

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 6, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy:

As our country continues to navigate the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial that we prioritize the implementation of a complete and accurate Census. Census operations have been delayed and disrupted to protect the health and safety of census workers and communities. There was previously bipartisan agreement to delay the census count deadline, and we are deeply disappointed and concerned that the Census Bureau has announced that it plans to end field data collection by September 30.¹ Therefore, we request that the next COVID-19 relief package extend statutory reporting deadlines for apportionment and redistricting data and allocate \$400 million to address continued 2020 Census challenges and modify the deadline to transmit state population totals to April 30, 2021.

While the Census Bureau has made an incredible push to encourage self-response online, by phone, and by mail, there is still a large need for in-person census operations. American taxpayers have already spent almost \$16 billion on the 2020 Census, yet about 37 percent of households remain uncounted.² This uncounted population includes some of the hardest-to-reach populations such as rural communities, low income households, people of color, American Indians living on tribal lands, immigrants, and young children. In addition, the Bureau must still

¹ United States Census Bureau, *Statement from U.S. Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham: Delivering a Complete and Accurate 2020 Census Count* (Aug. 4, 2020), <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/delivering-complete-accurate-count.html>

² Ted Mellnick and Reuben Fischer-Baum, *What's New for the 2020 Census*, WASHINGTON POST (April 2, 2019) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/national/census-2020-technology/Mapping "Self-Response" for a Fair and Accurate Census \(July 31, 2020\) https://www.censushardtocomputemaps2020.us/?latlng=46.05608%2C-117.53174&z=8&promotedfeaturetype=states&baselayerstate=4&rtrYear=sR2020latest&infotab=info-rtrselfresponse&filterQuery=false](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/national/census-2020-technology/Mapping%20%22Self-Response%22%20for%20a%20Fair%20and%20Accurate%20Census%20(July%2031,%202020)%20https://www.censushardtocomputemaps2020.us/?latlng=46.05608%2C-117.53174&z=8&promotedfeaturetype=states&baselayerstate=4&rtrYear=sR2020latest&infotab=info-rtrselfresponse&filterQuery=false).

count people who do not live in traditional housing units, including people experiencing homelessness and people living in transitory locations, such as RV parks, and in group facilities, such as nursing homes and college dorms. The Census Bureau's associate director for field operations, Tim Olson, has stated that the Bureau has "passed the point where we could even meet the current legislative requirement of Dec. 31" for reporting apportionment counts.³

Rushing census operations without an extension means that some populations will remain uncounted or will not be counted accurately, impacting all of our districts and communities. An accurate census count is critical for both Republican and Democratic districts—and rural districts may suffer tremendously without. Further, a poorly executed census would hurt a diverse range of rural and urban communities, impact congressional representation, and cut federal funding for services like schools, infrastructure improvements, economic development, Medicaid, and countless other vital programs. In fact, an accurate census is more important now than ever, as our nation continues to feel the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Current pandemic relief funds have been allocated based upon 2010 census data, and a complete and accurate count in 2020 will ensure that pandemic recovery funding and other resources, such as medical equipment, are directed to where they are most needed in the coming years.

Any congressional response to help the Census Bureau complete the 2020 Census amidst continued COVID-19 surges and lagging household response rates should be guided by census experts and scientists. In a letter signed by four former U.S. Census Bureau Directors calling upon Congress to extend the deadline, the Directors stated that “failing to extend the deadlines to April 30, 2021 will result in seriously incomplete enumerations in many areas across the country.”⁴ Census Bureau staff previously stated that they need additional time to complete the census in all communities, and to process and tabulate the data in accordance with the Bureau's quality standards. The Census Bureau developed a thorough adjusted plan in light of COVID-related disruptions, in partnership with local officials and nearly 400,000 partner organizations. Extending the statutory deadline will allow the Census Bureau to continue household counting operations through October 31, complete special counting operations thoroughly, and review, process, and tabulate the data in accordance with the Bureau's own quality standards. Communities and census workers deserve the time needed to produce a complete count.

Sincerely,



PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress

³ Hansi Lo Wang, *Republicans Signal They're Willing to Cut Census Counting Short*, NPR (July 28, 2020) <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/28/895744449/republicans-signal-theyre-willing-to-cut-short-census-counting>.

⁴ Vincent Barabba, Kenneth Prewitt, Robert Groves, John Thompson, *On the Importance of Extending the 2020 Census Statutory Deadlines to Achieve a Fair and Accurate Enumeration of the United States*, (Aug. 5, 2020), <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/7013550-Aug-4-2020-Statement-By-Former-U-S-Census-Bureau.html>

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