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New York State Complete Count Commission
April 12, 2019 - Public Hearing

Comments of: Marian H. Russo, Executive Director
Village of Patchogue Community Development Agency

Good afternoon. My name is Marian Russo. I am the Director of the Village of Patchogue Community Development Agency and serve as the Village's representative on the Suffolk County Full Count Committee.

The Village of Patchogue is a community of 12,000 residents located on the South Shore of Long Island. It is also part of the Patchogue-Medford School District which has 51,000 residents. Both the Village and the school district have a high percentage of Latino residents. In the last census 30 percent of the Village residents identified as Latino. For the school district the percentage was 44 percent. The poverty rate in Patchogue is 15 percent and we are a majority low-mod income community.

The Village is participating in the Full Count Committee because Mayor Pontieri understands that numbers matter. The information from the census has a direct impact on the funding the Village receives from the state and federal governments. The census information is integral for allocation of resources, for grant funding requests, and provision of services.

The Patchogue community will form its own full count committee leveraging an established network of community based and faith-based organizations along with the Patchogue-Medford Library. The Village relies on the community-based organizations and faith-based organizations for community outreach because every day they interact and serve those whom are most likely not to respond to the census, the underserved, elderly, poor, and immigrants.

The 2020 census presents roadblocks to counting particularly with responses being taken online. Many in our community do not have computers or connections to the internet and then there are those who just do not know how to use the "new" technology. Of particular concern is the inclusion of the citizenship question. For a community with a large immigrant population which includes DACA and TPS recipients as well as undocumented individuals, the citizenship question could cause many not to respond. It will take the work of trusted individuals representing trusted organizations to reassure, dispel rumors, and calm fears. Those organizations are community-based organizations and faith-based organizations working in the community.

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Because it is the community-based organizations and the faith-based organizations that will be doing the majority of the work we encourage direct funding to those organizations to assure a full count for the Village of Patchogue, the County of Suffolk and the State of New York.

Thank you for your time.