



# The Census Project

August XX, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer,

We, the undersigned census stakeholders, are writing to urge you to include imperative language in the next Senate COVID relief package (HEALS Act) that would extend the statutory reporting deadlines for the 2020 Census by four months.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected many facets of American life, including the 2020 Census. Earlier this year, the pandemic compelled the U.S. Census Bureau to suspend field activities and postpone key operations, including the critical Non-Response Follow Up (NRFU) phase in which census takers visit more than 30 percent of households that have not responded on their own, to collect information in person. Only weeks ago, senior expert career Census Bureau staff said unequivocally that they could not responsibly finish their work in time to complete the NRFU operation and compile, analyze, and disseminate apportionment data by the statutorily required December 31, 2020 deadline. Accordingly, the Secretary of Commerce wisely requested that Congress extend the reporting deadlines for apportionment and redistricting data, so that the Census Bureau could complete in-person visits and other special counting operations for the non-household population (including people experiencing homelessness; people living in transitory locations such as RV parks and motels; and people living in group facilities such as nursing homes and college dorms) and deliver reliable apportionment and redistricting data to the Congress and states. Now the administration is suggesting that this painstaking work can be done by the legally required deadlines.

Unfortunately, a rushed census will harm every state. Currently, there are low response areas in every part of the country, in every state, in every city. If remaining counting operations are not done well, communities most in need of resources to improve quality of life and standards of living will get the short end of the stick for the next decade.

The decision to reverse course on the proposed extension was reportedly hastily developed at the White House and not by career professionals at the Census Bureau whose job it is to plan and execute a full, fair, and accurate count. A decision of this magnitude must not be politically motivated. It must be carried out to ensure that the decennial census is conducted in an impartial, exact manner. Likewise, Congress has a constitutional responsibility to ensure that the enumeration is conducted responsibly and delivers reliable data about our nation's changing socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Too much is at stake--the undercount of vulnerable populations

such as young children, people in low-income communities (rural and urban), immigrants, American Indians and others; congressional representation; and the annual allocation of \$1.5 trillion in federal funding to states and localities.

It is vital that we protect the 2020 Census from political interference. The House of Representatives has already approved an extension of the 2020 Census operations as part of its most recent COVID relief package. We urge the Senate to stay the course by agreeing to an extension provision in its next COVID relief package (HEALS Act), so that the Census Bureau is not forced to rush remaining enumeration operations and critical data review, processing, and tabulation activities.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for supporting the full and fair 2020 Census we all deserve and the Constitution requires.

Sincerely,