

**Testimony re: 2020 Census**

**Submitted to  
New York State Complete Count Commission**

**Submitted by  
Alejandra Sorto  
Director of Civic Engagement and Organizing  
Hispanic Federation**

**May 1, 2019**

Dear members of the NYS Complete Count Commission:

My name is Alejandra Sorto and I am the Director of Civic Engagement and Organizing for Hispanic Federation. I want to first and foremost thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Hispanic Federation and our network of over 70 Latino community-based organizations in New York State.

The Hispanic Federation is a nationwide Latino membership organization founded to advance and empower the Latino community socially, politically and economically. The Federation does that by supporting and strengthening Latino nonprofits, carrying out public policy research and advocacy, and offering our state's residents with an array of community programs in the areas of education, immigration, health, economic empowerment, disaster-relief and civic engagement.

As you know all too well, the decennial 2020 Census is key to ensuring proper representation and resources for our state's diverse communities. Census data is used for crucial decisions such as the reapportionment of the US House of Representatives, redistricting at all levels of government, and the allocation of over \$800 billion dollars in federal government resources to states, localities, and families every year. New York alone receives \$53.2 billion in Census-guided federal funds annually.

Unfortunately, actions taken by the federal government have made it more likely that the 2020 Census will massively undercount people of color and immigrants here in New York and states across the nation. The Census Bureau's preparations for the 2020 Census have been significantly hampered due to years of underfunding. The last-minute addition of a citizenship question has only further disrupted the Bureau's plans for data collection and has significantly amplified fear and distrust of government within immigrant communities. A significant undercount of communities deemed "Hard to Count" — which includes low income individuals and families, people of color and immigrants — would be disastrous for our state, translating into the potential loss of billions of dollars in federal funding and 2 congressional seats.

**National Headquarters**

55 Exchange Place, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10005  
T: 212.233.8955 F: 212.233.8996

**Washington DC Office**

1133 19th Street N.W., Suite 1035  
Washington, DC 20036  
T: 202.887.4977 F: 202.833.6136

**Connecticut State Office**

175 Main Street, 2nd Floor  
Hartford, CT 06106  
T: 860.527.0856 F: 860.724.0437

**Florida & Southeast Region Office**

6900 S. Orange Blossom Trail, Suite 200  
Orlando, FL 32809  
T: 407.270.0597 F: 407.965.0356

We must all do our part to make sure that this does not happen. Community-based organizations and community leaders will be particularly important in overcoming the efforts by the Trump administration to undermine our state's census count. The borough in which today's hearing is taking place underscores the challenges we have ahead of us. Queens is the second most populous county in NY, home to approximately 2.3 million people from 150 different countries and is the most linguistically diverse area in the world, with over 138 languages spoken across the borough. According to the Census Bureau's latest estimates, over a third (36%) of New York's current population lives in hard-to-count neighborhoods. This trend is significantly higher in areas such as Queens County where 67% of the population (over 1.5 million people) are located within HTC areas, in neighborhoods such as Astoria, Jackson Heights, Corona, Jamaica, Morris Park, among others.

We urge the members of the NYS Complete Count Commission to ensure that community-based organizations here in Queens and all throughout the state of New York have the resources they need to carry out effective census education and engagement efforts in their neighborhoods and communities. The fact is that monies allocated so far by our state government are insufficient to do the work that is necessary. This committee must ensure that our state government fulfills fully its commitment and responsibility around resource allocation for census outreach. It must encourage city and local governments to help to fill the void left by our state government, and it must drive our partners in philanthropy — foundations, businesses and philanthropists in general — to step up and do the same. Hispanic Federation stands ready to work with this Committee to achieve this important goal. Thank you for your time.