



September 24, 2019

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As you know, in less than a year, the U.S. Census Bureau will conduct the decennial census. The 2020 Census will have far-reaching effects on every area of our lives and will reshape our political landscape for a decade. While we are heartened that the State Budget included \$20 million for census outreach efforts, the allocation of those funds has yet to be released. In light of the uniquely high risk of an undercount in our borough, we are writing to urge you to direct at least \$4 million of the funds to community groups in Brooklyn. This amount is justified by the considerable challenge of achieving a full count here and is proportional to distribution of funds [recommended](#) by the Fiscal Policy Institute.¹

An undercount in Brooklyn would be an unmitigated disaster not only for the people we represent, but the entire state. Billions of dollars in federal aid programs could be lost. While Brooklynites already face a lack of resources for many of their immediate needs, an undercount would only make this worse. Funding for programs that so many of our neighbors depend on to keep a roof over their head and food on their table -- such as Section 8 and SNAP -- could decline. New York's federal standing could also weaken, as we stand to lose at least two congressional seats.

Unfortunately, the risk of an undercount in our borough is alarmingly high. Brooklyn is severely disadvantaged when it comes to the census, as we have a disproportionately hard to count population. [80 percent](#) of Brooklynites live in hard-to-count neighborhoods, and [according to the Brooklyn Community Foundation](#), Brooklyn had the lowest mail return rate in the country among counties with populations of 500,000 or more.² Of the 500 census tracts most at-risk of an undercount, almost half are located in our borough.

¹ [fiscalpolicy.org/census-2020-nys-should-invest-40-million-to-fund-community-outreach](https://www.fiscalpolicy.org/census-2020-nys-should-invest-40-million-to-fund-community-outreach)

² <https://www.censushardtcountmaps2020.us/>;

<https://www.brooklyncommunityfoundation.org/census-2020-its-time-makebrooklyncount>

Recognizing this severe risk of an undercount, the Fiscal Policy Institute [recommended](#) that the state direct more funds to Brooklyn than any other county in the state.³ Their recommended funding was more conservative than both that of the New York Counts 2020 coalition, which requested \$40 million in total state funds, and the New York Community Trust, who [requested](#) \$60 million.⁴ Our recommendation of \$4 million matches the proportion of funds directed to Brooklyn in the Fiscal Policy Institute's original recommendation.

New York City and Brooklyn's community groups are already rising to the challenge. The city government has committed \$40 million to census outreach -- double the amount of what the state committed. Several groups have pooled more than \$3 million, and the Brooklyn Community Foundation joined with the Borough President to invest \$100,000. In addition to gathering funds, countless community groups and houses of worship are hosting census events and organizing drives, working tirelessly to spread the word. Still, we cannot achieve a full count without adequate support from the state.

A potential undercount poses a grave risk to the rights, livelihood and wellbeing of millions of people in Brooklyn and across the state. Our community is doing everything in our power to prepare for the census because we take that risk seriously. We trust that the state will, too.

Sincerely,



Senator Zellnor Y. Myrie
District 20

& undersigned:



*Congressmember Yvette
Clarke*



*Congressmember Hakeem
Jeffries*



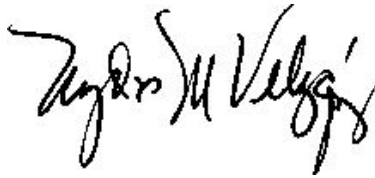
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³ fiscalspolicy.org/census-2020-nys-should-invest-40-million-to-fund-community-outreach

⁴ <https://www.nycommunitytrust.org/newsroom/letter-to-the-governor-census-2020/>



Congressmember Max Rose



Congressmember Nydia Velazquez



Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez



State Senator Simcha Felder



State Senator Andrew Gounardes



State Senator Brian Kavanagh



State Senator Velmanette Montgomery



State Senator Kevin Parker



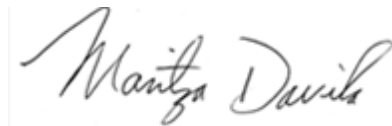
State Senator Roxane Persaud



State Senator Julia Salazar



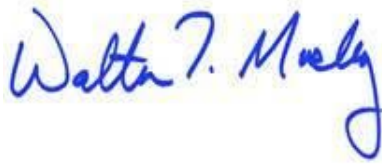
State Senator Diane Savino



Assemblymember Martiza Davila



*Assemblymember Mathylde
Frontus*



*Assemblymember Walter
Mosley*



Assemblymember Felix Ortiz



*Assemblymember N. Nick
Perry*



*Assemblymember Diana C.
Richardson*



*Assemblymember Jo Anne
Simon*



*Assemblymember Jaime
Williams*



*Councilmember Alicka
Ampy-Samuel*



Councilmember Inez Barron



*Councilmember Justin
Brannan*



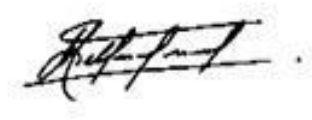
*Councilmember Robert
Cornegy*



*Councilmember Laurie
Cumbo*



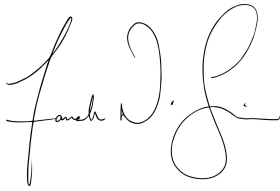
*Councilmember Rafael
Espinal*



*Councilmember Mathieu
Eugene*



Councilmember Brad Lander



Councilmember Farah Louis



*Councilmember Carlos
Menchaca*



*Councilmember Mark
Treyger*