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Fighting for our families, our communities & ourselves
COMMUNITY VOICES HEARD

Testimony for 2019 State Budget
Juanita Lewis, Community Voices Heard
February 11, 2018

My name is Juanita Lewis, I'm here to testify on behalf of Community Voices Heard. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the need for New York State to prioritize census funding in the 2019 budget. Along with my colleagues, I'm here to urge that the State legislature allocates \$40 million in funding for community-based organizations to conduct census education and outreach. This funding will be especially critical in upstate communities, where local municipalities lack the resources and the capacity to conduct a full count.

CVH is a member-led, multi-racial organization comprised of women of color and low-income families across New York State. CVH tackles tough issues and builds power to secure racial, social, and economic justice for all New Yorkers. Through grassroots organizing, leadership development, policy changes, and creating new models of direct democracy, CVH is working to create an equitable New York State.

We're here to advocate for prioritizing census funding because we cannot build an equitable state without an accurate count in Census 2020. If we get the census wrong, it will hurt New York for at least the next decade. \$53 billion dollars in federal funding and grants is at stake, which will affect healthcare, housing, welfare, and the economic and social stability of thousands of New Yorkers.

Communities in the Hudson Valley region are severely undercounted. For example, CVH members in need of housing subsidies or access to healthcare, are at risk not to be served because the funding for staff, equipment or monies for subsidies are inadequate due to the low census numbers.

We cannot count on the federal government to conduct an accurate count. The Trump Administration's plan to include a citizenship question on the census will lower response rates. The Census Bureau is at its lowest funding level at this point in the decade than at any other time in the past several decades. The Census Bureau might not enough funds to conduct the census.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on the critical need for census funding. We look forward to organizing and building power together to ensure that every New Yorker is counted in 2020.