

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
MINORITY (202) 225-5074
<http://oversight.house.gov>

August 4, 2020

The Honorable Steven Dillingham
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Rd
Suitland-Silver Hill, MD 20746

Dear Director Dillingham:

In light of alarming news about additional efforts to rush and politicize the 2020 Census, the Committee on Oversight and Reform requests the appearance of Census Bureau employees for transcribed interviews.

Last night, you issued a statement that the Census Bureau will be ending Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU) and online responses on September 30, 2020—a full month earlier than previously announced.¹ You did not mention this change during your testimony last week before the Committee. This move will rush the enumeration process, result in inadequate follow-up, and undercount immigrant communities and communities of color who are historically undercounted. As Former Director John Thompson testified to the Committee:

The career people who are experts at taking the census requested a four month extension of the deadlines that's in their Title. They know what they are doing. They know what it's going to take to get the census done. Not extending those deadlines is going to put tremendous pressure on the Census Bureau. It's not clear what kind of quality counts they can produce if they don't get the extension. So it could be a really big problem.²

Senior career staff at the Census Bureau have publicly stated that meeting the statutory deadlines is impossible because of the delays that have already occurred. On July 8, 2020, Al Fontenot, Associate Director for Decennial Census Programs, stated of the December 31, 2020, statutory deadlines: “We are past the window of being able to get those counts by those dates at

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Statement from U.S. Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham: Delivering a Complete and Accurate 2020 Census Count* (Aug. 3, 2020) (online at www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/delivering-complete-accurate-count.html).

² *Oversight Committee Held Emergency Hearing on Trump Administration's Unconstitutional Politicization of 2020 Census* (July 29, 2020) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/news/press-releases/oversight-committee-held-emergency-hearing-on-trump-administration-s>).

this point.”³ On May 26, 2020, Tim Olson, Associate Director for Field Operations, said publicly: “We have passed the point where we could even meet the current legislative requirement of December 31. We can’t do that anymore.”⁴

Testimony on July 29, 2020, during the Committee’s emergency hearing underscored the Committee’s concerns about the administration of the 2020 Census. Four former Directors of the Census Bureau testified that the President’s memorandum issued on July 21, 2020, directing the Secretary of Commerce to exclude undocumented immigrants from the apportionment count, is unconstitutional.

In addition, your testimony at that hearing revealed new and troubling information about the White House’s inappropriate partisan influence over how the 2020 Census is conducted. For example, when you were asked whether you or anyone else at the Census Bureau contributed to the President’s July 21, 2020, legal memorandum or provided any input on it before it was released, you responded, “Madam Chairwoman, I certainly did not, and I’m not aware of others in the Census Bureau that did.”⁵ When you were asked when you first became aware of the President’s intention to exclude undocumented immigrants from the Apportionment count, you responded, “As I recall, someone from the press reported that a directive may be coming down.”⁶

For the foregoing reasons, the Committee requests that Census Bureau officials appear for virtual transcribed interviews on the following dates:

- **August 10, 2020:** Enrique Lamas, Chief Advisor to the Deputy Director;
- **August 11, 2020:** Timothy P. Olson, Associate Director for Field Operations;
- **August 12, 2020:** Victoria Velkoff, Associate Director for Demographic Programs;
- **August 14, 2020:** Albert Fontenot, Jr, Associate Director for Decennial Census Programs;
- **August 17, 2020:** John Abowd, Chief Scientist and Associate Director for Research and Methodology;
- **August 19, 2020:** Adam Korzeniewski, Assistant Deputy Director for Policy;
- **August 20, 2020:** Nathaniel Cogley, Deputy Director for Policy; and
- **August 21, 2020:** Ron S. Jarmin, Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer.

³ *Republicans Signal They’re Willing To Cut The Census Counting Short*, National Public Radio (July 28, 2020) (online at www.npr.org/2020/07/28/895744449/republicans-signal-theyre-willing-to-cut-short-census-counting).

⁴ *‘We’re Running Out of Time’: Census Turns to Congress to Push Deadlines*, National Public Radio (May 27, 2020) (online at www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/05/27/863290458/we-re-running-out-of-time-census-turns-to-congress-to-push-deadlines).

⁵ Committee on Oversight and Reform, *Counting Every Person: Safeguarding the 2020 Census Against the Trump Administration’s Unconstitutional Attacks* (July 29, 2020) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/legislation/hearings/counting-every-person-safeguarding-the-2020-census-against-the-trump>).

⁶ *Id.*

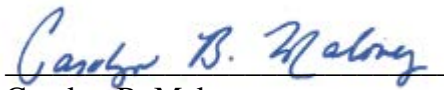
The Honorable Steven Dillingham

Page 3

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. In addition, the Committee has jurisdiction over “Population and demography generally, including the Census.”⁷

Please confirm whether the requested witnesses will appear voluntarily by August 7, 2020. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carolyn B. Maloney". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman

cc: The Honorable James R. Comer, Ranking Member

⁷ House rule X, clause 1(n)(8).