



New York State Complete Count Commission Hearing
April 12, 2019
Make the Road New York

My name is Eliana Fernandez. I am a Lead Organizer at Make the Road New York and a longtime Suffolk County resident.

I stand here today to represent the immigrant community, which the Trump administration is trying to silence and intimidate. New York state cannot allow for families like mine to be erased and therefore our state must show leadership and commitment to make sure we are all counted.

Our organization, Make The Road New York, is working to ensure our communities understand the importance of being counted in the census because this is not just about how many people live in our communities, it's about the allocation of resources for critical programs such as: education, health care, housing, food assistance, and the kind of political representation that our communities will receive over the next ten years.

In an attempt to undermine the participation of the immigrant community, the Trump administration requested to the Census bureau to add a citizenship question. However, our community stood together to challenge this request. A coalition of states and community organizations, including Make the Road, took this issue to the court and it will now be heard by the Supreme Court this year.

I am a DACA recipient who comes from a mixed-status family. Some of my family members are citizens, some green card holders, and others are undocumented. Like my family, there are thousands more across Suffolk County who may not want to answer the Census because they will not want to put their families at risk.

It is fundamental that New York State show real leadership to make sure all of us are counted in 2020. Currently, the State of New York has allocated \$20 million in the budget, this is not nearly enough in comparison to what is needed. By comparison, California has allocated well over \$100 million in its census efforts. New York needs to go further to secure and expedite funding for this campaign.

In order to have every single member of our immigrant and working class communities accounted for, New York needs to adequately fund community-based outreach. Trusted community organizations with community ties, like Make the Road, will help maximize participation across the county and the state.

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I know the immigrant community is one of the hardest-to-count communities on Long Island. Although people will be allowed to submit their responses online, this may not be attainable for many in Suffolk County who lack access to safe and reliable internet.

We need to be fully prepared for the 2020 Census, New York's political representation in Congress is at risk. We cannot afford to lose, our communities cannot afford to lose.

The voices of our communities are at risk. It is our responsibility to help lead on this issue to ensure everyone is counted, regardless of their immigration status or what community they are from.

All New Yorkers here in Suffolk including the immigrant community across the state deserve a fair and accurate count. New York needs to invest the resources to make this possible and fair for everyone.

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