

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 9, 2020

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

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 serious concerns regarding recent reports about the lack of follow-up outreach conducted by the Census Bureau's field operations in Minnesota for the 2020 U.S. Census and also to urge the Census Bureau to honor its previously announced completion date of October 31, 2020 and continue operations under this modified timeline to ensure that every Minnesotan is counted.

An accurate and comprehensive census is fundamental to our democracy and the well-being of communities across the country—yet recent reports have found that Minnesota's participation ranking in the 2020 Census has fallen from first in the nation to eleventh and noted that the lack of follow-up outreach conducted by the Census Bureau as a key contributing factor.¹ As of September 2, reports found that the Non-response Follow-up (NRFU) completion rate, which indicates the field work that remains for census takers, is 73 percent complete in the Duluth Area Census Office (ACO) and 74 percent complete in the Rochester ACO, which is less than other areas in the state.² The Minnesota State Demographic Office reported that a sampling of Hennepin County residents who have not self-responded have yet to receive follow-up outreach from the Census Bureau.³ Reports have also highlighted that response rates remain low in several Minnesotan communities, including communities of color and immigrant and indigenous communities, as well as rural and student communities.⁴

The Census Bureau plays a vital role in ensuring that everyone is counted for the U.S. Census, which helps determine key decisions, such as the amount of funding that states and local communities receive from the federal government for priorities such as health care, education, housing, and infrastructure. While we recognize that the Census Bureau has implemented new

¹ Roper, Eric. (September 1, 2020). *Census advocates warn of incomplete count in Minnesota*. Star Tribune. Retrieved from: <https://www.startribune.com/census-advocates-warn-of-incomplete-count-in-minnesota/572276492/>.

² Nonresponse Followup Completion Rates. (Accessed on September 9, 2020). United States Census 2020. Retrieved from: <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates/nrfu-completion.html>

³ Roper, Eric. (September 1, 2020). *Census advocates warn of incomplete count in Minnesota*. Star Tribune. Retrieved from: <https://www.startribune.com/census-advocates-warn-of-incomplete-count-in-minnesota/572276492/>

⁴ *Id.*

strategies to reach people during the pandemic,⁵ we have serious concerns that the follow-up field work in Minnesota is not sufficient to ensure that every Minnesotan will be counted in the 2020 Census.

Therefore, we urge you to honor the previously announced completion date of October 31, 2020 and to provide a detailed plan outlining steps the Census Bureau will take—including specific actions to ensure communities with low response rates are contacted and how the Census Bureau intends to count households that cannot be reached through follow-up operations—to ensure every Minnesotan is counted. In addition, we respectfully request that you provide the following information:

- The total number of housing units that will be contacted through NRFU, by county;
- The number and percent of housing units that were completed through an in-person interview with a household member for each MN county;
- The number and percent of housing units that were completed by a proxy respondent (who was not a household member) for each MN county; and
- The number and percent of housing units that received six visits from census enumerators without reaching a household member for each MN county.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We look forward to working with you to ensure a fair and accurate 2020 U.S. Census.

Sincerely,


Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator


Tina Smith
United States Senator


Betty McCollum
Member of Congress


Angie Craig
Member of Congress


Dean Phillips
Member of Congress


Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

⁵ America Counts Staff. (August 27, 2020). *U.S. Census Bureau, Partners Find Creative Ways to Promote 2020 Census Amid COVID-19*. United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/08/promoting-2020-census-participation-in-a-pandemic.html>