

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3213

March 20, 2018

Dr. Ron Jarmin
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Suitland, MD 20746

Dear Dr. Jarmin:

I am writing to express my concern regarding the Census Bureau's preparations for the 2020 Census enumeration. The Constitutionally-mandated Decennial Census is one of the most consequential responsibilities of the federal government. Every decade, the Census enumeration is carefully considered by leaders in both the private sector and federal, state, and local government bodies. The Decennial Census is the backbone to providing fair and full representation in our government and further informs funding and resources provided to Congressional districts across the country. Ensuring a reliable and accurate count in the 2020 Census must be a top priority for Congress and this Administration, and I write to ensure that my constituents, and the entire country, are adequately served by a fair, full, and accurate Census in 2020.

A primary concern of mine is that the Census Bureau is adequately funded to properly and fully complete the 2020 Census. I have requested, and I urge you to ensure, that the Census Bureau receives at least \$4.239 billion in funding for Fiscal Year 2019. This amount is \$438 million above the Administration's FY2019 request for the Bureau, and reflects the level stated in the Department of Commerce's revised FY2019 cost estimate for the 2020 Census. To provide funding of a lesser amount is irresponsible and a dereliction of duty, and as the top official at the Bureau I urge you to ensure full and necessary funding for the 2020 Census.

Adequately funding the Census Bureau is of particular concern to me as New York City has historically been undercounted during Census enumeration. In the wake of the 2010 Census, then New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg wrote an appeal to the Census Bureau in which he expressed concerns that the City had been significantly undercounted. In that letter, Mayor Bloomberg acknowledged that accurately counting New York City's population is a difficult task, but that the 2010 Census was an incomplete product that understated the city's population by roughly two hundred thousand people. Such a large undercounting takes a particular toll on under and misrepresented immigrant and minority communities, of which my district is largely

made up. The undercounting of African-American and Latino communities leads to a gap in funding, apportioned by Census enumerations, desperately needed for the betterment of these communities.

The Administration's current strategy leaves the program both underfunded and underemployed. The Bureau's current plan to establish 13 field offices in New York City for the 2020 enumeration, only two of which are in New York's 13th Congressional District, is a serious reduction from the 20 Census field offices deployed during the 2010 count. This decision directly contrasts the city's population projections, which have and continue to show continual growth. There must be an adequate number of field offices to account for the City's large and growing population, and these offices must be well staffed, not only in numbers, but with individuals who are familiar with the City and have the language proficiency to communicate with a diverse community of residents. This includes waivers to hire non-citizen residents, which the Trump Administration has cancelled for the 2020 Census, and that have, in the past, proven essential in collecting Census responses from immigrant communities. Full funding for the Census Bureau in FY2019 will ensure that the 2020 Census can dedicate crucial resources to the large and diverse population in New York's 13th Congressional District and greater New York City.

I am further concerned about the request made by the Department of Justice to reinstate a question regarding citizenship in the 2020 Census. Changes to questions on the Census go through a rigorous review process by the Bureau, and the addition of such a citizenship question this late and without proper review could be incredibly damaging to the accuracy and reliability of the 2020 Census. Experts and community leaders have indicated that the addition of this question could drastically reduce the initial response rate, particularly among already undercounted minority and immigrant communities. The lower response rate would not only mean that these communities do not receive adequate funding and representation based on the Census enumeration, but that the Bureau would have to expand its Nonresponse Follow-up operation, incurring an even greater cost for the 2020 Census enumeration while undermining its accuracy. The addition of a citizenship question could greatly jeopardize the accuracy and reliability of the 2020 Census, raising costs and lowering response rates, directly harming already undercounted communities. I urge you to decline the Department of Justice's request to add such a question.

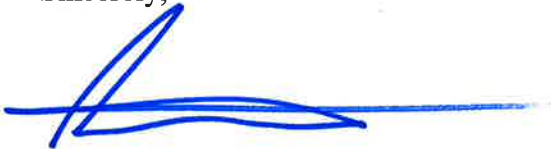
Additionally, I urge the Census Bureau to ensure that the questions regarding race and ethnicity are worded to ensure optimal accuracy and a high response rate. Disaggregated data on race and ethnicity can help to improve Census directed funding and representation of minority communities, and a simplified, combined question on race and ethnicity can better represent our diverse country. The Bureau's own study recommended a combined question on race and ethnicity in order to yield higher quality data and a higher response rate, which would further result in cost saving from improved returns. This question would allow respondents to select more detailed, accurate representations of their background by providing a greater number of

choices for race and ethnicity, and would allow respondents to select more than one option. The Administration's overturning of the Bureau's own recommendation demonstrates a lack of commitment to a full and accurate Census. As the combined question will not be implemented in the 2020 Census, I urge the Bureau to support the adoption of a greater number of options under the Hispanic and Latino origin and race questions – including the addition of Dominican and Salvadoran check boxes – to better represent these growing communities.

In summation, I urge the Census Bureau to define steps taken that ensure; (1) the 2020 Census is fully funded, (2) New York City receives necessary field offices, sufficiently staffed with residents trusted by immigrant and minority communities, (3) the 2020 Census does not include a question regarding citizenship, and (4) the 2020 Census most implements the most accurate questions for collecting data on race and ethnicity.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress
New York's 13th Congressional District