



# NYCLU

NEW YORK CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

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Submitted by: New York Civil Liberties Union-Lower Hudson Valley Chapter  
Testimony to Census Commission  
SUNY Sullivan  
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Good Evening Commissioners, my name is Lorraine Lopez-Janove and I am a board member of the Lower Hudson Valley Chapter of the New York Civil Liberties Union. The NYCLU, the New York affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union, is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization with eight offices throughout the state and more than 180,000 members and supporters. The NYCLU's mission is to promote and protect the fundamental rights, principles, and values embodied in the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution and the New York Constitution.

We care deeply about ensuring that every New Yorker is counted in the 2020 census and are particularly focused on hard-to-count communities who also have a history of low-civic engagement – immigrant communities, low-income communities, communities of color, and young people.

The 2020 Census may be one of the most challenging in recent history with 1) the looming possibility of a citizenship question - a question that serves to intimidate immigrant communities as well as communities of color in which people commonly live in mixed-status households or have family, friends, or neighbors who may be noncitizens, 2) inadequate investment in the Census Bureau from the federal government, and 3) an emphasis on an online response when many community members have limited access to broadband and computers. With these hurdles and the enormity of what is at stake, New York must invest at least \$40 million for community groups (in addition to funds for state and local government outreach) to conduct outreach from trusted community messengers to ensure a full and fair count. It is community organizations that knock on doors every day, talk to their members every single day, have deep relationships in the community and are OF the community. This outreach will prove critical to making sure every New Yorker is counted and that communities across the state receive the resources and political representation they deserve.

The current federal administration has sown fear and uncertainty in many communities and that, combined with a general hesitancy for many New Yorkers to share information with the federal government, could seriously jeopardize a full and fair count in communities that are often undercounted, especially in communities of color. This is why it is absolutely essential that organizations who are trusted messengers in these communities, play the biggest role possible in maximizing participation in the Census next year. But this will require a significant investment from the state. Other states have already recognized the essential role they must play in ensuring a full count. For example, the state of California is investing \$100 million in census outreach. A report from the Fiscal Policy Institute calculated that it would take \$40 million in this year's state budget for community-based organizations to do outreach around the 2020 Census.

The consequences of undercounting our communities would be dire. According to research done by the George Washington Institute of Public Policy, in FY2016, New York received over \$73 billion through 55 federal

spending programs guided by data derived from the 2010 Census. Federal funding, economic development, and fair representation are all at stake with the 2020 census, which is why the state must make the investment now so community-based groups have the opportunity to plan and get the word out early. Next year will be too late. Community groups who have deep and trusted relationships with their constituencies are the best equipped to get the word out about the census and they need the resources NOW in order to be successful, which is why we urging the state to prioritize making this investment.

At this critical juncture, we are counting on you to take the comments that you have heard so far, from Rochester, the Bronx and now the Hudson Valley, seriously. Though your official findings may not be due until the end of May or June, I hope you will send your preliminary findings to the governor immediately, well before April 1st when the New York State budget is finalized. The Governor is betraying the people of this state unless he includes Census money in the budget. He has delayed long enough and the consequences are severe.