

August 5, 2016

Karen Humes, Chief

Population Division

Bureau of the Census

Dear Ms. Humes,

I am writing to persuade you and the Bureau of the Census to change its current practice and reconsider the ways and means by which incarcerated citizens are counted in the 2020 census.

As your own mission statement declares:

“The Census Bureau's mission is to serve as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy. We honor privacy, protect confidentiality, share our expertise globally, and conduct our work openly.”

To support my request I strongly suggest that it is incorrect to count people as residents of the prison in which they are incarcerated. Neither these individuals nor their families regard their cell or the facility as their home. They are there because of a conviction and sentencing, but they have not elected it as their residence. Incarcerated citizens counted as such, is not quality data.

Why is this important? The incorrect allocation of their residence has a very tangible impact upon all of the resources that rely on the accuracy of the census to determine a host of allocations. This data, as you well understand, has an impact upon the lives of many. To eliminate these citizens from the more accurate placement of their residence shifts the power dynamics of all forms of representation.

I am asking that you count the incarcerated at their home address, which is almost always their legal address. To count the incarcerated otherwise is falsely increasing the population counts of all those communities with prisons. This practice benefits some but it distorts the greater picture and this lens, once inaccurate in its true measure, reverberates with less than beneficial consequence to the majority.

I applaud your decision to extend the deadline for residence rule comments and hope that common sense prevails in reaching your decision to sustain a process that will provide quality data in the 2020 census. I strongly urge you to not count the incarcerated as residents of the community in which they have been imprisoned.

Thank you for your consideration.

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