



TESTIMONY OF  
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BEFORE NEW YORK STATE COMPLETE COUNT COMMISSION  
ON  
2020 CENSUS

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Hostos Community College, Bronx, New York

Greetings on behalf of LatinoJustice PRLDEF (LJP), a national civil rights institution in the Latinx community, headquartered in New York that champions an equitable society by using the power of the law together with advocacy and education. Since being founded in 1972 as *the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund*, LJP has advocated for and defended the constitutional rights and the equal protection of all Latinos under the law and has worked to secure the voting rights and political participation of Latino voters. LJP has been involved in state and federal litigation regarding Latino political representation and voting rights, including constitutional legal challenges to discriminatory redistricting plans or those otherwise implicating voting rights

I thank you for the invitation to share our views on the upcoming decennial Census and its effect on the Latinx community – the State’s largest racial and ethnic minority.

With your permission I would like to only outline a few basic points to underscore how the 2020 Census will impact the Latinx community and the State. My written testimony has numerous citations that will assist you and your staff in documenting the foundation of the brief points I would like to make today.

Latinx’s between the ages of 16 to 24 make up the highest plurality of U.S. citizens – the largest of any minority group, and as previously noted Latinx’s are the largest ethnic minority group in New York State. The undercounting of Latinx communities poses serious problems for political representation and proper disbursement of federal funding over the coming decade. Latinx’s already face significant barriers to equal participation in the political process. Voter suppression efforts, gerrymandering, and limited language access barriers are among the many obstacles that discourage and prevent many Latinx’s and families from exercising their constitutional right to vote. When Latinx’s are undercounted in the Census, their communities are accorded fewer congressional representatives and other state and local political districts. This deprives Latinx voters of the equal protection of “one person, one vote” under reapportionment principles of the U.S. Constitution.

In addition, accurate designation of political subdivisions for electoral language assistance under Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act requires an accurate count of linguistic minorities and limited-English proficiency (LEP) voters. When Latinx residents are undercounted, municipalities and counties throughout the State may not qualify for the Section 203 designation that their large LEP populations warrant.

Finally, by undercounting Latinx communities, the Census Bureau deprives citizen and non-citizen Latinx's across the country of their fair share of the \$700 billion that is distributed annually based on Census data for programs such as:

- \$13.9 billion in Title I Grants to Local Education Agencies, which provide financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools of primarily low-income children to ensure that all children are meeting state academic standards.<sup>1</sup> In the 2014-15 school year, Title I served more than 24 million children, about 34 percent of which (over 8 million) were Latino.<sup>2</sup>
- \$11.2 billion in Special Education Grants. To help schools comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Special Education Grants are used to provide resources to students with a disability helping states provide early intervention services for 1.3 million Latino infants and toddlers (0-2) and their families based on the latest estimates.<sup>3</sup>
- \$8.3 billion in Head Start Program Grants. These grants to local public and private nonprofit and for-profit agencies provide child development services to low-income children and families.<sup>4</sup> In the 2015-16 school year, Latino children comprised 37 percent (about 340,000) of participants in the Head Start Program.<sup>5</sup>
- \$69.5 billion in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Nearly 21 percent of Latinos receive SNAP benefits.<sup>6</sup>
- \$11.6 billion in National School Lunch Program (NSLP). NSLP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free lunches to 24 percent of Latino children in low-income homes in public and nonprofit schools in 2004-2005.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Factsheet: Will You Count? Latinos in the 2020 Census*. The Leadership Conference Education Fund, Center on Poverty and Inequality, Georgetown, and Economic Security and Opportunity Initiative, April 17, 2018, at p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, at p. 3

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

- \$6.3 billion in Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). WIC gives nutrition assistance through vouchers used to buy nutrient-rich food for pregnant women and children under five, of which Latino women and children made up 42 percent (more than 4 million) of the participants in 2012.<sup>8</sup>
- \$19.1 billion in Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers Program. Section 8 vouchers helps secure affordable housing for about 16 percent (over 300,000 households) of low-income Latino seniors, people with disabilities, and families with children.<sup>9</sup>
- \$312 billion in Medicaid. Medicaid is a federal-state insurance program that provides health coverage to low-income families and individuals, parents, seniors, and people with disabilities, of which about one fifth (20 percent) of those enrolled in Medicaid in 2012 were Latino.<sup>10</sup>
- \$11.1 billion in Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). CHIP provides funds to enable states to maintain and expand child health assistance to uninsured, low-income children, and about 60 percent of all Latinos eligible for CHIP participate in the program.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*