



To: New York State Complete Count Commission
Re: Public Forum – Written Testimony
Date: May 7, 2019

Good morning, and thank you for providing this opportunity for public input into the very important question of getting a complete count of New Yorkers in the 2020 federal census. My name is Eric Trahan, and I am the Executive Director of the Mohawk Valley Library System, an organization that provides services and support for the 22 public library locations in Fulton, Montgomery, Schenectady and Schoharie counties here in the Capital District. Our library system is one of 23 public library systems in New York State. Together, these 23 public library systems serve all 756 public libraries in the state, and by extension, serve all New Yorkers.

I am here to make sure the commission is well educated on the vital role that public libraries play in reaching all New Yorkers. My remarks will expand on three attributes of New York's public libraries that make libraries a perfect partner in your complete count efforts: Public Libraries are Trusted Safe Places; Public Libraries are the place residents go to access web-based resources; and Public Libraries are accessible to the "Hard to Count" segments of New York's population.

Most New Yorkers trust and have positive impressions of their public library. According to 2016 Pew Research data, almost 90% of US Adults view libraries as "safe places". The underprivileged, the undocumented and separate communities like the Amish all use public libraries. Public libraries are well positioned to serve as a place for collecting census data.

Public Libraries are in the business of providing web access to those who do not have that access in their homes. Twenty-five percent of New York State households earning less than \$50k annually indicate that their local public library is their primary point of internet access. Libraries are where the unconnected go to file taxes, apply for jobs, and access information that is only available on the web. Submitting census information is one more task this population will want to do at the public library.

Finally, public libraries are where the hard to count populations are. There are more than 1,000 public library locations in New York State, and nearly 99% of New York State's Hard to Count (HTC) tracts are within 5 miles of a library. Public libraries can be a strong partner in insuring a complete count.

Public libraries can be effective partners in the effort to obtain a complete count of New Yorkers in the 2020 federal census. Libraries can be a part of the process at all levels: as vehicles for getting the message out on the importance of a complete count; as partners in providing information on how to complete the census and as locations where community members can access to web to complete the forms. An investment in public libraries should be a part of insuring a complete count in New York State.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eric Trahan", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Eric Trahan, Executive Director, etrahan@mvls.info
Mohawk Valley Library System