

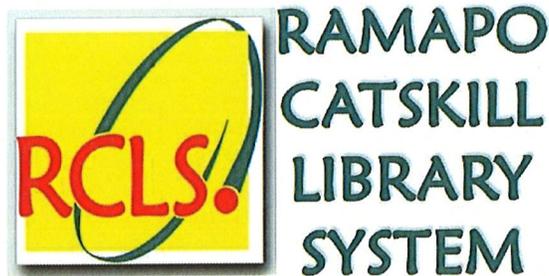
The New York State Complete Count Commission Public Hearing

March 20, 2019

SUBJECT: The role of New York State libraries in the 2020 Census

PURPOSE: To examine the essential service that libraries will provide to their communities as we face the challenges that an online 2020 Census participation will bring.

Grace Riario
Assistant Director
Ramapo Catskill Library System
griario@rcls.org
845-243-3747 ext. 233
www.rcls.org



“The only thing that you absolutely have to know, is the location of the library”. Toni Morrison

My name is Grace Riario, I am the Assistant Director of the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS), a library system that serves forty-seven public libraries in Rockland, Orange, Sullivan and Ulster counties.

Twenty percent of households in New York State lack internet access. In Sullivan County that number increases to forty percent of households in some areas such as Liberty. The lack of internet access will be a challenge for the 2020 Census being conducted primarily online for the first time. The absence of education regarding the impact the 2020 Census will have on our state budget, federal representation, and \$60B in federal funding through population-based formulas is another barrier.

These challenges are the primary reason why libraries are working on developing Complete Count Committees by collaborating with local and state legislators, county departments and nonprofit organizations who work directly with the “Hard-to-Count” (HTC) communities in our area.

According to the Siena Research Institute data, 25% of NYS households earning less than \$50k annually indicate their local public library is their primary point of internet access. Local libraries are trusted institutions and experienced in providing information, technology, and training to assist community members to connect with government.

RCLS met with local legislators in Rockland, Orange and Sullivan counties in January to ask for their help in providing funding to Complete Count Committees and to partner with libraries to develop the committees county-wide.

In February 2019, RCLS partnered with the Orange County Planning Department and the Youth Bureau to create the Orange County Complete Count Committee. We had thirty-six representatives from legislators, county departments, nonprofits and public, academic and school libraries at a 2020 Census educational session. This morning, March 20, 2019, the Orange County Complete Count Committee met again to develop a plan of action to reach the HTC communities. In Sullivan County, libraries have partnered with the Sullivan Agencies Leading Together (SALT) to establish the Sullivan County Complete Count Committee. We had our first 2020 Census educational session this past Monday at the SALT monthly meeting. Libraries

are working with Senator David Carlucci to develop the Rockland County Complete Count Committee. The first 2020 Census educational session in Rockland County will be on April 11, 2019 at the Nanuet Library. Library staff will be trained on the 2020 Census timeline, type of questions, etc this coming spring to increase library staff confidence in answering and helping community members participate on the 2020 Census.

Libraries are collaborating with all of our partners to make sure that we can reach as many people as possible. We are an educational institute; our priorities are to educate community members, to bridge the digital divide and to support a complete count. Libraries will always do their best. However, without funding to help reach the 47,690 people (63%) who live in Sullivan County's hard-to-count neighborhoods, I as an administrator of a public library system, I can guarantee that we will not be able to count everyone. The success of the 2020 Census depends on us, locally, to help community members who need extra help to answer ten questions due to a disability or lack of digital literacy. As my colleague, Terry Kirchner, Executive Director of the Westchester Library System said at March 11th hearing "A modest \$40 million investment in community-based organizations and libraries today will result in a more financially secure New York State that can better support the quality of life needs and democratic rights of all its residents over the next ten years". This \$40 million investment needs to go directly to the community-based organizations. We know what to do with those funds, we are working on getting everyone counted.

Regards,

Grace Riario