
**Testimony for New York State Complete Count Commission's Queens County Public
Hearing**

May 1, 2019

Good evening everyone. My name is Maya Gurung. I am the Case Coordinator at Adhikaar and I have worked with thousands of Nepali-speaking members in our community over the course of last four years working at Adhikaar. The work I do on a day-to-day basis highlights the importance of ensuring that the Nepali speaking community will be represented in the 2020 Census. Adhikaar is the only women-led worker and community center serving and organizing the Nepali-speaking refugee and immigrant community. It is estimated that over fifty thousand Nepali Speaking individuals live in Queens.

Our community is rapidly growing, but we have been historically undercounted for decades. Even within our community, those with limited English proficiency, with low incomes and young children are undercounted. Now is the time to make sure that we are counted and visible. For too long we have been doing this work in addition to other needed services, underfunded, but we never stopped because the community needed us, and continues to need us.

We know that Census data determines how our districts are set up and how we are funded and resourced. For example, Elmhurst Hospital, which is at the heart of the immigrant community living in Queens, is one of the most accessible health facilities. The community dependent on Elmhurst Hospital continues to grow, but the resources given to the hospital remain the same as it's been since years ago -- back when the community wasn't as big as it is now. Recently, one of our community members who was suffering from a brain tumor was admitted to the emergency room, but she could not get a room. That's right -- here, in the City of New York... here, one of the wealthiest cities in America... here, the international capital of the world. Our member was relegated to the emergency room for four days straight and was discharged from there. In addition to that, the member had to postpone her surgery date because there was a backlog of people needing surgery at Elmhurst Hospital. This is just an example to show how even someone with a life-threatening condition must wait for critical services, and how important it is to get an



71-07 Woodside Ave.
Woodside, NY 11377
(718) 937 - 1117

accurate count in the Census that would determine accurate funding for resources accordingly throughout the city. An undercount is something we simply cannot afford.

Other significant challenges that both contribute to and result in undercounts are gaps in language access. With our language access advocacy experience we have been able to observe countless over-the-phone interpretation services in different institutions and government agencies, and our conclusions are that the quality -- both in reliability and in accuracy -- is insufficient. In spaces where interpretation may be a literal case of life or death, we demand in-person interpretation services. In a global city like New York, in a global borough like Queens, our families, our workers, our communities should have nothing less. However, based on the lack of census data on our communities, we are unable to access this service where it's needed the most.

The upcoming census is a unique and opportune moment for us. Small CBOs like Adhikaar do not receive enough budget to do census work and because of that we cannot mobilize our community to get an accurate count. We urge the state and the city to prioritize small CBOs like ourselves for funding allocation to ensure that smaller, but quickly growing communities like ours are counted accurately and receive the resources to continue this important work.

Adhikaar is a proud member organization of the Queens Borough President's Queens Complete Count Committee and we are ready to unite with all of our partners to make sure we are counted in this Census 2020.

Thank you.