



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

March 18, 2020

The Honorable Steven Dillingham, Ph.D
Director
United States Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Dr. Dillingham:

I am writing to urge you to authorize the United States Census Bureau's New York Regional office to substantially adjust the timeframe for many 2020 Census operations in New York City in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) public health crisis. Maintaining the current timeframe for census operations in New York City would not only risk severely damaging the accuracy and credibility of the population count, it would also likely exacerbate an already severe public health crisis. At a time when my administration is taking every precaution to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, continuing to move forward with the Census Bureau's door-to-door enumeration could prove calamitous.

Specifically, I am requesting that the Bureau consider the following adjustments to its operations in New York City:

1. Reschedule Early Non-Response Follow Up (ENRFU)

As you are aware, colleges and universities in New York City have overwhelmingly cancelled in-person classes. Many students who reside in New York City during the academic year – and who should be enumerated as New York City residents – have already left the city. Many more will do so in the coming weeks. While I commend you for delaying ENRFU in response to the public health crisis, the barriers to ENRFU in New York City are unlikely to resolve within the next several weeks. We recommend rescheduling ENRFU to when students return to their campuses, which is ostensibly at the end of this summer.

2. Immediately begin contingency planning for a potentially substantial delay of the Bureau's door-to-door enumeration, or Non-Response Follow-up (NRFU).

At a time when social distancing is critical to slowing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, I strongly urge the Bureau to consider the public health implications of proceeding with door-to-door enumeration before the virus has been fully contained. Your recent announcement regarding a suspension of field activities is a helpful start, but a much more significant delay will most likely be needed. The vast majority of door-to-door enumerators are themselves part-time employees who do not receive health insurance through their employment with the Bureau. It is imperative that the timing of door-to-door enumeration be adjusted to eliminate any possibility that Census Bureau

enumerators and the New Yorkers with whom they interact, face heightened risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

3. Extend the self-response window beyond July.

The online and telephonic modes of self-responding to the census are unquestionably an asset at this time, and my NYC Census 2020 team is working hard to raise awareness of the census and encourage New Yorkers to self-respond by phone or online. However, the disruption caused by the COVID-19 virus, including the closures of schools, libraries and houses of worship, and prohibitions on large in person meetings and person to person outreach, will significantly curtail our collective ability to reach New Yorkers and promote self-response. We ask that you extend the self-response deadline from July 31 to September 30.

I know you share these concerns and I thank you for the work you and your team have done, and continue to do to ensure that all New Yorkers are counted in the 2020 Census. The Census Bureau must do everything in its power to ensure the 2020 Census is carried out accurately, completely and safely.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill de Blasio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bill de Blasio
Mayor

CC: Jeff T. Behler
Regional Director
New York Regional Office, U. S. Census Bureau
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