

New York State Complete Count Commission

Public Hearing – Buffalo, NY

April 18, 2019

Testimony Mary Jean Jakubowski, Director Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System

Good evening.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

I would like to open my remarks and direct them to the Honorable Byron Brown, Mayor, City of Buffalo.

Mr. Mayor, Byron. I am so very happy to learn of Buffalo's Complete County Committee and the collaboration/cooperation between the City's Committee and the County's Committee. I am sure that you have the 9 libraries located within the City on your radar and recognize the important role that the public libraries will have in helping to get everyone counted. Therefore I am requesting the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library be included in your Committee and thank you for the opportunity. Thank you for your consideration.

I cannot stress enough the important of libraries --- all libraries; public, school, academic, etc. in the Complete Count effort. We are trusted intuitions, places where everyone is welcome and many (many) come – for books, for programs, for lifelong learning, and so on. In the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System not only do we currently have nearly 1,000 free public access computers with high-speed internet, as well as free high-speed Wi-Fi - we provide over 1,700 service hours per week from our 37 libraries and bookmobile throughout the County of Erie. That's quite a bit of time for folks to come into the library and complete the online Census!

As I know you will hear today, from my library colleagues, the libraries are here to help. We want to help and absolutely recognize the importance of getting everyone counted. We here in Erie County recognize the loss of funding which resulted from thousands not being counted in 2010.

And we wholeheartedly say: Please let us help! The only thing I would ask from you, from beyond working collaboratively with us is to be considerate of what we do. We are not able to and I don't think you want us to – forgo our ability to provide current services i.e. access to free computers and Wi-Fi for the sake of the Census. In other words – stop providing a service so that we can adequately take on another task. What I am saying is: we need both computers and staff to assist with the process of Counting Communities – and we need your help and support to make this happen. You obviously recognize the important role of libraries in this Census – acknowledging such by simply having libraries represented on the Commission. I, we, thank you for that.

I'll say it again.....Please don't ask us to take on a task without providing support in order for all of us to do it right! We want to be able to SUCCESSFULLY help in getting everyone counted! Thank you.

