



TESTIMONY FROM THE ASSOCIATION FOR A BETTER NEW YORK BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY

February 11, 2019

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Melva Miller and I am the Executive Vice President at the Association for A Better New York, a business and civic organization that for nearly 50 years has advocated for policies and initiatives that make New York a better place to live, work, and visit. On behalf of our members of employers, health, unions, nonprofit, educational, and cultural institutions, I am here to represent our deep commitment to obtaining an accurate 2020 Census Count.

The Census plays a massive role in determining the federal funds New York receives for Medicare, Medicaid, and federal programs that fund housing, infrastructure, and other social services. The \$73 Billion that New York currently receives in federal funds is at stake in 2020.

According to the New York City Department of City Planning, in 2010 only 62% of New Yorkers completed the Census through self-response. This percentage stands to decrease further in 2020 for a combination of reasons. Firstly, the federal government has made drastic cuts to the number of census offices and outreach employees. Additionally, the Census Bureau has elected to move on an online form. While in many ways this is a step forward, we must remember that 18% of New York households have either no Internet subscriptions or dial up-only access and recognize the technological literacy barrier created with this change. Finally, if the proposed citizenship question remains on the form, historically difficult to reach immigrant populations will be even more reluctant to complete the Census. All of these factors lead us to believe that securing an accurate Census count in 2020 will be even more difficult than in years prior, and therefore requires real investment.

We believe the state needs to invest at least \$40 Million to help New York obtain an accurate 2020 Census count. This expenditure of about \$2 per New Yorker is an extremely wise investment, as New York stands to lose \$3,000 for every undercounted individual. If New York does not proactively fund Census outreach, we are only delaying eventual investment due to decreased federal funding.

It is crucial that this funding is allocated to Community Based Organizations, who are already embedded in the communities we need to reach. We will not obtain an accurate count in 2020 from only a universal messaging campaign. It is vital that we have culturally-competent messaging, and that this information comes from trusted messengers. Community Based Organizations are these trusted messengers and already have the infrastructure for success. They speak the right languages, know the stakeholders, and have already earned the confidence of many hard to count citizens and non-citizens. CBO's are the only organizations that will be able to effectively communicate with individuals that government and businesses have historically struggled to reach.

We know that every New Yorker counts and that every New Yorker deserves to be counted. We hope that the State Legislature gives CBO's the resources they need in order to make this vision a reality.

Thank you for your time.