

# United States Senate

May 26, 2020

Dr. Steven Dillingham  
Director  
United States Census Bureau  
4600 Silver Hill Road  
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Dr. Dillingham:

We write regarding the Census Bureau's plans to count those experiencing homelessness. The COVID-19 pandemic has already affected the census, delaying in-person enumeration and requiring the cancelation of census outreach events. The Census Bureau has responded admirably to these challenges, but we remain concerned that more must be done to address the unique obstacles inherent in counting people experiencing homelessness. We therefore ask you to detail steps you will take to ensure a complete and accurate count of this population.

Before the onset of COVID-19, the Census Bureau had planned an in-person count of those experiencing homelessness in one of four ways — at outdoor locations where people are known to sleep, in emergency and transitional shelters, at soup kitchens, and at stops of regularly scheduled mobile food vans. This operation has been delayed due to the pandemic and has not yet been rescheduled.

We have heard concerns from areas with large homeless populations that the pandemic may render this approach inadequate. Notably, conducting in-person enumeration will put those involved at higher risk of contracting and spreading the virus. This includes people experiencing homelessness, as well as Census Bureau staff, homeless service providers, and non-profit advocates. Furthermore, we have spoken with many non-profit partners and homeless service providers — critical to an accurate count — who are focused on the emergency response to the virus and have limited capacity to conduct the census outreach and preparations they had initially planned.

While we have asked the Census Bureau for information on how these safety and capacity issues will be addressed, we unfortunately have not received concrete answers. Our state, county, and non-profit census stakeholders are similarly seeking clarity about the Census Bureau's plans, in order to have necessary time to adjust their operations and help ensure a complete census.

We appreciate the Census Bureau's efforts in these difficult circumstances to keep the census on track. But in light of the impact of COVID-19, we believe the Census Bureau must fully develop, articulate, and implement a specific plan to count those experiencing homelessness. Given impending deadlines and the importance of this issue, we ask you to respond to this letter — and to detail such a plan — by Tuesday, June 2.

Sincerely,



DIANNE FEINSTEIN  
United States Senator



KAMALA D. HARRIS  
United States Senator



BRIAN SCHATZ  
United States Senator



MAZIE K. HIRONO  
United States Senator



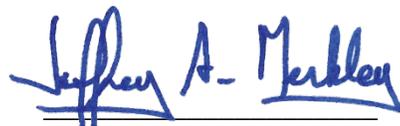
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JEFFREY A. MERKLEY  
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