



Good evening. I am Paul Westrick, Manager of Democracy Policy at the New York Immigration Coalition, a member of New York Counts 2020. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the 2020 census and how we can work together to ensure we have an accurate count of all communities.

The over 200 members of New York Counts 2020 asked the State for \$40 million to be dedicated to community-based organizations (CBOs) to conduct on-the-ground census outreach and education. We were disappointed the State budget allocated only \$20 million, with no specific amount set aside for CBOs. \$20 million is simply not enough to conduct basic outreach in hard-to-count communities and shows that New York is not taking seriously the threat of an undercount. I ask that this commission work with the Governor and Legislature to allocate an additional \$20 million.

An undercount jeopardizes the over \$73 billion dollars New York State receives annually across 55 federal programs funded through census data. These vital programs include Medicaid, Medicare Part B, Highway Planning and Construction, and SNAP. New York's political power is also on the line as we are already estimated to lose 1-2 seats in the House of Representatives, and could lose more if there is a significant undercount.

Our work in ensuring a complete count in 2020 is even harder than previous census efforts. Underfunding of the US Census Bureau, the switch to a largely digital census, and an overall climate of fear and distrust in the federal government presents significant barriers to achieving an accurate count. And even if the Supreme Court rules against the inclusion of a citizenship question on the census, the damage has already been done. Rather than just having to build trust with hard-to-count communities, we now have to rebuild trust so everyone feels comfortable providing their household information.

CBOs are in the best position to do this. CBOs are already on the ground, have the language and cultural competency needed to reach our diverse populations, and the earned trust that comes with years and decades of working within communities. But they need funding. A total of \$40 million dollars would allow CBOs to do "basic outreach" consisting of public forums, providing information, and direct outreach. I urge the commission to recommend an additional \$20 million be allocated to census outreach and education, and to dedicate that money toward CBOs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to continuing to work together to ensure every New Yorker's right to be counted.