

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 6, 2020

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

Dear Director Dillingham:

We write to you today to strongly urge the U.S. Census Bureau to ensure a complete and accurate count by withdrawing your August 3rd statement and allowing the self-response period and non-response follow up (NRFU) to continue through October 31st, as previously planned. Ending these critical operations on September 30th will result in a severe and historic undercount of already difficult-to-count communities, including Latino and other marginalized groups.

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted normal day-to-day activities for every American and has disproportionately affected more vulnerable communities. This has, in turn, negatively impacted the work of our Census workers. The inability to effectively perform in-person outreach as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected the 2020 Census' capacity to reach difficult-to-count communities, resulting in communities of color having significantly lower response rates than white Americans. The lack of targeted and in-person outreach to minorities is evident when looking at the current response rates. The national response rate is 62.9% compared to 66.5% in 2010. In the state of Texas, the response rate is 57.9% compared to 64.4% in 2010. In our largely rural and Latino congressional districts, the response rate is only 45.3% compared to 58.7% in 2010 in Texas District 34, and 51% compared to 61.4% in 2010 in Texas District 15.

A four-week cut in the self-response period and NRFU would further exacerbate differences in response rates between communities of color and predominantly white communities. In the last six months America's battle against the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the ongoing pandemic of systemic racial inequity to the forefront. A complete 2020 Census that includes an accurate count of all communities would help combat these ongoing health and economic disparities by providing communities with the resources they are entitled to. Specifically, in our districts, the impact of COVID-19 has been more severe now than in March. An accurate 2020 Census will provide critical resources that are essential for the well-being and safety of those in our communities.

The 2020 Census is fundamental in determining the federal funding that communities receive for key public services. Taxpayers spend nearly \$16 billion on the 2020 Census and deserve an

accurate count. A poorly executed 2020 Census would hurt our communities, states and localities, especially historically underrepresented areas, by providing limited federal funding for economic development, childcare, schools, hospitals, roads, public works, and many other vital services.

We urge you to reconsider removing four critical weeks from the self-response and NRFU period. An October 31st deadline for the self-response period and NRFU will help ensure all communities are accurately counted.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Filemon Vela'.

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Vicente Gonzalez'.

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress