

## **TESTIMONY**

### **Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association**

**New York State Complete Count Commission  
Public Hearing**

**April 12, 2019**

**William H. Rogers Building  
Suffolk County Legislature William J. Lindsay Complex  
Smithtown, N.Y.**

**Good afternoon –**

**I am Lorraine Deller, Executive Director of Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association. On behalf of Long Island's 124 boards of education, I am here to affirm our commitment to do all within our authority and capabilities to assure our region has a complete and accurate count in the 2020 Census.**

**Long Island school leaders fully understand the dire ramifications a less-than-complete count will have on our schools, communities and citizens. Ramifications that will plague us well into the decades beyond Year 2020.**

**Census data influences the distribution of federal education funding to schools and states. Long Island and its schools have long experience with chronic underpayment of the government's share in the costs of compliance with federal nutrition programs, Title programs and services for students with special needs as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.**

**Long Island's schools and local property taxpayers have not only been burdened with the need to fill the gaps created by unfunded and underfunded federal education mandates; their federal tax payments have largely gone to ease tax burdens in other states.**

**That inequities caused by an imbalance in federal aid that bypasses this region only to be sent elsewhere is due in large part to a perception that we are an island of wealth with a population with few needs. That, in turn, has influenced Congress' arbitrary limitations as to where federal education dollars are directed.**

**Our schools interact with and serve a large portion of the hidden-from-official view population that the Census must reach. A look at our enrollments shows a vastly different picture than**

that captured in the Census of 2010. If Long Island is to move towards receiving its fair share of federal funding for its public schools, it is imperative that Census 2020 presents a true count of Long Island's demographics. We cannot afford to squander the opportunity to correct the perception.

Under the leadership of the Nassau and Suffolk County Executives and the stewardship of the Health and Welfare Council of Long Island, a grassroots strategic mobilization is underway. This localized mobilization effort is neither premature nor should it be assumed it could be successful on its own. Other states are far ahead of New York in aggressively reaching out to record every part of their population. New York State must not only do the same, it must financially assist those localities and agencies that are the key to reaching the hard-to-reach.

In order that "We Count" is to be more than a logo, we need to count on the State of New York for its support and sufficient resources.

Thank you.

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