Testimony to New York State Complete Count Commission

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Queens Borough Hall

For the past two decennial censuses, AAF has been the leader in organizing the Asian American communities of New York for full participation in the Census count. In 2010 we were able to re-grant to 35 community groups mostly in New York, but also in New Jersey and Philadelphia for Census outreach work. AAF is also the leading expert in New York's Asian American community on Census issues and the only officially designated Census Information Center by the U.S. Census Bureau focused on the Asian community in the Northeast.

We want to highlight for the commission the need to fund community-based organizations who have invested in their communities and built a level of trust with the people they serve. We also want to ensure that Asians as the fastest-growing population in New York City and State, growing from 1.6 million to 1.9 million from 2010 to 2017, are fully included in the state's outreach and funding priorities.

Asian Americans have historically been a hard to count community. Immigration is one of the primary reasons. Larger portions of the Asian community are recent immigrants, never having experienced a census in the United States.
- According to the most recent ACS data, 17%of all Asians in New York moved into the US after the last Census was completed, compared to 10 percent of non-Asians and 10 percent of all Hispanics.
- The rapid growth in the Asian population in upstate counties has resulted in 31%of all Asians living in upstate counties having arrived after the last Census was completed.
- Two-thirds Asians in New York State are immigrants. 7 in 10 Asians in NYC are immigrants. As a consequence significant portions of the community have limited English skills, with 2 in 5 Asians across the state and almost half of Asians in the city having limited English skills.

In addition, Asian American perceptions of Census indicate less than favorable views about Census participation.
- Recent Census Bureau studies in preparation for the 2020 Census found that Asian Americans were the least likely racial group to say they intend to participate in the Census.
- Only 55% of Asians surveyed planned to respond to the Census, compared to 64% of Blacks, 65% of Hispanics, and 69% of non-Hispanic Whites.
- Asians were more concerned that Census data would be used against them and were less likely to say that Census data mattered to their communities.
    o Historic use of Census data for the internment of Japanese Americans, despite being addressed post-war by stronger laws prohibiting the sharing of personal Census data, continue to resonate with Asians.

o Also, the legal fight around the citizenship question and the current actions by the Trump administration to limit immigration and increase deportations are also negatively influencing perceptions and increasing reluctance in interacting with all levels of government.

Despite the current misgivings about the Census in the Asian community, history suggests that CBO-based outreach is highly effective in convincing Asian Americans to participate. In 2010, Asian mail response rates in New York City, a key measure of Census participation, was 71%, an increase from 63% in 2000. Key differences between the 2000 and 2010 Censuses were AAF's Census Outreach Initiative which included regranting and training for community groups for Census outreach and targeted media buys in the Asian community, and Census Bureau's own paid media and partnership programs.

We recommend that state and city government step up to provide resources to allow trusted community organizations to reach out to the hardest to reach members of our communities to ensure a complete count. **Significant investment needs to be made in particular for outreach and assistance in the Asian community for 2020 Census due to major changes in how the Census will be implemented.** We support the New York Counts 2020 Coalition in continuing to call for the State to invest at least $40 million for all community-based organizations to do critical outreach to hard-to-reach populations.

We need this investment because:
- **We need to address the awareness issue.** With significant portions of the Asian community never having experienced a Census, we need to work with CBOs that work with these immigrant communities to inform them about what the Census is, why it is important and most importantly how to participate.
- **We need to address the language needs of the community.** Even with eight new languages (Arabic, French, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese and Tagalog) supported with online forms translated and a paid media campaign, in addition to the languages previously supported in the 2010 Census (Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Russian, and Vietnamese), NONE of these languages support the fastest growing Asian communities in New York State (listed in order of growth rates): Nepali, Burmese, Indian, Bhutanese, Thai, Indonesian, and Pakistani.
- **We need to show our communities how the Census benefits them directly.** By giving our CBOs resources to incorporate Census messages into their work, they can show how the Census brings funding and resources for the programs that their communities use every day.
- **We need to reassure our communities of the safety of their information.** With the citizenship question and the continued anti-immigrant policies at the federal level, immigrant communities are wary of the Census and interacting with the government in any way. This message must come from trusted community voices, not government.
- **We need to make the Census easy to complete.** The 2020 Census is the first internet Census. Yet, 14% of Asian households in NYC do not have internet access in any form and 9% of Asian households in upstate Counties do not have internet access. Working with libraries, community organizations, and elected officials we need to create safe community spaces where our most vulnerable members can participate in the count.