

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-2804**

September 4, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur Ross  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Steven Dillingham, Ph.D.  
Director of the U.S. Census Bureau  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
4600 Silver Hill Road  
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Secretary Ross and Dr. Dillingham,

I am writing to you to request information on operational adjustments to the 2020 Census caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, I am seeking additional information on the steps the Census Bureau is taking to protect its field workers, prevent the spread of the virus and ensure a safe and thorough Nonresponse Follow-Up (NRFU) operation.

The current public health crisis has disrupted many elements of American life, including the 2020 Census. House Democrats understand that certain changes to the enumeration process must be made to keep communities across the country safe. However, ensuring a fair and accurate count must remain a national priority. Now more than ever, the American people need the resources and representation they deserve.

Recent reports detail a disturbing lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies for census employees.<sup>1</sup> Not only do masks play a critical part in ensuring the safety of census workers and the people they meet, but they are also required by law in more than 30 states and mandated by the Census Bureau's updated operational plan. Census field workers cannot be expected to perform their duties without sufficient PPE, nor can residents be expected to interact with improperly protected employees. In order to ensure census workers can conduct their work safely, I request additional information on the quantity and type of PPE and related supplies provided to all Area Census Offices.

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<sup>1</sup> Brown, A. (2020, July 07). Census Workers Say Coronavirus Protections Insufficient.  
<https://theintercept.com/2020/07/07/census-workers-coronavirus/>

In addition to the shortage of PPE, I am deeply concerned about the Census Bureau's ability to safely conduct NRFU in the present climate. Although the agency's incremental approach to starting NRFU was an important step to protect its workforce, census takers across the country put themselves at risk when they entered the field on August 11, 2020. Not only are census

workers at risk of contracting coronavirus, but infected workers could also act as vectors for coronavirus transmission. In the absence of a large-scale testing program for field workers, please provide information on how the Bureau plans to protect both workers and residents from the virus.

Lastly, COVID-19 has made people across the country understandably reluctant to interact with unfamiliar individuals. As census workers go door-to-door for NRFU, some residents will undoubtedly choose not to answer the door rather than risk potentially exposing themselves and their families to the virus. Addressing this issue will be crucial to completing a fair and accurate census, particularly when it comes to enumerating marginalized communities. Communities of color, which are routinely undercounted by the census, are already suffering disproportionately from coronavirus. A failure to correctly count communities of color in the 2020 Census will have a devastating impact on the resources those communities receive in the coming years.

As outlined above, please provide answers to the following questions by no later than September 14, 2020. Please direct your responses to Feven Solomon.

1. What PPE and cleaning supplies, or funds designated for those resources, have been provided to Area Census Offices? Please provide specific information on the type and amount of resources provided, as well as details on when the resources were provided.
2. What steps is the Census Bureau taking to protect field workers and residents from contracting or transmitting coronavirus during NRFU?
3. How will the Census Bureau address the negative impact COVID-19 will have on the NRFU contact rate?

Although the pandemic has forever altered the course of American history, we cannot allow it to disrupt our democratic process. The country is relying on the Census Bureau to safely and accurately deliver data that will shape our elections and guide our policymaking in the decade ahead. I look forward to receiving additional information on your plans to ensure a safe and fair count during this pandemic.

Sincerely,



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Steven A. Horsford  
Member of Congress

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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

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Karen Bass  
Member of Congress

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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

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WM. Lacy Clay  
Member of Congress

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Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

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Val B. Demings Member  
of Congress

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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

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Marcia L. Fudge  
Member of Congress

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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

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Deb Haaland  
Member

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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson  
Member of Congress

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Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

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Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

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Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

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Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

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Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

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Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress