

February 20, 2019

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 11224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We are community, social service, labor, and legal advocacy organizations from across New York State who represent the interests of hundreds of thousands of working-class New Yorkers. We care deeply about making sure that every New Yorker is counted in the upcoming decennial census and urge you to prioritize resources for the 2020 Census.

With the looming citizenship question that serves to intimidate immigrant communities, the failure of the federal government to adequately prepare, and the move to an online census when many communities don't have access to broadband, computers, or computer skills, the 2020 Census could be one of the most challenging in recent history. With these hurdles and the enormity of what is at stake, **New York must invest at least \$40 million for community groups (in addition to funds for state and local government outreach)** to conduct outreach to ensure a full, fair count. This outreach will prove critical to making sure every New Yorker is counted and that communities across the state receive the resources and political representation they deserve.

An accurate and complete count of all New Yorkers is essential to ensure adequate resources and representation for New York State. To ensure this, the Census process must involve trusted leaders in "hard to count" communities. Since the 18th Century, the Census has been clear that all people residing in this country—citizen and non-citizen alike—should be counted. Not only would a citizenship question reduce response rates in immigrant communities across the state, but the reduced number of outreach workers along with a general hesitancy for many New Yorkers to share information with the federal government, could seriously jeopardize a full, fair count in already undercounted communities, and especially immigrant communities and communities of color.

That is why it is absolutely essential that community organizations, trusted messengers in these communities, play the biggest role possible in maximizing participation in the Census next year. But this will require a significant investment from the state.

The Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) recently released a report that detailed the resources community-based groups would need to maximize participation in the 2020 Census among "hard to count" residents across the state. After surveying community groups across our state, they calculated that it would take \$40 million in this year's state budget for community-based organizations to do sufficient outreach around the 2020 Census. The FPI report (linked [here](#)) noted that community-group based outreach funding must be in addition to whatever funds the state needs to do its own outreach, media campaigns and funding to local governments.

The consequences of undercounting our communities would be dire. The Census is critical to determining representation as well as federal funding for vital government programs. In addition, it provides indispensable information for local and state government to make policy and budget decisions. Resources for our communities' schools, hospitals and health centers, infrastructure, housing, and more is on the line. And, businesses rely heavily on Census data to make their investment and planning decisions.

We urge you to ensure that the state budget include \$40 million for Census outreach by community-based organizations, in addition to funds for state and local government outreach. This cannot wait for next year's budget. By the time the budget is adopted in 2020, the Census will be in full swing, far too late for the planning needed for adequate outreach.

If you would like to discuss these concerns further, or have any questions about them, please contact: Daniel Altschuler at daniel.altschuler@maketheroadny.org or Melody Lopez at melody@nycet.org.

Signed,

32BJ SEIU

ACTS (Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse)

Alliance for Quality Education

American Pakistani Public Affairs Committee

Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE)

Bend the Arc Jewish Action

BILT (Buffalo Immigrant Leadership Team)

Capitol District Latinos

Center for Popular Democracy

Choice for All

Citizen Action of New York

Common Cause New York

Communications Workers of America -- District One

Community Voices Heard

The Cultural Center

Desis Rising Up and Moving

Dutchess County Progressive Action Alliance

Empire State Indivisible

Environmental Advocates of New York

Faith in New York

Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA)

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Newburgh

Haitian Americans United for Progress

Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network

Hispanic Federation

Immigrant Defense Project

Indivisible Nation BK

Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement

Kathryn O. Greenberg Immigration Justice Clinic, Cardozo School of Law

Let's Visit Lee Zeldin

Long Island Progressive Coalition

Make the Road New York

Muslims for Progress

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Education Fund

National Institute for Reproductive Health

New York Civic Engagement Table

New York Communities for Change

NOAH (Niagara Organizing Alliance for Hope)

Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson

Nu-V.O.T.E.R.S. Movement

Partnership for the Public Good

Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic

Planned Parenthood of Nassau County

Progressive East End Reformers

Rockaway Youth Taskforce

Strong Economy for All Coalition

Sustainable Port Chester Alliance

Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock

VOCAL-NY

VOICE-Buffalo

Women's Diversity Network

Working Families Party

The Workmen's Circle