March 9, 2022

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Robert Santos
Director
United States Census Bureau
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo and Director Santos:

We are writing to share our concerns regarding new reports indicating that America’s Black population was likely disproportionately undercounted by the 2020 Census, possibly exceeding 2010 undercount rates.\(^1\) If true, this is unacceptable, and we seek to understand how you plan to investigate and address these concerns.

Preliminary independent research estimates indicate that the Black population was undercounted during the 2020 Census at a rate nearly three times as high as the previous 2010 Census.\(^2\) Particularly concerning is the finding that Black children may have been undercounted in 2020 at a rate nearly ten times higher than in 2010.\(^3\)

As you know, Census data plays an enormous but often silent role in Americans’ daily lives, informing legislative representation and the distribution of hundreds of billions of federal dollars and other resources each year.\(^4\) A Census that does not accurately represent Black communities robs them of their equal share of federal resources in education, health care, housing, nutrition assistance, and many other areas—perpetuating systemic racism.


We also know that the implementation of the 2020 Census as a whole was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and its residual effects, including increased hunger, housing insecurity, and poverty. We are deeply concerned that disparities in the 2020 Census count were further exacerbated by the Trump Administration’s efforts to politicize the Census for partisan gain, including the decision to abruptly end Census operations prematurely.  

The Census has a long and troubling history of undercounting Black communities, which helps drive economic inequities and skews political representation. We understand that the Census Bureau will evaluate the accuracy of the 2020 Census through the forthcoming Post-Enumeration Survey (PES); in the meantime, we are seeking additional information about how the Department will address a potential increase in the Black undercount.

Therefore, we respectfully request answers to the following questions as soon as possible:

1. What has the Department done to study the differential undercount of the Black population?
2. When undercounts have occurred in the past, what actions has the Department taken to remedy the situation?
3. Does the Department have any preliminary estimates of the undercount by race, ethnicity and substate geography?
4. When will the Department release the PES results detailing net undercounts and Census “omissions” for demographic groups?
5. How will the results of the Post-Enumeration Survey inform the Department’s plans to address a potential undercount? What are the options for adjustment?
6. Given the challenges to implementing the PES—ranging from “census fatigue” to unusually high rates of displacement since the reference date of April 1, 2020—how will the Department verify the PES’s accuracy and fitness for gauging the undercount of racial and ethnic populations, and what other data sets can be used to obtain an accurate assessment?
7. What authority, if any, does the Department have to ensure that districts and their residents are not negatively impacted by the undercount, particularly regarding potentially inadequate federal funding allocations caused by a significant undercount?
8. Will the Department provide more flexible options for tribal, state, and local governments to challenge their counts for the benefit of accurate federal funding allocations?
9. Will the Department expand the Census Count Question Resolution program to provide for impacted governmental units with undercounts exceeding 2010 levels?

---

10. What other avenues do state and local governments have available to them to challenge the numbers?

11. What actions, if any, will the Department undertake to address this specific situation, including prioritizing the differential undercount of the Black population on the 2030 Census research agenda?

Finally, we request that Director Santos provide a full briefing to the Congressional Black Caucus on this issue and the steps he plans to take to rectify it as soon as possible. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you to address this troubling and time-sensitive situation.

Sincerely,

Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

Lauren Underwood  
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

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

Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress
Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress

Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

Colin Z. Allred
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

David Scott
Member of Congress
Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress

Al Lawson
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Jamaal Bowman
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

James E. Clyburn
Member of Congress

Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress
Troy Carter  
Member of Congress

Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick  
Member of Congress

Hakeem S. Jeffries  
Member of Congress

Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

Marc A. Veasey  
Member of Congress