



New York State Complete Count Commission Hearing
March 11, 2019
Make the Road New York

My name is Yatziri Tovar. I am a member of Make the Road New York and a Bronx resident.

I am here because the Trump Administration is seeking to intimidate immigrant communities and erase families like mine, and we need New York to step up to make sure we're counted.

The census is the country's way of knowing how many people live in each city, county and state. It is a critical source of information that communities nationwide rely on for political representation, and allocation of resources that our communities need.

About a year ago, I learned that the Department of Justice, led by the former Attorney General Jeff Sessions, had requested that the Census Bureau add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census, threatening our democracy and putting the entire Census in jeopardy.

Adding a citizenship question is a clear attempt from the Trump administration to undercount and silence immigrant communities. I'm a Dreamer, my husband and some of my family members are citizens and others are undocumented. It is families like mine who may not want to answer the Census because they will not want to put their families at risk.

A coalition of states and community organizations, including Make the Road New York have taken this issue up to the court. This past January the court sided with us and rejected the reckless attempt to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census—a decision that will now be heard by the Supreme Court.

But, as we wait to for the US Supreme Court decision, New York State needs to prepare for the 2020 Census. It's not just the citizenship question, but also the under-funding, under-planning, and under-staffing at the federal level that will hurt the Census.

It is critical that, where the federal government lags behind, New York State shows real leadership. As a recent report by the Fiscal Policy Institute shows, to get a full, fair count, NY must include \$40 million for community-based outreach for the Census in our state budget this year, in addition to funds for state and local government outreach. This cannot wait for next year's budget.

New York needs to properly fund community based outreach because it is these trusted messengers who will help maximize participation across the state to ensure a full and accurate count of our immigrant communities and working class people of color.

As a Bronx resident, I know my community is one of the hardest-to-count communities in the country. This upcoming Census people will be able to submit their responses online, yet during 2013-2017, 24.3% of Bronx county's households had no internet access. With the Bronx having a mail back self-response rate of just a bit over 50% and with a quarter of its resident having no access to the internet, the Bronx is at risk of being undercounted and underrepresented.

If we do not prepare for the 2020 Census, New York's political representation in Congress is at risk.

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Resources for schools, hospitals, housing, Medicare, are at risk.

The voices of our communities are at risk.

Our communities are under attack by this Administration that is using every tool at its disposal to undermine and undercount our people. It is our duty and responsibility to lead in this issue and make sure everyone is counted.

My community deserves to be counted, the Bronx deserved to be counted, New Yorkers deserve a full, fair and accurate count. And New York needs to invest the resources to make it happen.

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