



Giving Every Child A Chance

To: The Honorable Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce
Steven Dillingham, Census Director
Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field Operations

From: Census 2020 NJ Coalition
Representatives of Complete Count Committees and Census partners across New Jersey

Date: July 10, 2020

RE: Need for additional Census paper questionnaire

Dear Associate Director Olson, Director Dillingham and Secretary Ross:

We represent Complete Count Committees, local governments and nonprofit organizations across New Jersey, including some of New Jersey's hardest to count communities such as Newark, Paterson, Passaic, Elizabeth, New Brunswick and Hoboken, as well as Hudson County, Union County and Passaic County.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has massively disrupted planned 2020 Census operations, including in New Jersey and across the country. In particular, New Jersey had some of the highest rates of COVID-19 infection nationally and continues to face substantial limits on in-person events.

In light of these disruptions, and to create an additional opportunity to make up for diminished response, **we believe it is imperative that the Census Bureau include a paper questionnaire in its final mailing, rather than only a reminder postcard.** From what we have seen on the ground in New Jersey, our hard-to-count residents often prefer responding via the paper form, rather than the online option.¹ Notably Black residents, Hispanic/Latino residents, older Americans and residents without a high-school degree prefer the paper questionnaire, which arrived at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and business shutdowns.

Therefore, to save millions in taxpayer dollars – **an estimated \$55 million for each additional 1% of households that respond on their own**² – and to ensure the most accurate census count, it is critical that the Bureau use its contingency funding now to distribute a paper form in this final mailing.

As of July 2, New Jersey's response rate is 6% below its 2010 response rate. But many areas of the state are lagging even farther behind the state average. The state's two largest cities, Newark (86% of its 2010 response rate) and Jersey City (84%) are far below their 2010 response rates, as are Trenton (79%), New Brunswick (73%) and Paterson (80%). Each is also below 50% in overall response rate, well below the 63.8% response rate statewide. Conversely, the highest-response areas have also come in affluent and

¹ For example, about 22 percent of Newark's responses have been mail/phone, as compared to about 15 percent statewide.

² See John M. Abowd, Memorandum for Wilbur L. Ross, Secretary of Commerce, "Technical Review of the Department of Justice Request to Add Citizenship Question to the 2020 Census" at 001282 (January 19, 2018), available at <https://www.amstat.org/asa/files/pdfs/POL-Abowd01-19-18.pdf>

internet-connected areas of the state. This is not a problem unique to New Jersey. Many areas of the U.S., particularly those with demographics that have long been undercounted by the Census, are falling further behind during COVID-19.

There is strong evidence that sending an additional paper form in the final mailing will support meaningful growth in response rates, across many groups who have been slow to complete the census thus far. Latino respondents, particularly those older than 40, have consistently said that they prefer to submit responses on paper.³

Getting another paper form to households to facilitate their response means **millions of dollars in taxpayer money can be saved** by avoiding the need for door-to-door census taking. As of now, the Census Bureau currently plans to only send a postcard in the final mailing; the Bureau could draw on the more than \$500 million in its contingency fund to print and distribute a paper questionnaire. On behalf of the undersigned New Jersey Census advocates, we urge the Bureau to make the judicious investment needed to send a paper questionnaire to all households that have not yet responded to the census.

The unprecedented situation that we are all facing due to COVID-19 calls for a robust response – with your help, we can **improve our residents' ability to respond to the Census** by insisting that the Census Bureau send paper questionnaires in its final mailing. Given the Bureau's commitment to ensuring an accurate count of hard-to-count areas, an additional paper questionnaire will go a long way to accomplishing this goal.

Kind Regards,

Peter Chen, Advocates for Children of New Jersey, Census 2020 NJ Coalition

Bridget Anderson, City of Elizabeth, City Manager, Elizabeth Counts Complete Count Committee

Sherrill Austin, Community Improvement Association of the Oranges, Board of Directors, CIAO Local Complete Count Committee

John Bartlett, Passaic County, Freeholder, Passaic County Complete Count Committee

Charles Bergman, New Brunswick Tomorrow, Project Director, Middlesex County Complete Count Committee

Dashawnda Brown, BRICK Education Network, Chief Advancement Officer, Newark Complete Count Committee

Darren Bryden, City of Elizabeth NJ, Coordinator, Elizabeth Counts Complete Count Committee

Kevin Callaghan, Council of NJ Grantmakers, Newark Philanthropic Liaison, Newark Complete Count Committee

Glenny Candelaria, Housing Authority of the City of Passaic, Resident Services

³ Per NALEO Educational Fund surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019. For a summary, see https://naleo.org/COMMS/PRA/NEF%20Census%202020%20_2_10_FINAL.pdf

Caroline Caulfield, City of Hoboken, Chief of Constituent Affairs, Hoboken Complete Count Committee

Mary Ciccone, Disability Rights New Jersey, Director of Policy

Kim Decker, YMCA of Fanwood Scotch Plains, YMCA of Fanwood Scotch Plains, Scotch Plains Complete Count Committee

Rita Gernant, Paterson, NJ, Census Ambassador

Raymond A. Giacobbe, City of Rahway, Mayor

Francesca Giarratana, County of Hudson, Planning, Division Chief of Planning, Hudson County Complete Count Committee

Nancy Grierr, Neighborhood Assistance Office, Outreach

Anthony Hamilton, YMCA of Paterson, Membership Director

Toni D. Hendrix, New Brunswick Area NAACP, Civic Engagement Chairperson, Somerset County and Middlesex County Complete Count Committees

Julissa Herrera, Gilmore Memorial Preschool II, Family Worker

Smita Nadia Hussain, Bangladeshi American Women's Development Initiative (BAWDi), Co-Founder, Passaic County Complete Count Committee

Philip Kandl, County of Union, Director, Division of Strategic Planning, Union County Complete Count Committee

Nhu-Uyen Khuong, ATNJ Education Fund, Founder

Colletta Liccardi, St. Joseph Social Service Center, Job Readiness Program Director

Kathy Lloyd, Borough of Roselle Local Gov., Public Information Officer

Elizabeth Loden, St. Peter's Haven, Development/Marketing Consultant

Andrew Luck, Elizabeth Public Library, Assistant Director, Elizabeth Counts Complete Count Committee

Janet McDaniel, Deputy Mayor City of Paterson, Ambassador, Paterson Counts Complete Count Committee

Evelyn Mercado, HOPES CAP, Inc., Director of Community Programs, Hudson County Complete Count Committee

Nicole Morse, United Way of Gloucester County, Director of Community Initiatives, Gloucester County Complete Count Committee

Elizabeth Moulthrop, Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts, Paterson Music Project Director

Rania Mustafa, Palestinian American Community Center, Executive Director, Paterson Complete Count Committee

Rachel Niemczyk, The Gateway Family YMCA, Grants Administrator, Union County Complete Count Committee

Kendra Orta, Programs for Parents, Inc., Community Liaison

Jacqueline Quiles, City of Newark, Deputy Mayor

Nora Radest, City of Summit, Mayor

Marisol Rodriguez, RENEW Life Center, Executive Director

Nicholas Rodriguez, Inner City Ensemble, Director

Rabbi Robert Scheinberg, United Synagogue of Hoboken, Rabbi, Hoboken Complete Count Committee

Tom Schulze, Center for Community Planning, Executive Director

Rupen Shah, Casano Community Center, Director, Chairman

Meka Sinclair, Faces of Fallen Fathers, CEO

Inge Spungen, Paterson Alliance, Executive Director, Paterson Complete Count Committee

Irene Sterling, Paterson Public Library Foundation, President

Coleen Stevens Porcher, 4CS of Passaic County, Chief Executive Officer, Paterson Complete Count Committee

Thomas Strowe, Scotch Plains Township, Project Coordinator for Redevelopment, Scotch Plains Complete Count Committee

Letitia Sweat, The Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless, Community Education and 2020 Census Consultant, City of Elizabeth Complete Count Committee

William Webb, Community Access Unlimited, Census Project Coordinator, Elizabeth and Union County Complete Count Committees

Ronald E. West, City of Plainfield, NJ, Director of Finance

Roshan M. White, Township of Scotch Plains, Councilman

Patricia D. Williamson, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, NJ Counts Project Director, Census 2020 NJ Coalition

Kim Wilson, Community Coordinated Child Care, Program Specialist, Elizabeth Counts Complete Count Committee

Cathleen Wolf, City of Hoboken, Planner - Community Development, Hoboken Complete Count Committee Coordinator

Marge Zarkowski, Community Coordinated Child Care of Union County, Program Director, Elizabeth Complete Count Committee