



May 2, 2019

My name is Janice Dekoff and I am the Executive Director of the Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System; our system serves 38 libraries across the two counties. I am asking the Complete Count Commission to support libraries in receiving a portion of the \$20 million that has been earmarked for census efforts. A recent Sienna poll confirms that New York is currently headed towards a devastating undercount that will impact our representation in Congress and threaten nearly \$60 billion in federal funding. By providing funding to support libraries involvement in census efforts, we increase our chances of retaining both representation and funding.

Libraries are the heart of the community. They are uniquely situated to play a major role in the success of the 2020 Census. Libraries are trusted institutions across the state and the country. Community members know that they can rely on their libraries for accurate information, quality assistance, and easy access to the internet inside and outside of operating hours. The trust that libraries have established with their communities will play a vital role in a successful and accurate census. It is currently estimated that libraries will invest an additional 150,000-175,000 in staff hours assisting patrons with technology to allow them to complete the census. With proper funding they will be able to educate and assist our community members with the challenges of completing the first online census.

Twenty-five percent of households in our service area are without access to the internet or computers at home and rely on libraries to meet their needs. Our communities have seen major employers leave the area over recent years. Many of the people who have lost their jobs are heading to the library to learn how to use a computer for the first time. Senior citizens come to the library to take computer classes and learn that they can have confidence in using the internet for a variety of tasks. There are many people in our community who simply don't feel comfortable conducting business such as banking over the internet. All of these people will need support to complete an online census that was designed for those who have easy access to the internet and are computer savvy.

While our libraries are eager to be leaders in complete count efforts, the lack of sufficient funding that has persisted over the last decade is a major barrier. Every year libraries see rising needs in their communities and strive to meet them despite inadequate funding. Providing census funding to libraries across New York State ensures that we are adequately prepared to spearhead efforts; this will result in a more accurate count of our population.

Libraries function to help their communities succeed. At this time, we are asking for support so we can assist the state in securing our future stability. We all want to see New York flourish in the coming years and these efforts will go a long way towards making that a reality.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice Dekoff".

Janice Dekoff
Executive Director Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System