

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 12, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

We write to express our concern about the potential impact that the coronavirus, COVID-19, may have on the 2020 Census. With the census in full swing, we request a detailed account of the plans and actions being taken to prevent any disruption to 2020 Census operations and to ensure a fair and accurate count. We are particularly concerned about the impact on hard-to-count communities, which the Census Bureau has acknowledged are more likely to respond to in-person census enumerators, rather than to census forms completed by mail or online.<sup>1</sup>

We request that the Department provide a briefing to our staffs with detailed information on contingency plans, steps taken, policies to be implemented, and coordination efforts to mitigate the potential impact of this outbreak on the 2020 Census. Please also provide written responses to the following questions by March 19, 2020:

1. What contingency plans does the Census Bureau have in place for potential epidemics during the 2020 Census?
2. How does the Census Bureau anticipate COVID-19 may impact the 2020 Census, including in the following areas:
  - a. Recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and retention of census workers;
  - b. Self-response;
  - c. Non-response follow-up; and
  - d. Group quarters enumeration?
3. What steps is the Census Bureau taking or planning to take to mitigate the impact in these same areas? What role does the Department expect the previously announced Census fusion center to play?
4. How has the Census Bureau coordinated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Health and Human Services, the White House Coronavirus Task Force, and state and local health departments to develop protocols in response to the potential threat of COVID-19?

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<sup>1</sup> Census Bureau, *Counting the Hard to Count in a Census* (July 2019) (online at <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2019/demo/Hard-to-Count-Populations-Brief.pdf>).

5. Does the Census Bureau plan to utilize its appropriated contingency funding to address the potential impact of COVID-19 on the 2020 Census?<sup>2</sup> If there are no plans to do so at this time, how will the Bureau evaluate the necessity of using these funds?
6. How does the Census Bureau plan to promote high self-response rates for households, including those who may eventually be under quarantine or isolation? Will the Bureau be issuing any public guidance or amending its advertising and outreach campaign?
7. What information has the Census Bureau communicated to staff, including 2020 Census Takers, regarding actions and policy changes in response to COVID-19, including with respect to non-response follow-up operations?
8. What steps is the Census Bureau taking to protect the health of census workers?
9. Is the Census Bureau considering extending the time period for self-response, non-response follow-up, or group quarters enumeration? If not, will the Bureau revisit that decision depending on conditions in the coming weeks?
10. Is the Census Bureau communicating with colleges and universities that have cancelled classes or asked students to leave campus in order to clarify where to count those students on April 1, 2020?

We look forward to your responses to these requests and to working together to ensure a successful 2020 Census. If you have any questions, please contact Appropriations Committee staff at (202) 225-3351 or Oversight Committee staff at (202) 225-5051.

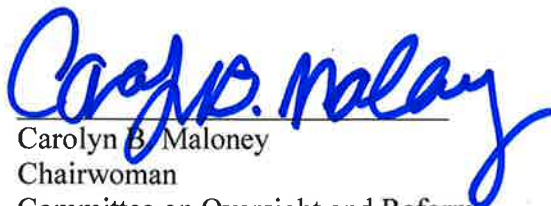
Sincerely,



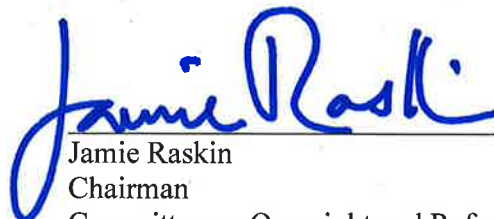
David E. Price  
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Jamie Raskin  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Reform,  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil  
Liberties

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<sup>2</sup> See Joint Explanatory Statement Accompanying the Conference Report to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, H. Rept. 116-101 (online at <https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/HR%201158%20-%20Division%20B%20-%20CJS%20SOM%20FY20.pdf>).

cc:

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,  
and Related Agencies

The Honorable Jim Jordan  
Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Chip Roy  
Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight and Reform, Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil  
Liberties