavirus is Newest Threat to Latinos' Census response, As Groups Pivot on Outreach*, NBC News (Mar 30, 2020) (online at [www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/coronavirus-newest-threat-latinos-census-response-groups-pivot-outreach-n1170011](http://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/coronavirus-newest-threat-latinos-census-response-groups-pivot-outreach-n1170011)).

On March 12, 2020, we wrote a letter with our colleagues, Rep. José Serrano and Rep. David Price, to Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross regarding the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the Census. We requested “a detailed account of the plans and actions being taken to prevent any disruption to 2020 Census operations and to ensure a fair and accurate count.” We noted that we were “particularly concerned about the impact on hard-to-count communities,” and we requested written answers to ten questions by March 19, 2020.<sup>4</sup>

To date, the Census Bureau has not provided written responses to any of the Committee’s questions despite repeated follow-up efforts from Committee staff.

On March 23, 2020, our staff called Census Bureau staff to request a video briefing for Committee Members to discuss the Census Bureau’s recently announced delays. Committee staff followed up repeatedly on this request, explaining that a briefing is urgent given the Bureau’s multiple announcements that they are postponing critical field operations. To date, the Bureau has not agreed to schedule this briefing for Committee Members.

We recognize that the Census Bureau faces significant challenges in completing the Census in the face of the coronavirus crisis. However, as your Committee of jurisdiction, we play a critical role in overseeing the Bureau’s efforts. In order to fulfill our Constitutional responsibilities, we must have greater compliance from the Census Bureau with our outstanding oversight inquiries, especially during this critical and difficult period.

For these reasons, we request that you provide complete written responses to the Committee’s March 12, 2020, letter by April 3, 2020, and we ask that you participate in a video briefing for Committee Members by April 6, 2020. Please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5051 to make these arrangements.

Sincerely,



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Chairwoman



Jamie Raskin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and  
Civil Liberties

cc: The Honorable Chip Roy, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

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<sup>4</sup> Letter from Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Committee on Oversight and Reform, Chairman Jamie Raskin, Committee on Oversight and Reform, Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Chairman José E. Serrano, Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, and Rep. David E. Price, to Secretary Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., Department of Commerce (Mar. 12, 2020) (online at <https://price.house.gov/sites/price.house.gov/files/Letter%20to%20Sec%20Ross%20re%20Census%20and%20Coronavirus.pdf>).