



**LAWYERS FOR
CIVIL RIGHTS
BOSTON**

March 17, 2020

Dr. Steven Dillingham, Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Jeff Behler, Director
New York Regional Census Office
32 Old Slip, 9th Floor
New York 10005

Dear Dr. Dillingham and Mr. Behler:

Lawyers for Civil Rights writes to urge the U.S. Census Bureau to extend critical Census 2020 deadlines in light of the public health crisis surrounding COVID-19. As an organization actively working on census outreach and engagement, we appreciate that the Census Bureau has already delayed its Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Programⁱ from March 30th to April 13th, and its Early Nonresponse Followup Operationⁱⁱ from April 9th to April 23rd. These extensions are vital to help ensure a full and accurate count, particularly in hard-to-count populations that are vulnerable to COVID-19.

We urge you to consider additional extensions of other Census 2020 target dates and deadlines, particularly the following two key dates:

- **May 9, 2020:** Non-response follow up begins (enumerators go door-to-door and place phone calls)
- **July 31, 2020:** Non-response follow up ends

Both deadlines must be extended by at least two months, and the extensions should be declared now while the Bureau has time to plan and execute accordingly.

The requested extensions are amply justified by the public health crisis. During past censuses, both the Bureau and community organizations seeking to secure a complete count would spend the Spring undertaking extensive outreach, including and especially to individuals who are in nursing homes, permanently disabled, or homeless. Yet all of these outreach efforts will either be postponed or severely curtailed by COVID-19.

The pandemic will also significantly impact the ability of many hard-to-count populations to access Census 2020 online, which approximately 80% of all U.S. residents have been encouraged to do. Many individuals without a reliable broadband connection or telephonic data plan who intended to complete the census at a library or community center will not be able to do so during this period of national emergency, either because those facilities have been ordered to close or because individuals will not want to travel to them. Once again, the hardest-to-count populations will be most directly impacted.

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The constellation of factors surrounding COVID-19 militate strongly in favor of extending all Census 2020 target dates and deadlines. We stand ready to assist in community outreach and engagement for Census 2020.

Sincerely,

Ivan Espinoza-Madrizal

Ivan Espinoza-Madrizal, Esq.
Oren Sellstrom, Esq.
Lauren Sampson, Esq.

Cc: Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth

ⁱ The Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Program provides assistance with responding to Census 2020 at events and locations where people naturally gather.

ⁱⁱ Through Early Nonresponse Followup Operation census takers begin following up with households that have not responded.