

I am Steve Choi, Executive Director of the New York Immigration Coalition, which is the facilitator of New York Counts 2020. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the need for New York State to allocate at least \$40 million dollars toward census education and outreach this fiscal year.

Maximizing an accurate count in the 2020 Census for New York, the fourth largest state with a current "official" population of almost 20 million is a monumental undertaking, especially with limited resources. That's why the New York Immigration Coalition facilitated the creation of New York Counts 2020, which officially launched on March 28, 2018. New York Counts 2020 is a diverse and inclusive statewide coalition of more than 110 social service providers, businesses, faith-based organizations, and groups involved with civic participation, health, race, immigrants, housing, advocacy, education, and children's services. Our aim is to ensure that 100% of New Yorkers participate in the 2020 Census and are counted. However, the actions of the Trump Administration over the last two years have made a difficult situation far worse, and the consequences for New York could be dire.

The Trump Administration has made clear its plan to engineer an undercount in diverse states like New York with sizable immigrant populations; the centerpiece of this plan being the inclusion of a citizenship question on the census. Although the Southern District of New York ruled against the Trump Administration on January 15, 2019 and ordered the removal of the citizenship question, that decision has already been appealed and may end up before the Supreme Court. Despite this ruling, the Administration is moving forward with testing the question this summer, mailing 480,000 households one of two versions of the census, one with and one without a citizenship question. Mailing a test version of the census with a citizenship question that has not been properly vetted will accomplish nothing except create more confusion. The Census Bureau itself concluded a citizenship question would lead to an additional 3.3% decline in self-response rates in households with at least one non-citizen compared with all-citizen households. A disastrous outcome for a state that is 10.26% non-citizen.

On top of this, the Census Bureau is planning to reduce the national number of Regional Census Offices from 12 to 6, and Area Census Offices from 435 to 248. This drastic cut leaves New


York with 14 fewer census offices compared to 2010. This decision places thousands of critical census workers far away from the populations they are responsible for counting and seriously jeopardizes the accuracy, completeness, and validity of the 2020 census.

Finally, for the first time, the census will be conducted primarily through online responses. In 2016, 18.3% of New York's households had either no Internet subscription or dial up-only access. The high percentage of New Yorkers without Internet or access to reliable Internet at home increases the chances the initial round of opportunity to complete the census will see higher non-response rates and thus lead to an even greater need for on-the-ground follow up from door-to-door census enumerators.

It is crucial that New York receives an accurate count of all persons in the upcoming census. An undercount jeopardizes over \$53 billion dollars in federal funding for vital programs like Medicaid, Medicare Part B, Section 8 Housing, Title 1 Grants, Highway Planning and Construction, and SNAP. These and other Federal mandatory and discretionary grants account for approximately one third of State spending.

New York's political power is also on the line. The census is the only population count used for redistricting of congressional, state, and local district lines. New York is already estimated to lose two seats in the House of Representatives following the 2020 Census, and could lose even more if there is a significant undercount.

Sadly, we cannot count on the federal government. New York State must take seriously the threats we face with a census undercount and allocate at least \$40 million dollars toward the 2020 census this fiscal year. Specifically, that money must go to community-based organizations (CBOs) who are already on the ground, have the language and cultural competency needed to reach our diverse populations, and the earned trust that comes with years and decades of working within communities, specifically the hard-to-count communities who are most at risk of not being counted.



This \$40 million figure came from a detailed analysis by the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI), which concluded \$40 million was the minimum amount of funding needed to reach hard-to-count communities. Hard-to-count communities exist in all 62 counties in New York State and are calculated based on the number of households in each county that did not return their 2010 Census forms by mail. In New York, this is 4.8 million people. \$40 million dollars allows CBOs to do “basic outreach” consisting of public forums, providing information to people who came to a CBO, and some level of direct outreach. California is poised to spend at least \$90 million in state funds on the upcoming census effort. New York cannot fall behind while other large states with diverse and large populations of non-citizens are planning robust census efforts beginning this calendar year.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on the critical need for census funding. I look forward to continuing to work together to ensure every New Yorker’s right to be counted.

