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**STATEMENT OF
VANITA GUPTA, PRESIDENT & CEO
THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

**“REACHING HARD-TO-COUNT COMMUNITIES IN THE 2020 CENSUS”
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM**

January 9, 2020

Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Jordan, and Members of the Committee: I am Vanita Gupta, president & CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about reaching hard-to-count communities in the 2020 Census.

The Leadership Conference is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 210 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States. Founded in 1950 by A. Philip Randolph, Arnold Aronson, and Roy Wilkins, The Leadership Conference works in support of policies that further the goal of equality under law through legislative advocacy and public education.

The Leadership Conference provides a powerful unified voice for the many constituencies of the coalition: persons of color, women, children, individuals with disabilities, LGBTQ individuals, older Americans, labor unions, major religious groups, civil libertarians, and human rights organizations. Given the breadth of our coalition, The Leadership Conference is ideally positioned to address many of the most pressing issues affecting the successful implementation of Census Bureau programs, surveys, and initiatives. The Leadership Conference's coordinating role among so many diverse organizations allows for the sharing of different perspectives, as well as the development of broader strategies that occur within the purview of any individual organization. All of our work draws on the expertise of the cross-section of national organizations and examines the impact of civil rights policy on a broad range of constituencies.

Our coalition views an accurate and fair census, and the collection of useful, objective data about our nation's people, housing, economy, and communities generally, to be among the most important civil rights issues of our day. We and the Leadership Conference Census Task Force co-chairs, NALEO Educational Fund and Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, have a long record of first-hand experience working in support of previous censuses. For the 2010 Census, we undertook the most comprehensive and extensive effort by a stakeholder organization to promote participation in historically hard-to-count communities

and to mobilize local advocates in support of the census by highlighting the community benefits, civil rights implications, and constitutional imperative of a fair and accurate count.

We are now building upon our previous work to help ensure that no one is left out of the 2020 Census. The Leadership Conference Education Fund, the education and research arm of The Leadership Conference, established the Census Counts Campaign¹ to engage national organizations and state and community partners across 50 states and the District of Columbia to ensure communities do not miss out on the political power and resources they deserve. The campaign is driving innovative outreach strategies to hard-to-count communities through a network of trusted national and local stakeholders. National organizations in the Census Counts Campaign include representatives from the groups most at risk of being missed in the 2020 Census and those with networks to reach hard-to-count populations, including American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Arab American Institute Foundation, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), Coalition on Human Needs, Color of Change, Common Cause, Community Action Partnership, Faith in Public Life, Fair Immigration and Reform Movement (FIRM), League of Conservation Voters, NALEO Educational Fund, National Congress of American Indians, National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), National LGBTQ Task Force, National Urban League, OCA National, Partnership for America's Children, ReadyNation (project of Council for Strong America), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), State Voices, Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV) Coalition, and Voto Latino. These national organizations are training communities about the 2020 Census and its importance, translating materials into languages the Census Bureau will not be offering translations for, as well as monitoring Census Bureau activities to ensure they are best serving hard-to-count populations. The Census Counts Campaign's State Count Action Network works with state coalitions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to implement proven strategies to reach hard-to-count populations leveraging message research, organizing best practices, and strategies driven by community need.

Under the Constitution, Congress bears responsibility for overseeing the census and, by extension, for ensuring a fair and accurate count that supports the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal representation. That is why this oversight hearing is so important, and we commend the committee for focusing much-needed and welcome attention on the challenges of enumerating "hard-to-count" populations.

The Importance of the Census

Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution places the census at the core of our democratic system of governance by calling for a count of the nation's population every 10 years. The census provides information that is the cornerstone of knowledge about all people in the United States. It is the basis for virtually all demographic and socio-economic information used by businesses, policy makers, research institutions, and nonprofit organizations.

¹ <https://prospect.org/civil-rights/accurate-census-look-grassroots/>; www.censuscounts.org

Congress uses census data to identify community needs and to distribute federal program dollars to states and localities based on population numbers or other community characteristics that the decennial census and related American Community Survey measure. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, 316 federal spending programs relied on 2010 Census-derived data to distribute \$1.504 trillion to state and local governments, nonprofits, businesses, and households across the nation.² A more accurate census will: (1) ensure that every community, as well as people and households in need, receive the federal resources to which they are entitled under all census-guided programs; and (2) ensure that lawmakers can make more informed decisions about how to allocate federal dollars fairly, prudently, and effectively.

For all of these reasons, getting the census right is important to everyone. The primary and overarching goal of the census is a fair and accurate enumeration of all people living in the United States on Census Day (April 1, 2020). The goal of a census that is equally successful in *all* communities is non-negotiable.

Census Accuracy and the Problem of the Undercount

Certain population groups are at a higher risk of not being fully counted in the decennial census. Some areas and population groups – referred to as “hard-to-count” – have had lower rates of self-response in past censuses,³ requiring the Census Bureau to send enumerators into the field to count households one by one, increasing costs and operational needs. There are many reasons that households may not participate in the census, including fear of government and limited language access. Now, however, additional populations – such as rural residents⁴ and older Americans⁵ – may experience new or increased vulnerability due to major changes in methodology, such as relying on the Internet as the primary way for households to respond to the 2020 Census. Others may be reluctant to respond due to concerns about data confidentiality.⁶ The Census Bureau will face these challenges in many parts of the country and in many types of communities. Outreach to these groups must be innovative, research-based, and responsive to community needs. Being hard-to-count can deprive people and their communities of equal political representation and their fair share of vital public and private resources.

The differential undercount is a disproportionate undercounting of these population groups, most notably people of color, young children, and renters (a proxy for low-income households), compared to non-Hispanic Whites, seniors, and homeowners. These groups have been historically underrepresented in the decennial census for decades; and for some populations – for example, young children under age five – the undercount has been getting progressively worse.

² <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/counting-dollars-2020-role-decennial-census-geographic-distribution-federal-funds>

³ <https://www.censushardtcountmaps2020.us/?latlng=40.00000%2C-98.09000&z=4&layers=2020%20census%20initial%20contact%2Cmajor%20roads%2Ccounties&infotab=info-contacttypes&modal=info-about&filterQuery=false>

⁴ <https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/2020-census>

⁵ <https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/government-elections/info-2019/census-impact-older-americans.html>

⁶ <https://www2.census.gov/cac/sac/meetings/2019-03/census-barriers-attitudes-motivators-survey.pdf>

Census tracts are considered hard-to-count, according to Census Bureau research, if they have certain population and housing characteristics associated with both low self-response and higher likelihood of being missed entirely in the census.

There are hard-to-count communities in every state, and hard-to-count population groups in communities of all sizes across the country, from large urban areas such as Denver, New York City, and Omaha, to smaller cities such as Virginia Beach and Little Rock. Hard-to-count communities are not confined to urban areas. It may be less well known, but rural and remote communities, including American Indian tribal lands and reservations, are also vulnerable to disproportionate undercounting in the decennial census, with lower income households especially at risk. Eighty-seven percent (87 percent) of the hardest-to-count counties in the 2010 Census were rural counties. In order to identify where hard-to-count areas and population groups are located around the country, The Center for Urban Research at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), together with The Leadership Conference, has launched a searchable online map⁷ that identifies communities whose demographics and other characteristics qualify them as “hard-to-count” for purposes of the 2020 Census.

These examples may be of particular interest to members of the committee:

- 36 percent of New York’s population live in hard-to-count census tracts.
- More than 19 percent of Ohio’s households have no home Internet or dial-up only.
- One quarter of California’s residents live in hard-to-count census tracts.
- 17 percent of Arizona’s households lack home Internet or have dial-up only.
- Nearly 15 percent of Tennessee census tracts are hard-to-count. Just over 23 percent of Tennessee’s households lack home Internet or have dial-up only.
- Nearly 21 percent of Missouri’s households lack home Internet or have dial-up only.
- Roughly one in five Illinois census tracts are considered hard-to-count.
- Ten percent of North Carolinians live in such areas. 20 percent of North Carolina’s households lack home Internet or have dial-up only.
- 35 percent of Louisiana’s residents live in hard-to-count census tracts.
- One in 10 Michigan census tracts face similar circumstances, with a staggering 65 percent of Detroit residents living in neighborhoods that are harder to count accurately. Just over 19 percent of Michigan’s households lack home Internet or have dial-up only.
- 23 percent of Massachusetts’ population live in hard-to-count census tracts.

A Fair and Accurate Census is At Risk

The window of opportunity to ensure a successful 2020 Census in all communities is closing fast. The 2020 Census has already started. Major census operations have already begun and critical final steps – from recruiting and screening staff, to verifying addresses, to finalizing outreach and advertising plans, to testing IT infrastructure – are finished or underway. On January 21, the Census Bureau will begin Remote

⁷ See generally <https://www.censushardtcountmaps2020.us/>.

Alaska enumeration, and in March, U.S. households will begin receiving their 2020 Census materials, by mail or hand-delivery.

The census only happens once every 10 years, and its complex design leaves little room for error or modifications this close to the starting line, without consequences for data quality, cost-effectiveness, public confidence, and accuracy. People across the country will lose out if the Census Bureau does not commit sufficient resources for final preparations, dissemination of information to stakeholders, peak counting operations, and expanded outreach in communities at risk of being missed in the 2020 Census. These activities include:

- Final address list verification and updating, including for new construction;
- Strengthening cybersecurity and ensuring adequate load capacity for IT systems;
- Recruitment, screening, hiring, and training for census field staff;
- Increasing ad buys, especially targeting hard-to-count population groups, and launching national advertising and outreach;
- Location verification and advance contact for enumeration of group living facilities (such as college dorms, nursing homes, military barracks, and prisons), shelters and outdoor locations where people experiencing homelessness stay, and transitory locations (such as motels, RV parks, campgrounds, marinas, and carnivals);
- Modification of plans to count communities recovering from natural disasters; and
- Final preparations and launch of peak counting operations in Remote Alaska later this month.

That is why we are grateful to congressional leaders and all lawmakers for their bipartisan effort at the end of last year to ensure sufficient funding for the 2020 Census, at a level higher than the administration's inadequate request. We believe the Census Bureau must update its operational plan now with input and feedback from key stakeholders and Congress whenever possible, to spend effectively the additional funding Congress made available and in ways that meet the goals Congress set: to increase Partnership Program staff (not just Partnership Specialists) who help state and local officials and trusted community leaders support census operations through focused outreach and promotion for their constituencies, as well as targeted communications and advertising to hard-to-count communities, including in-language outreach where helpful; and to deploy Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Centers (with \$90 million plan being the floor) in coordination with grassroots stakeholders. Stakeholders have also recommended planning for additional field staff to ensure accurate, effective in-person enumeration for household follow-up (Nonresponse Followup, or NRFU), as well as for the primary operations for counting people experiencing homelessness, Service-Based Enumeration and the Enumeration of Transitory Locations.

By all accounts, the 2020 Census will be the largest, most difficult enumeration in our nation's history. The U.S. population is increasingly diverse – geographically, culturally, and linguistically – with households becoming more complex, and a greater share of residents falling into hard-to-count categories. The Census Bureau will also need to meet the growing challenges and threats that could undermine the enumeration, including cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns, natural disasters, growing distrust of government that could depress response rates in many communities, and the digital divide (especially in

rural, remote, and low-income communities). Because of a broad, months-long coalition effort, the citizenship question is not on the 2020 Census questionnaire. However, fear and the specter of the question remains and targeted outreach to immigrants and hard-to-count communities continues to be needed. Finally, budget constraints over the course of the decade have added to these barriers, causing the Census Bureau to eliminate, streamline, or delay vital planning activities and tests.

Counting every person residing in the United States is a difficult endeavor. But even with careful planning, several other factors – many out of the Census Bureau’s control – pose significant risks to a fair and accurate census.

IT Readiness and the Digital Divide

As this committee knows, the 2020 Census will be the first “high-tech” census. An Internet response option, while offering the promise of cost savings, could lead to poor or uneven participation, technological infrastructure failings, or both, thereby increasing the differential undercount.⁸

The Internet response option, which will be available along with options to respond by paper questionnaire or telephone, could help keep census costs in check or at least hold them steady compared to 2010, thereby saving resources that can be used to find and enumerate the hardest to count. The Census Bureau will ask nearly 80 percent of households to respond online, as the preferred method, in the initial request to respond to the census.⁹

However, not everyone – or all households – has the same connectivity, security, and comfort or skill with the Internet. The Commerce Department’s own analyses show that communities of color, rural residents, adults with low educational attainment, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and older Americans lag behind younger, affluent, highly educated, urban, and White adults in both device and Internet penetration.¹⁰ The devices used vary – not every household can afford to update their devices frequently, leaving them open to vulnerabilities. In addition, many marginalized people in America have tenuous Internet access through data-limited smartphones, public computers, or slow or unsecure home connections – if they have Internet access at all. This disparate access and opportunity contribute to households being hard-to-count in the 2020 Census. A lower-than-projected Internet response rate could strain the Census Bureau’s already limited resources by increasing response by paper questionnaire or telephone or, more costly and inefficient, the number of households that require door-to-door follow-up.

Technology also brings cybersecurity threats, real or perceived. The Census Bureau has built dozens of systems for 2020 and maintains a full-scale structure, as per the National Institute of Standards and

⁸ <http://www.civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/reports/Counting-Everyone-in-the-Digital-Age.pdf>

⁹ <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/census-research/predictive-models-audience-segmentation-report.pdf>

¹⁰ https://www.georgetownpoverty.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/LCEF_2020_Census_Poll_Report-Final-002.pdf

Technology (NIST) framework, to ensure its systems are designed, built, tested, and deployed. The framework includes ways to identify and fix system bugs, including penetration testing that tries to break the systems. The security of the 2020 Census IT systems and personal census data they contain is paramount, and the Census Bureau and its federal and private sector partners must do everything possible to ensure that security. This means there must be a comprehensive back-up plan to address any potential breaches and their consequences for the census process in real time. The Census Bureau also needs to take necessary steps to address how new IT and automated systems affect the communities the census is most likely to miss. The Census Bureau should update Congress on the status of these activities and show it is spending resources in the manner that Congress directed. Further, Congress must press the Census Bureau to ensure that IT systems are secure.

In addition, the Census Bureau will need to build confidence in a high-tech census at a time when many people are wary. The Census Bureau will need to educate all communities – particularly those at risk of being missed – about how to interact with the Internet self-response portal and work with trusted community voices to disseminate that information. The Census Bureau can work with civic technology groups to report issues they see in the field. At the same time, the Census Bureau must have an effective communications plan to direct people on where they can report potential incidents and assure everyone in the United States that their personal information is secure. Lack of confidence in data security could depress Internet response rates (more so if a large business or another government agency suffers a cyber-attack near the time of the census), thus increasing costs and enumeration challenges considerably.

Misinformation and Disinformation

Our coalition has already observed attempts to suppress census participation by promoting inaccurate or fearmongering information on social media and traditional media outlets.¹¹ Media manipulators and disinformation agents may attempt to undermine the integrity of census data and the public's perception of the data. Experience shows that efforts to rig the 2020 Census could take place online, in national or local media, and by attempting to directly influence vulnerable community groups.

Pressured by The Leadership Conference¹² and other civil rights groups, as well as Congress,¹³ tech companies and online social media platforms have started to commit to fight disinformation and misinformation that prey on people's fears, but strong enforcement of those policies by the platforms will be critical.

The Census Bureau has set up a new website, 2020census.gov/en/news-events/rumors.html, and email box, rumors@census.gov, but must also work with trusted messengers (including representatives of hard-to-count communities) to combat the spread of inaccurate information. The Census Bureau must detail its plans about how it will communicate with partners about the frequency and severity of incidents, and how

¹¹ <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/14/779465179/the-census-is-going-digital-bringing-the-threat-of-disinformation-campaigns>

¹² <https://civilrights.org/2019/12/19/facebook-listens-new-policy-protects-against-census-interference/>

¹³ <https://www.schatz.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Census%20Misinformation%20Letters%2007.15.19.pdf>

it will report resolved events. The census demands extreme vigilance and Congress must ensure that the Census Bureau and tech platforms do everything they can to address and counter census interference.

Distrust of Government and Climate of Fear

The reluctance of many individuals to provide personal information voluntarily to the government poses an additional barrier to a full count. There is lingering fear and mistrust of confidentiality pledges by the administration following the prolonged controversy over the proposal to add a citizenship question to the census. The Census Bureau's own research found that fear is a significant barrier to participation among hard-to-count populations.¹⁴

In order to combat this fear, the Census Bureau must work closely with trusted messengers and partners to encourage populations at risk of being missed to participate in the census. The Census Bureau's Community Partnership Engagement Program (CPEP) and National Partnership Program (NPP) will play essential roles in building trust, raising awareness, and increasing participation in the 2020 Census. As intermediaries between the Census Bureau and the residents it is responsible for counting, partners help enumerators make inroads in hard-to-count communities. They also provide the relationships and supplemental resources and language support that census workers need to successfully count residents from all walks of life.

The Census Bureau's 2020 Census Partnership Plan outlines CPEP's objectives,¹⁵ chief among which is to establish committed partnerships with at least 300,000 local partners by March of 2020. The 2020 Census Partnership Plan also details the objectives of the NPP, although it does not specify a target number of national partners. Robust partnership programs are especially critical in light of the realignment of the Census Bureau's field office structure following the 2010 Census, including plans to employ, at most, half the staffing used for the 2010 Census. However, the Census Bureau has not revealed much information to help Congress and stakeholders to determine that it is on track to meet its stated goals. Congress should request the Census Bureau to provide information on all current local and national partners, as well as details on how the Census Bureau identifies, defines, and recruits partners for both programs.

This work will be complemented and buttressed by the efforts of nonprofit organizations and grassroots groups, who will play crucial roles in building the groundwork needed to ensure a complete count in 2020. National and state-based organizations have already [developed information](#) about the importance of the census and how people can engage. The Census Counts Campaign has developed a Get Out the Count (GOTC) toolkit¹⁶ that consolidates and disseminates resources on effective census outreach strategies, from how to build a GOTC plan to how to ensure outreach is accessible. In addition, the Census Count Campaign's State Count Action Network¹⁷ convened more than 800 census leaders in a series of regional

¹⁴ <https://www2.census.gov/cac/sac/meetings/2019-03/census-barriers-attitudes-motivators-survey.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/2020-partners.html>

¹⁶ <https://censuscounts.org/gotc-toolkit/>

¹⁷ <https://censuscounts.org/state-by-state/>

trainings about 2020 Census operations and outreach best practices. During 2020, the Census Counts Campaign will convene a “train the trainer” series for grassroots leaders and work with local leaders in rural communities in Arizona, Oklahoma, Texas, Mississippi, and New York to directly engage with hard-to-count populations and communities.

Recruiting, Hiring, and Training Staff

The timely recruitment and hiring of enumerators who have cultural competency, necessary language skills, and are local to communities where they will be going door-to-door will be another key strategy to combat fear in communities. Encouraging people within hard-to-count neighborhoods to work for the 2020 Census can help ensure people in these communities hear from trusted voices when an enumerator comes to their door.

The Census Bureau has launched its nationwide 2020 Census recruitment campaign to recruit and hire the nearly 500,000 people needed to ensure a fair and accurate 2020 Census.¹⁸ These census workers will staff the Partnership Program or serve as enumerators going door to door to count those households that did not respond to the census by mail, phone, or online in April. With the national unemployment rate its lowest in 50 years, the Census Bureau has faced challenges reaching its hiring targets and increased its recruiting goal from 2.3 million to 2.7 million for peak operations. The Census Bureau expects that of the 800,000 to 900,000 applicants chosen, about 500,000 will be hired. At the Fall 2019 meeting of the National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations, the Census Bureau noted that to bolster recruitment efforts they are reviewing and increasing pay rates, expanding recruiting staff, and tripling Census Investigative Services (CIS) staff to initiate and process background checks.¹⁹ Nonetheless, reports from grassroots stakeholders indicate difficulty getting applicants into the pipeline.

Recruitment progress varies by region and city; for example, some regions are on track to meet recruitment goals while San Francisco,²⁰ Philadelphia,²¹ and Raleigh²² lag far behind their recruiting goals. Of specific concern is the lack of progress to date in hiring and recruiting applicants with the necessary language skills. While the Census Bureau has reported that 20 percent of applicants are bilingual and that applicants speak more than 450 languages and dialects, oversight will be necessary to ensure that staff are deployed in a manner that ensures language access according to community need.

Stakeholders are also concerned that the onerous and time-consuming hiring process will deter participation by marginalized groups. Once applicants are in the pipeline, they are required to complete a background check and to travel to an area census office to be fingerprinted. Shepherding applicants with the right skills through the process is already proving to be challenging and will likely result in some applicants not completing the application, requiring the Census Bureau to recruit additional candidates.

¹⁸ <https://2020census.gov/en/jobs.html>

¹⁹ <https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2019-11/fontenot-thieme-update-2020-census.pdf?#>

²⁰ <https://www.sfchronicle.com/business/article/Census-seeks-12-000-Bay-Area-workers-and-pay-is-14945666.php>,

²¹ <https://www.inquirer.com/news/2020-census-jobs-pay-hikes-20191226.html>

²² <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article238501738.html>

Finally, it will be critical to ensure that once hired, partnership and enumerator staff are adequately trained. Census stakeholders in the field have observed instances of census employees providing inaccurate information to community partners and trusted messengers. This erodes trust in the Census Bureau and presents an opportunity for inaccurate information about census participation to spread.

Communications and Advertising

The Census Bureau is deploying a robust communications and advertising campaign that includes partnership, advertising, events, and public service announcements. For this campaign to be effective, the Census Bureau must customize content and outreach strategies for hard-to-count communities that is informed by its message research and be responsive to input from representatives from hard-to-count community groups. Stakeholders were pleased to see adaptive and customizable public service announcements (PSAs) released in late 2019,²³ and the Census Bureau's responsiveness to stakeholder suggestions such as increasing English language PSAs targeting the Latino community can serve as a model for future engagement.

In December 2019, the Census Bureau released its planned \$240 million media spend.²⁴ VMLY&R (formerly Y&R), the firm that secured the Integrated Communications Contract (ICC) for the 2020 Census campaign, and its subcontractors have developed a media buy strategy to encourage participation in the 2020 Census and reach hard-to-count communities. But a number of concerns remain. Stakeholders have identified the following gaps in the media spend:

- Advertising will be developed and placed in 60 languages, creating content gaps for Asian American, Native American, and African Immigrant languages.
- Ad buys for certain population groups, such as the Black/African American ad buy, were not sufficiently robust and will need to be supplemented by additional advertising.
- There are several historically undercounted groups that the Census Bureau is trying to reach through its "diverse mass" outreach. Because individual plans were not built for these groups, the outreach is likely not to work well. Groups included in "diverse mass" that need, but are not likely to receive, specific outreach include: English speaking Latinos, parents of young children, LGBTQ people, people experiencing homelessness and housing instability, and people living in poverty.
- State and local media in-language vary by state, creating some gaps in-language communications.
- The advertising campaign will end on June 22, before Nonresponse Followup (NRFU) is completed, meaning that enumerators will be in the field well after the advertising campaign has ended. While the advertising campaign for the 2010 Census also ended in June, stakeholders expect that the increased concern and fear in hard-to-count communities and a crowded media environment expected in the summer of 2020 will necessitate targeted outreach to hard-to-count communities for the duration of NRFU.
- The plans for outreach to Arabic speakers and Portuguese speakers seem very minimal.

²³ <https://www.census.gov/library/video/2019/2020-census-psa-all-videos.html>

²⁴ <https://www.census.gov/about/business-opportunities/opportunities/2020-ops/2020-census-paid-media.html>

- There are very few in-language outreach materials for Native Hawaiian, Native Alaskan, and Native American people, and most of the media buy for those communities seems focused on out-of-home outreach materials (like service provider flyers) as opposed to in-home advertising materials.

The Census Bureau has yet to share planned creative content for hard-to-count populations and the planned persuasion “journey map” that will drive the strategy and flow of the advertising buy. Members of The Leadership Conference, the Census Counts Campaign, states, cities, and other key stakeholders are planning to place advertising buys to supplement the bureau’s campaign. More transparency from the Census Bureau would help ensure that efforts aren’t duplicated.

Finally, the Census Bureau has indicated that its advertising will not speak directly to the fears that many hard-to-count communities will be grappling with. Stakeholders believe that the Census Bureau should incorporate messaging about confidentiality into its earned and paid media strategy, e.g., that the Census Bureau will not share data with landlords, police, or public benefits providers.

Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Centers (M-QAC)

A new Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Center (M-QAC) operation, which Congress requested, will require substantial advance planning and collaboration with local and community partner organizations. Stakeholders believe that the Census Bureau’s proposed initiative, with an estimated \$90 million price tag, needs more staff and a larger footprint to be effective.

Stakeholders have very limited information about how the Census Bureau plans to implement M-QACs. In the absence of information from the Census Bureau, counties, cities, and community-based organizations have been developing their own plans to support questionnaire assistance, including how they will provide support to their communities and the gaps that will need to be covered. In the 2010 Census, community-based organizations were given insufficient time to plan and advertise “Be Counted” questionnaire assistance centers, resulting in low usage rates. Congress must press the Census Bureau to spend the \$90 million allocated on this M-QAC program (and possibly more) and to consult with stakeholders, so that the program can be most effective.

Population Displacement Due to Natural Disasters

Extreme natural disasters (e.g., flooding, tornadoes, hurricanes, and wildfires) will require modified, more costly outreach methods to ensure an accurate enumeration in recovering communities. The Census Bureau now has sufficient funding to take decisive, swift action in communities recovering from natural disasters, where modified, labor-intensive counting methods and special advertising and outreach might be needed. Those areas include 13 Texas counties recently flooded by Tropical Storm Imelda; East and Gulf Coast communities damaged by Hurricane Dorian and several powerful 2017 hurricanes; California towns and cities wiped out by wildfires; and Southern and Midwest states ravaged by significant flooding and unprecedented tornado outbreaks.

Conclusion

Members of Congress are fully aware that the census has political consequences – in fact, the Constitution says as much, by basing congressional apportionment and equal representation on the population count. But the conduct of the census must be strictly nonpartisan and must strive to achieve an equally accurate count in all communities.

The Leadership Conference and its member organizations look forward to working with all members of this committee to ensure a cost-effective, secure, and above all, accurate and inclusive census in every one of the nation's communities. When people – *your constituents* – are not counted in the census, they remain invisible for the next 10 years. And overcounts – that is, counting people twice or including them by mistake – do not benefit anyone either, because policymakers have a skewed picture of where to direct hard-earned, limited taxpayer dollars. There are no do-overs with the census. The Census Bureau must get it right the first time, and all of us – members of Congress, county officials and mayors, school principals, veterans advocates, businesses large and small, and, indeed, every person in the United States – must live with the results for the next 10 years.