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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025

<http://appropriations.senate.gov>

July 2, 2020

The Honorable Stephen Dillingham
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Director Dillingham:

As the Chair and Vice Chair of the Senate Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, we have worked together to ensure that the Bureau of the Census (Census) has the resources needed to ensure a complete and accurate 2020 Decennial Census. This includes appropriating, for the past several fiscal years, the entire amount requested in the Independent Cost Estimate for the 2020 Decennial Census, as well as the 10 percent contingency reserve requested by Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross.

We are cognizant of the challenge of the decennial census in the best of conditions as the largest peacetime mobilization of the Federal government and understand how challenging the current circumstances are with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, we are confident that the Census can rise to the challenge and execute a successful 2020 Decennial Census. With the resources provided, we expect the Census to reach hard-to-count populations and to preserve integrity and fairness in the post-enumeration data processing.

Bipartisan congressional intent for the Census to accurately enumerate hard-to-reach populations was clearly articulated in Senate report 116-127 adopted as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (Public Law 116-93):

Undercounting.—The Committee recognizes the difficulty the Bureau has in counting people in historically hard-to-count areas and believes that local community efforts are essential to ensure an accurate count. The Committee encourages the Bureau to partner with communities on innovative approaches to ensure an accurate Census. The Committee also directs the Census Bureau to ensure that the current decennial questionnaire and the impact of new enumeration methods do not negatively affect demographic groups identified in its 2010 Census Coverage Measurement Survey as undercounted.

It is imperative for the Census to count every person in the United States, where they live, and this includes communities that for various reasons have historically had low participation in decennial censuses. Activities including the modified Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Centers program, targeted communication and partnership campaigns, ensuring efforts to address

undercounts in rural areas, and a robust non-response follow up effort will be critical to achieving this goal.

With the four-month delay in submission of the apportionment and redistricting counts due to the pandemic, post-enumeration data processing is going to be more important than ever before. We expect that data processing will be free from political interference and that the highest standards of integrity and fairness will be upheld. We will be closely watching to ensure this is the case. Further, we expect the Bureau to continue to update the Committee regularly on its progress and to be alerted immediately should you require additional resources for the 2020 Decennial Census.

Under Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution, since 1790, every ten years the United States has conducted a decennial census. The decennial census not only determines the representation in the House of Representatives, but Federal programs rely on Census data to distribute more than \$1.5 trillion in funding annually to communities around the country. We only get one chance every ten years to get it right. We look forward to continue working with you to ensure that all communities are enumerated and the 2020 Decennial Census is complete and accurate.

Sincerely,



Jerry Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science and Related Agencies



Jeanne Shaheen
Vice Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science and Related Agencies