

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 19, 2020

Dr. Steven Dillingham
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, D.C. 20233

Dr. Steven Dillingham:

We write to you with great concern over the completeness and accuracy of the 2020 Census in Michigan, particularly in Detroit and other areas with populations at risk of not being counted in the census. The Census Bureau ended its data collection on October 15, over two weeks earlier than planned. In the final weeks of data collection, allegations of rushed and improper census procedures appeared across the country,¹ including in Michigan. In Detroit, multiple Census enumerators have come forward alleging the Bureau did not follow proper protocols or provide them with the necessary support to count every person.² In addition, the Bureau is now attempting to shorten the data processing operation by 2.5 months, which will rush crucial data quality checks, increasing the risk of errors and disparities in the 2020 Census. Experts have warned that the premature termination of the census could also result in a significant undercount of minority and hard-to-count communities.

At the end of data collection, census self-response rates were very low in some Michigan communities. In Detroit, the overall self-response rate was 51%, lower than any other large city in the nation, with some tracts as low as 4.4%. Self-response was also low in areas of Flint and other Michigan cities, as well as rural areas in Northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula.³ While the Bureau interviewed non-responding households during Nonresponse Follow-up and claims to have high completion rates, officials have refused to provide local completion data. Self-response yields are the best-quality census data, but the Census Bureau under-resourced its outreach and community partnerships to help all households self-respond, including refusing to invest early in strategies like questionnaire assistance centers to help Americans fill out Census forms. These acts, coupled with the Trump administration's attempt to include a citizenship question—which was struck down by the Supreme Court—have politicized the Census, eroding the public's faith in a fair and accurate count.

An accurate Census is extremely important to the allocation of billions of dollars in federal funding, benchmarking of state and local statistics, apportionment and redistricting of congressional seats, and myriad other applications. In 2016, for example, Michigan received \$29.2 billion through federal programs that were guided by 2010 Census data. Our residents rely on an accurate Census to fund their most basic needs, from school breakfast programs and public housing to unemployment insurance and Medicaid. However, the Census Bureau's enumeration of Detroit and other Michigan communities has been rushed and under-resourced and threatens to result in an inaccurate census. Therefore, we request answers to the following questions by November 30th, 2020.

Please provide the following data for the state of Michigan, the City of Detroit, and any Michigan geography with a final census completion rate below 99% :

¹ <https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-massachusetts-census-2020-98d187302fbccc5e422fa43522d51dfe>

² <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2020/10/28/duggan-tlaib-say-theyll-challenge-detroit-census-count/6053740002/> . The Detroit whistleblowers described understaffing, vacant supervisor positions and lack of support from managers, IT problems, and directives to enumerate households by proxy (through a neighbor) immediately. We have heard similar complaints about understaffing, lack of staff support, and other issues in other Michigan Area Census Offices.

³ <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates/self-response.html>

1. The number of housing units (on the Master Address File, or MAF) at the start of the data collection operation in March;
2. The percentage of housing units completed (resolved) by the end of the data collection operation on October 15 (i.e. the total “completion rate”);
3. The number of households that self-responded to the census (by mail, by phone, or online);
The percentage of total housing units (on the MAF) that were part of the Nonresponse Followup (NRFU) operation (NRFU workload);
 - a. The number of NRFU cases (the NRFU workload) at the beginning of the NRFU operation;
4. The percentage of total NRFU cases that were completed by the end of NRFU on October 15;
 - a. The number of NRFU cases that remained as not completed by the end of NRFU on October 15;
5. The percentage of housing units in the NRFU workload that were completed by proxy;
6. The percentage of housing units in the NRFU workload that were resolved as eligible for administrative records completion;
7. The percentage of housing units in the NRFU workload that were resolved as vacant or nonexistent;
8. How many Census workers were deployed in the City of Detroit as a percentage of population?
9. How many Census workers were deployed in the City of Detroit for Nonresponse Follow-up?
10. How many Census workers were deployed in Michigan as a percentage of population?
11. How many Census workers were deployed in Michigan for Nonresponse Follow-up?
12. How many Census takers were deployed nationally as a percentage of population?
13. Please answer questions 1-12 with data from the 2010 Census.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



RASHIDA TLAIB
Member of Congress



DEBBIE STABENOW
United States Senator



GARY C. PETERS
United States Senator



BRENDA LAWRENCE
Member of Congress



DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress



ANDY LEVIN
Member of Congress