

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We all know how important the Census is to New York State and I am excited that the 2020 Census will initially be done online; however, I am concerned about our homebound elderly population and those who don't get out of the house much. I believe that these people will find a digital census daunting.

The solution is to utilize the census to show our homebound elderly and shut-ins that their community cares about them by taking the time to help them complete the census with one on one assistance. Not only will this help us obtain a true count, but it will also give the community a way to work with this vulnerable group. I see this as an opportunity to reach out to each of our neighbors not only as a wellness check but to integrate those who may feel abandoned.

While this is a great opportunity, it will not be a cheap one. When dealing with seniors and shut-ins the most important skill is patients and listening. It requires a trusted, caring person to work with an elderly or shut-in person who has limited exposure to the internet. This is not just about offering a computer and Wi-Fi, it is about sitting down with a person and guiding them through new and sometimes scary technology with patience and thoughtfulness. More importantly, this is an opportunity to make sure that all our neighbors know that they are important and that there is a community that welcomes them. It would be a shame to miss this once a decade opportunity due to lack of funding.

While New York State did fund Census 2020 with \$20 million, experts say it will require \$40million. It is not clear how much it will cost to meet the special needs of the homebound elderly and shut-ins. I hope that New York State will fund our existing networks such as Visiting Nurses, Home Health Aid Groups and Meals on Wheels to use the census as another way to support this vulnerable group.

Sincerely,
Nuala O'Doherty

Queens Count Committee