



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Census 2020 Leads Discussion at Senator James Sanders Jr.'s Community Clergy Breakfast

JAMES SANDERS JR. May 24, 2019



Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village, Far Rockaway) brought together faith-based leaders at his Community Clergy Breakfast this month on May 23, 2019 to discuss the role community based organizations must play in getting a full and accurate count for Southeast Queens during the 2020 Census.

“It’s time to stand up and be counted,” Sanders said. “Your participation in the census is critically important to ensuring that our community gets the resources it needs and

deserves.”

Sanders held the breakfast at the Bernice Caesar Multi-Purpose Center in Jamaica. It was conducted in partnership with the NY Regional Census Center, Fiscal Policy Institute & the Advocacy Committee for the New York Counts 2020 Coalition.

The U.S. Census occurs every ten years and provides a snapshot of demographics, which determine how billions of state and federal dollars are distributed. Since the first count in 1790, the census has evolved to count every person living in every state, territory, and tribal nation. This year an estimated 330 million people, representing an estimated 140 million housing units will be counted, according to Ian Hill, the Deputy Regional Director for the NY Regional Census Center.

“Census population counts help to determine the equal apportionment of approximately \$883 billion in federal funds every single year,” Hill said. “It is estimated that in 2017 that approximately \$73 billion came to the State of New York based on Census counts.”

The funding goes to support programs like Medicaid, SNAP, highway planning, Section 8 Housing, special education grants, S-CHIP, Title 1 Grants, the National School Lunch Program, WIC, Head Start, foster care and health center programs.

Hill said the three key things to know about the census is that it is safe, easy and important. People will be able to fill out the census survey online, by phone, on paper, or via a personal visit by a census employee. The U.S. Census Bureau never publishes private information including names, addresses, Social Security numbers and telephone numbers. Only general demographic statistics are released publicly. Personal information cannot be used against respondents by any government agency or court. The Census Bureau employees are sworn

to protect confidentiality for life.

The survey will be available in 59 different languages. As far as those languages that are not covered, the census is looking to hire workers for different positions, including to travel to areas where ethnic groups may be overlooked due to communication barriers or for other reasons. The jobs start at \$25 per hour and the U.S. Census Bureau provides paid training and reimburses all travel costs, Hill said. For more information, go to

<https://2020census.gov/jobs>

Shamier Settle, a Policy Analyst with the Fiscal Policy Institute, noted that U.S. Census Bureau needs community groups more than ever to help ensure an accurate 2020 count, particularly since this the first year people will be able to fill out the forms online, a controversial question about the citizenship status of immigrants may be added, and people feel hesitant about giving their information to the federal government.

In addition, some New York residents are particularly at risk for being undercounted, according to Settle, including immigrants, people who speak limited English, people of color, Muslims, low-income residents, young parents, Native Americans, homeless residents and numerous others.

The Fiscal Policy Institute proposes that the governor and the legislature include \$40 million in next year's state budget for community-based organizations to do outreach around the 2020 Census.

We would like to thank Bethel Gospel Tabernacle Church for allowing us to use their Bernice Caesar Multi-Purpose Center to host this month's breakfast.