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The State Senate  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

July 21, 2016

Mr. John Thompson  
Director, U. S. Census Bureau  
4600 Silver Hill Road  
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Mr. Thompson,

I am writing about my opposition to the recent proposal on how to implement residence guidelines for the 2020 Census. I believe the Census Bureau is wrong to consider incarcerated people as residents of the correctional facility, rather than at their home address. The current method of counting has proven to be inaccurate and outdated. As a state senator, representing a predominately urban area, I am requesting a more fair and equitable representation of all people and communities.

The Bureau has chosen to continue counting people in the wrong place, ensuring an inaccurate 2020 Census. With the next census just four years away, planning is already underway. For this reason, I urge the Bureau to make the necessary steps to ensure, at this early point in the planning process, that the 2020 census can count incarcerated people at their home addresses.

As you know, the Census Bureau's current "residence rules" instruct the Bureau to tabulate incarcerated people as residents of the prison location, even though incarcerated people are not considered residents of the prison location for other purposes. At the time of the nation's first census, the question of where incarcerated people were counted was of little importance because very few people were behind bars. Today, nearly 1 percent of the U.S. adult population is incarcerated. By designating a prison cell as a residence, the Census Bureau concentrates a population that is disproportionately male, urban, and African-American or Latino in approximately 1,500 federal and state prisons that are far from their home communities.

I recognize that the Census Bureau seeks to conduct the fairest, most accurate, and most efficient census possible, and I also understand that this undertaking requires decade-long preparations. I therefore urge you, in your research and planning for the 2020 census, to make it a priority to develop a methodology to tabulate incarcerated people at their home addresses.

I thank you for your careful consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Nan Grogan Orrock  
Senator, District 36