



May 6, 2019

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the role of public libraries in the upcoming 2020 Census.

I'm Erica Freudenberger, the Outreach and Engagement Coordinator for the Southern Adirondack Library System, one of 23 public library systems in New York. With me today is Sara Dallas, our director and member of the Library Complete Count Committee. We serve 34 mostly small, rural member libraries in Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington counties. Our smallest library, in Raquette Lake, serves 114 people, while the largest, the Crandall Public Library in Glens Falls, serves 57,329 residents.

Historically, people in poverty, those in transient living situations, people of color, and immigrants are undercounted in census efforts. The move to a digital census will further exacerbate the challenge of getting an accurate count, especially in rural "hard to count" areas without reliable broadband, and where much of the population have little to no access to home internet or mobile phone service. In New York, 25% of households earning less than \$50K annually rely on the local public library as the primary point of internet access.

The 2020 Census will have an immense impact on the underfunded and unrepresented communities we serve, and we are concerned that digital equity issues will result in an incomplete count, costing us resources and representation.

Fortunately, public libraries are located within five miles of 99% of the hard-to-count census tracts identified with the lowest response rates in 2010 – and 73% of the time are located within one mile. Our member libraries are planning on providing broadband access points and trusted assistance to those with digital and literacy challenges to ensure that everyone is counted.

We are already supporting the census, hosting recruitment for potential workers at member libraries and collaborating with Amy Brombas at the New York Regional Census Center. While we are delighted to play this role as a critical partner with the government, public libraries need funding to invest in infrastructure, technology, cybersecurity, and staffing – an estimated additional 150,000 to 175,000 library staff hours will be needed to do our part in ensuring a fair, accurate, and inclusive count. We appreciate the \$20 million designated for census efforts in New York and want to ensure that public libraries will receive funding to support our role in obtaining an equitable count. This investment in public libraries will yield robust returns in the coming decade, ensuring that every person counts.

Thank you.

Erica Freudenberger  
Outreach & Engagement Coordinator  
Southern Adirondack Library System