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New York Secretary of State Rosado, Dr. Malatras, and members of the New York State Complete Count Commission: thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today to stress the importance of the 2020 Census to Nassau County, and the outreach efforts of our Complete Count Committees here on Long Island.

It cannot be overstated how important the upcoming 2020 Census is to Nassau County for state and federal funding, non-partisan and fair redistricting, economic development, education, and many other critical issues over the next decade and beyond. Census data is used by policymakers to identify a community's needs and to distribute over \$73 Billion annually in federal funding to New York State and its localities. This federal funding includes critical transportation and infrastructure dollars, and funding for a range of important programs such as Medicaid, Medicare Part B, Head Start, WIC, Transit-Capital Investment Grants, CDBG Grants, Pell Grants, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Health, housing, transit, education, the environment, our roads, social services, fair representation on all levels of government - you name it, it's probably impacted in some way by census data.

The Census also provides statistics that are important to economic development and planning efforts and are used in proposals by local governments for competitive grant programs. Additionally, businesses will use this data to determine if Nassau County is a viable place to expand or set up shop. As creating a business-friendly environment and pushing for economic development are top priorities of my Administration, this is incredibly important: if we're under-counted it would mean less business in the future for the County.

It is also important to note that the Decennial Census is used as the basis for equal political representation under the Constitution. Fair redistricting and representation in Congress, the State Legislature and, in Nassau, the County Legislature, and the Town Councils in Hempstead and North Hempstead all depend on an accurate count of the population. A complete count in the 2020 Census will ensure that a fair and non-partisan redistricting of these districts can occur - an accurate count will help to minimize in the next decade the racial and partisan gerrymandering that we too often see looking at today's maps.

Nassau County is the fifth hardest-to-count county in the State of New York, behind only Kings, Queens, Bronx, and Suffolk Counties, with approximately 23% of its population living in what are classified as hard-to-count neighborhoods. The County's major hardest-to-count communities include Hempstead, Freeport, Uniondale, Lakeview, Elmont, Valley Stream, Long Beach, Glen Cove, and Great Neck.

That is why in February I formed Nassau County's Complete Count Committee. Complete Count Committees are essential to developing and implementing effective outreach efforts that will occur over the next year with the goal of increasing response rates. Comprised of community leaders, non-profits, local government officials, and activists, Complete Count Committees have the grassroots knowledge needed to communicate, educate, and motivate their networks and communities from the ground, up. We must all work together to ensure every single Nassau County resident is counted in the 2020 Census.

Complete Count Committees will have to tackle many new challenges for the 2020 Census. For the first time ever, self-responses will move to an online system, which will be unfamiliar and disconcerting to many residents, and possibly inaccessible for our seniors and some residents in our hardest-to-count communities.

Additionally, the threat of a citizenship question, whether it is ultimately included on the questionnaire or not, has already been a part of the public discourse causing concern and fear, and potentially having a cooling effect on the response rates in our immigrant communities. With an estimated 112,143 foreign born non-citizens residing in Nassau County, or 8.3% of the total county population, this could lead to major undercounts in a significant part of Nassau's population, which is why it is important that we engage our immigrant communities, and all of our hard-to-count communities, early to educate, assure, and motivate them to be counted.

With these new challenges, it is vital to prioritize supporting the outreach and mobilizing efforts of our Complete Count Committees. Most Long Island residents know that we send more in tax dollars to Albany and Washington D.C. than we get back in funding. We simply cannot afford an undercount. The 2020 Census is our chance to get it right and to ensure we're getting our fair share for the next ten years. That is why having an active and successful Complete Count Committee is so important to Long Island - we need to put our heads together, strategize, and utilize every resource available to us to ensure that every resident, no matter their race, immigration status, or zip code, knows they count, and that they need to be counted in 2020.

Thank you for your consideration, I look forward to working towards increased response rates in 2020.

Sincerely,



Laura Curran
Nassau County Executive