

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 13, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Dr. Steven Dillingham
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Suitland, MD 20746

Dear Secretary Ross and Director Dillingham:

We write to express our concerns with the U.S. Census Bureau's (the Bureau) recent decision to end 2020 Census enumeration on September 30, 2020, four weeks ahead of the date it previously indicated would be necessary to ensure the accuracy of the Census count. With four in 10 households yet to be counted, we urge you to identify how the Bureau plans to ensure an accurate count and reach tens of millions of the hardest-to-count Americans in just seven weeks.

On April 13, 2020, the Department of Commerce (the Department) and the Bureau jointly announced adjustments to 2020 Census operations, citing the challenges to counting the nation's population amid the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ The operational changes included extending the enumeration window for field data collection and self-response from August 15 to October 31. At the same time, you asked Congress to approve a four-month extension of the statutory deadlines to deliver final counts, to "ensure the completeness and accuracy of the 2020 Census."² In a statement issued on August 3, you backtracked, announcing the enumeration window would end on September 30.³ This last-minute change means the Bureau will conclude operations a full month earlier than expected, even as Congress continues to consider fulfilling your deadline extension request.

As of August 11, the national self-response rate was 63.4 percent, several points behind the final 2010 self-response rate of 66.5 percent.⁴ Significant additional self-response is unlikely at this late stage, meaning there are still roughly 60 million unresponsive households. Under the Bureau's previous plan, Census workers were set to follow-up with non-responsive households August 11 through October 31. However, concluding operations a month earlier means the Bureau will now have to do in seven weeks what would have been extremely difficult to accomplish in eleven.

By compressing an already tight schedule to conduct in-person outreach amid an unprecedented pandemic, the Bureau is threatening the integrity of the 2020 Census and laying the groundwork for what could be a historic undercount of the population. The roughly 40 percent of households yet to

¹ "U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and U.S. Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham Statement on 2020 Census Operational Adjustments Due to COVID-19," U.S. Census Bureau, 13 April 2020, <https://2020census.gov/en/news-events/press-releases/statement-covid-19-2020>.

² *Ibid.*

³ "Statement from U.S. Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham: Delivering a Complete and Accurate 2020 Census Count," U.S. Census Bureau, 3 August 2020, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/delivering-complete-accurate-count.html>.

⁴ "Response Rates," U.S. Census Bureau, 5 August 2020, <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html>; "Mail Response/Return Rates Assessment," U.S. Census Bureau, 30 May 2012, https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2012/dec/2010_cpex_198.pdf.

be counted include a disproportionate share of people of color, immigrants, low-income people, and the homeless. Ensuring an accurate count of all people is critically important to the fair distribution of more than \$900 billion in federal funding and Congressional and state legislative representation. If the remaining Census operations do not achieve a complete count, historically marginalized and vulnerable populations most in need of federal investment and representation will get the short end of the stick for the next decade.

Our communities need a complete and accurate 2020 Census count. There are currently low response rate areas in every Congressional district across the country and we remain concerned about the potential long-term consequences of an inaccurate count for our diverse constituencies. For this reason, we request timely responses to the following:

1. Explain the rationale for the decision to shorten the data collection period and outline how and when the final decision was made.
2. Detail how the Bureau plans to conduct outreach to the remaining non-responsive households within the shortened timeframe, without sacrificing completeness or worker safety. Include information on whether the plan takes into consideration the unique needs of households that are historically hardest to count.
3. Outline whether an extension of the deadline would impact the Bureau's data collection operations, if Congress were to do so in the coming weeks.
4. Outline the Bureau's target national self-response rate and provide information on any plan in place to increase self-response rates within the shortened timeframe.
5. Explain whether the Bureau will be able to fully carry out non-response follow-ups before September 30, 2020 and, if so, how this will be accomplished. If not, provide details on the Bureau's plan to address any undercounting.
6. Provide information on any operational changes that will coincide with the shortened collection timeframe and whether the Department or the Bureau anticipate the changes will impact the number of attempts door knockers will make to gather in-person information.
7. Detail the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the recruitment, onboarding, and deployment of Census workers along with any efforts, guidance and policies the Bureau has put in place to protect workers' health and safety.
8. Explain whether the ongoing COVID-19 will impact non-response follow-ups, particularly in areas of the country with a rising number of confirmed cases. Provide information on the progress made so far on non-response follow-ups.
9. Provide clear details on how the Department and the Bureau plan to assess the accuracy of the final 2020 Census count.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter. We look forward to receiving your responses.

Sincerely,



Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



Cedric Richmond
Member of Congress

/s/

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

/s/

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/

Al Lawson
Member of Congress

/s/

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

/s/

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

/s/

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

/s/

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

/s/

André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

/s/

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

/s/

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/

Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress

/s/

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

/s/

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

/s/

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

/s/

Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

/s/

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

/s/

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

/s/

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

/s/

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

/s/

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/
Darren Soto
Member of Congress

/s/
David E. Price
Member of Congress

/s/
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

/s/
David Trone
Member of Congress

/s/
Dean Phillips
Member of Congress

/s/
Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

/s/
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

/s/
Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress

/s/
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

/s/
Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

/s/
Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

/s/
Dina Titus
Member of Congress

/s/
Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/
Donald Norcross
Member of Congress

/s/
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/
Donna E. Shalala
Member of Congress

/s/
Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

/s/
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

/s/
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

/s/
Ed Case
Member of Congress

/s/
Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress

/s/
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/
Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

/s/
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

/s/
Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

/s/
Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress

/s/
G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

/s/
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

/s/
Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/
Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

/s/
Grace Meng
Member of Congress

/s/
Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress

/s/
Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

/s/
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

/s/
Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress

/s/
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

/s/
J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress

/s/
Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

/s/
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

/s/
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

/s/
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

/s/
Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

/s/
Jim Costa
Member of Congress

/s/
Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

/s/
Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

/s/
Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

/s/
John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

/s/
John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

/s/
Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

/s/
Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

/s/
Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

/s/
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/
Judy Chu
Member of Congress

/s/
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

/s/
Karen Bass
Member of Congress

/s/
Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress

/s/
Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

/s/
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

/s/
Katie Porter
Member of Congress

/s/
Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress

/s/
Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress

/s/
Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress

/s/
Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

/s/
Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

/s/
Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

/s/
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

/s/
Mark Takano
Member of Congress

/s/
Matthew Cartwright
Member of Congress

/s/
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

/s/
Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

/s/
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

/s/
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/
Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress

/s/
Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

/s/
Peter Welch
Member of Congress

/s/
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

/s/
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

/s/
Raul Ruiz
Member of Congress

/s/
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

/s/
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

/s/
Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

/s/
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr
Member of Congress

/s/
Sean Casten
Member of Congress

/s/
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress

/s/
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/
Steven Horsford
Member of Congress

/s/
Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

/s/
Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

/s/
Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

/s/
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

/s/
Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress

/s/

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress

/s/

Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

/s/

Val B. Demings
Member of Congress

/s/

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

/s/

Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress