



National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Ellenville Branch
PO Box 229 Ellenville, NY 12428

NYS Census Commission
SUNY Sullivan
112 College Road
Loch Sheldrake, NY 12759

Re: Census Testimony
20 March 2019

Good Evening Commissioners. My name is Ann Brown; I am the Civic Engagement Chair of the Ellenville Branch of the NAACP. With half a million supporters throughout the US and world, the NAACP has been leading grassroots campaigns for equal opportunity and community mobilization for 110 years.

The NAACP is committed to the full and fair counting of New York State's people for the Census 2020.

The Constitution requires the federal government to count all persons living in the US every ten years. It must be based on the actual count of all persons dwelling in US residential structures. These include citizens, non-citizen long-term visitors and undocumented immigrants. The final count matters.

The federal government uses census data to determine the allocation of federal funding for programs such as Head Start, Medicare, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Pell grants for college and reduced-price school lunch programs. Congressional representation is also based on the census data.

Let us be clear, this is a zero sum game. There are a finite number of Congressional seats. There are a finite number of Federal dollars. If New York State is undercounted, other states will gain. There are those who have a powerful interest in not counting all of New York's inhabitants.

Although the Census is a Federal responsibility, New York State has a unique vested interest in the count of our inhabitants being complete. If our population is undercounted we will lose some of our representation in Congress...and billions of dollars in Federal aid.

Governor Cuomo has stated publicly that he believes all New Yorkers should be counted. However, **he has failed to provide any funding in the budget for community outreach** to encourage full participation. This must be changed.

Educating communities about the census needs to be done right and needs to begin immediately. Sending outsiders with government badges and clipboards into communities is the wrong approach. The current wave of racism, deportations, and White Nationalism has instilled fear in many communities. This fear constrains people from opening their doors and speaking frankly about the members of their households. **The best approach is for New York State to partner with trusted local organizations, like the NAACP and others, to use their preexisting community networks to teach about this essential issue.**

Counting folks in mansions will be easy. **A full count of people in all the neighborhoods will require a joint effort by the State and grassroots organizations on the ground.** We insist that Governor Cuomo make the appropriate funding of 40 million dollars available in the current budget.

We must do this. Billions of dollars and our political representation are both at stake. Other states hope we will fail. Don't fail our state. Thank you.

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