

**TESTIMONY OF BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT RUBEN DIAZ JR.
BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE COMPLETE COUNT COMMISSION
TO PREPARE FOR THE 2020 CENSUS**

MARCH 11, 2019

Good evening, NYS Complete Count Co-Chairs, Secretary of State Rossana Rosado and Jim Malatras. I am Marricka Scott-McFadden and I am the Deputy Borough President of the Bronx.

On behalf of the people of my borough I want to thank you for giving of your time as leaders of our state's "Complete Count" commission, and doing your part to make sure that the 2020 Census delivers for all New Yorkers. Whether Bronxites and New Yorkers know it or not the census count has a huge effect on what happens in our everyday lives. If New Yorkers are not counted, our quality of life and our access to necessary services will undoubtedly be diminished.

We at the Borough President's office are working with Churches, Colleges, Non-profits and Community Based Organizations to put together our own complete the count committee. We plan to work with those within the community to ensure that trusted voices communicate just how important it is to be counted in this upcoming Census.

I am here this evening on behalf of Bronx Borough President, Ruben Diaz Jr., to present our view on ways to ensure that as many New Yorkers as possible are accurately counted in the 2020 Census.

There is no doubt that New York City needs adequate funding in order to help our residents thrive. The accuracy of the Census count has a direct impact on the amount of government funding that is allocated to the Bronx, and New York City as a whole. These government funds support a gamut of issues, from infrastructure improvements, rehabilitation of public housing and Head Start programs - all of which our Bronx and New York City residents profoundly need. Understanding this fact is the first step to understanding how important it is to promote an accurate Census count.

Historically, our communities have been chronically undercounted and therefore, acutely underserved. In the Bronx, we have had a history of having to do more with less for our more than 1.4 million residents. Based on the latest census estimates, approximately 57 percent of Bronx County's current population, some 818,390 residents, live in hard to count neighborhoods. In fact, the Bronx ranks #4 on the

list of Hard to Count Counties in all of New York State. By that same metric, almost 30 percent of Bronx households did not respond by mail to the 2010 Census, leaving some of them to be left out of that years count. Knowing what we know now, and how critical it is to our community's well-being to be counted, we cannot stand idly by and let that happen again.

The Bronx has seen its overall participation in the Census increase considerably, rising from 56 percent during the 2000 Census to 65 percent in 2010. This improvement was in no small part due to a concerted effort and partnerships between local officials, community organizations and the Census staff itself. A decade has passed, and we are now facing an even more polarized environment that works to invoke fear and intimidation within vulnerable populations. This fact poses an even more significant threat to hard to count communities, and increases the likelihood of undercounting that could occur as a result.

All of this underscores the need for resources from the state that are specifically allocated to Community Based Organizations to help increase their capacity.

This is why the Bronx Borough President is advocating for the inclusion of \$40 million dollars in the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) budget to build additional capacity at Community Based Organizations in New York City to ensure that all of our residents are counted.

Community Based Organizations work within our neighborhoods to reach out to vulnerable populations, explaining the purpose of the census, what it means to their community, how it helps our schools, how it affects our representation in Congress and their districts. With adequate funding, we at least have a fighting chance to target historically hard-to-count communities, to make sure they know this is their opportunity to be represented, counted and heard.

Conducting an accurate count for the 2020 Census will be no small feat. It requires planning, education, strategic management, and a groundswell of community outreach with partners invested in its mission – “a complete count”. We believe that the only Census that is a successful one is one that sincerely aims to reach, each and every person, and count each and every household it can. Without full participation in the 2020 Census, New York City residents, Bronxites, will not receive the Federal resources and political representation they need and deserve. But that can only happen when there is a commitment from the State to provide adequate funding.

Thank you for allowing me to speak before you this evening, and Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.