

*Statement*

*Of*

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Office of Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor*

*Information Policy, Census, and National Archives  
Subcommittee*

*Oversight and Government Reform Committee*

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*“CENSUS 2010: ASSESSING THE BUREAU’S STRATEGY OF  
REDUCING THE UNDERCOUNT OF HARD TO COUNT  
POPULATIONS”*

Good Morning Chairman Clay and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today about the City of New York's plans to ensure a full and accurate count of our population. My name is Stacey Cumberbatch and I was appointed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg to serve as the City of New York's Census 2010 Coordinator. I have over 20 years of experience in public service, philanthropy, and the law.

The City of New York is the most populous and ethnically diverse city in the United States with a population of 8.36 million people as of July 2008. Over 3 million of New York City's residents are foreign-born, about one-fifth of whom arrived since 2000. New York City has the largest Chinese population of any city outside of Asia. More people of West Indian ancestry live in New York than any city outside of the West Indies. Over 2.27 million Hispanics live in New York City, more than any other city in the United States. Non-Hispanic New Yorkers of African descent numbered 1.95 million in 2006, more than double the count in any other U.S. city. More than 200 languages are spoken with almost one-half of all New Yorkers speaking a language other than English at home.

New York City's diversity is its strength but it also poses a challenge to ensuring that every New Yorker is counted in the 2010 census. Recognizing this, Mayor Bloomberg established the City Census Coordinator Office to act as the primary liaison with the Census Bureau, leverage the City's resources and relationships to promote the 2010 Census and supplement the outreach activities and communication strategies of the regional census office.

In a large and diverse City like New York, the Partnership Program is critical. However, there are many questions we have about the Partnership Program. How does the Census Bureau determine how many partnership specialists are assigned to New York City and how are they allocated across the City? How does the bureau evaluate the work of individual partnership specialists as their outreach work proceeds, so that gaps and inefficiencies in their strategy are identified and fixed *before* the enumeration? What is the process to determine ethnic media buys in local markets and how is the communication plan coordinated with the work of the Partnership Program?

The Census Bureau needs to adopt a more formal process of convening diverse local stakeholders together and engaging them early on in the development of a comprehensive local outreach and communication plan so that local expertise and resources are included and considered. Again, I want to emphasize that there must also be an ongoing interactive feedback process as plans are implemented, so that local and census bureau resources can be deployed efficiently and problems can be fixed as they arise.

While the City's population exceeded 8 million for the first time in 2000, the overall response rate to the mail in questionnaire was 55%, much lower than the average national response rate of 66%. A further analysis conducted by our Department of City Planning's Population Division reveals certain neighborhoods with a high concentration of census tracts with response rates below 40%. These same neighborhoods had low response rates in the 1990 census and in some areas response rates actually got worse in 2000. One of our challenges over the next year is to penetrate these

particular neighborhoods to reverse this historically low census response rate. These neighborhoods are largely African-American and Afro-Caribbean. The New York City 2010 Census Office will make a concerted effort in collaboration with the Regional Census Office to work with a broad cross section of leaders who can make the case in these communities of why it is important to be counted and participate in the census and how it impacts services delivered in these communities.

The City Census Coordinator's Office is also working directly with over twenty city government agencies to develop plans to promote the 2010 census through existing agency communication networks and community activities. For example, the New York City Housing Authority, which manages the city's public housing stock and Section 8 program, has assigned a staff person to my office to develop and implement outreach and communication plans to reach the 633,000 residents, one in thirteen New Yorkers, who receive housing assistance from Housing Authority. We have already held two briefing sessions for over 100 resident leaders explaining the 2010 census and providing them with information and data to focus their outreach efforts to increase their development's response rate to the 2010 census. This is an example of what is required to heighten public awareness, build trust, and encourage people to participate in the census by filling out the questionnaire and mailing it back promptly. Public housing resident leaders got it right away about the importance of the census to their communities and some were aghast at response rates to the 2000 census as low as 31% at a development. Now what's key is follow-through on everyone's part to continue to carry the message and encourage participation.

In conclusion, while the census is a federal responsibility, there must be earlier and ongoing communication and accountability to local governments and communities given the impact of the census on apportionment, districting, and federal funding.