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leading libraries forward

To: New York State Complete Count Commission
Date: April 19, 2019

My name is Andrea Snyder and I am the Outreach and Training Coordinator at the Pioneer Library System (PLS), one of the 23 cooperative public library systems in New York State. PLS is comprised of 42 small and rural public libraries located in the Livingston, Ontario, Wayne and Wyoming Counties.

Libraries are trusted institutions in their communities and we recognize that because of this many will be relying on their local library for both access and information when it comes time for them to complete the 2020 census digitally. Libraries provide internet access to nearly 20% of New Yorkers who lack broadband access at home.

There is much overlap between the targeted groups that Library Systems serve (according to New York State Education Law, §273 (1) (h) (1), and Commissioner's Regulations §90.3) and the groups that are defined as Hard-to-Count by the United States Census Bureau.

These groups include but are not limited to non-English speakers and member of ethnic or minority groups, people with mental or physical disabilities, and low-income persons. In New York, 100% of the census-defined hard to count populations live within 1 mile of a public library.

In addition, libraries are committed to digital security and online privacy. Library staff can help individuals understand how the online census works, what risks are inherent in the process, and how the library as a point-of-access has helped to mitigate those risks. In order to provide the safest and most secure online experience, many libraries will require additional funding to put best practices into place.

Libraries are underfunded at the state level as we are still not receiving State Aid at the statutory level. Although libraries are excited to help lead efforts to ensure a complete count, additional funding would expand their ability to do even more. I urge you to support a financial investment in libraries to support the work that they will be carrying out to ensure that all New Yorkers are counted. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea Snyder
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