

Remarks of the Chief of Staff for State Assemblyman David Buchwald to the State Census Complete Count Commission at its hearing in White Plains, July 25, 2019

Hello, my name is Alexander Roithmayr, Chief of Staff to State Assemblyman David Buchwald. The Assemblyman had a pre-existing commitment this evening, and asked me to share with you his appreciation for the effort the Complete Count Commission is making to ensure all communities are accurately represented in the 2020 Census and in particular for conducting this hearing in his district and for the particular benefit of residents of White Plains and Westchester County. Mr. Buchwald represents the 93rd Assembly District, which stretches from the City of White Plains, north along interstate 684, through the Town of North Salem.

Let me first share with you how concerned the Assemblyman is about the need for efforts to ensure a complete census count. Assemblyman Buchwald was a participant in a friend of the court brief to the U.S. Supreme Court in opposition to the addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 Census. The Court thankfully helped ensure that the citizenship question would not be included in the census, especially when the Census Bureau itself said that there are more accurate ways to determine citizenship figures.

I will now direct my remarks to this Commission's investigation of possible obstacles to a complete count, and what tactics might overcome those challenges.

It is essential that New York State's efforts recognize that Westchester County has its share of hard to count communities. Assemblyman Buchwald represents downtown White Plains which is historically a hard to count area, but there are additional election districts with similar response percentages including those in Mount Kisco, and parts of the towns of North Castle and Harrison.

In hard to count districts like these, 2020 finds growing challenges to relying on Census enumerators to overcome low initial participation. Census 2020 identifies specific challenges including, people can be hard to persuade, changing household arrangements and distrust in government. Therefore, it is critical that we act to increase initial mailed and online response rates. We encourage the Complete Count Commission to focus on tactics that increase initial response rates to assure all areas of Westchester are counted and that sufficient resources are made available.

The Assemblyman requests that complete count funds be allocated to the Westchester Library System which is coordinating with the libraries of our county to assist in census outreach efforts.

The Commission should encourage advocacy by civic organizations, such as churches, chambers of commerce, and schools, to extend complete count outreach and identify and explain specific opportunities for citizen involvement that goes beyond filling out their Census form.

In closing, Assemblyman David Buchwald's office stands ready to help in any way we can, to support a Complete Count here in Westchester. Do not hesitate to reach out to us to encourage as responsive a census-taking population as possible. Thank you.