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August 11, 2020

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

Dear Director Dillingham:

I write to express serious concerns with the U.S. Census Bureau's decision to end self-response and field data collection operations for the decennial census by September 30, 2020, one month earlier than previously announced.¹ I am particularly worried about the implications this could have on the accuracy and completeness of the count in low self-response jurisdictions like Puerto Rico, and therefore respectfully request that you consider reinstating the October 31, 2020 deadline.

As you are aware, Puerto Rico continues to have the worst self-response rate in the United States. As of August 10, 2020, only 29 percent of households had completed the 2020 Census, well below the national average of 63.4 percent.² This can be partly attributed to the challenges and delays brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the suspension of field operations on the Island in early March 2020. It was not until May 22, 2020 that the Census Bureau was able to resume its work, completing the delivery of invitations and paper questionnaires to every household in Puerto Rico by late June.³

For all intents and purposes, then, Puerto Rico residents have had less time to respond to the 2020 Census than most of our counterparts in the 50 States and the District of Columbia. That is why I am extremely concerned that reverting the data collection deadline to September 30, 2020 could result in an undercount on the Island, especially when considering the current self-response rate and the time it will take to properly conduct the follow up operations with nonresponding households.

¹ See U.S. Census Bureau, *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*, April 13, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/statement-covid-19-2020.html>

² See U.S. Census Bureau, *Response Rates*, <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html>, accessed on August 11, 2020.

³ See U.S. Census Bureau, *Census Workers Completing Delivery of 2020 Census Materials to Households in Puerto Rico*, June 18, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/completing-delivery-puerto-rico.html>

In order to avoid this scenario, I respectfully ask that the U.S. Census Bureau continue self-response and data collection operations until October 31, 2020. This additional time should support efforts to achieve an accurate and complete count, which is vital to ensure we receive appropriate federal funding to support Puerto Rico's ongoing recovery process and continue meeting the needs of our citizens during the next decade.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer González-Colón". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a prominent flourish at the end.

Jennifer González-Colón
Member of Congress