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Dear Karen Humes,

I represent the 32nd District of Georgia and submit this comment in response to the Census Bureau's federal register notice regarding the Residence Rule and Residence Situations, 81 FR 42577 (June 30, 2016). The Bureau's proposal to continue counting incarcerated people at the particular facility that they happen to be located at on Census Day ignores the reality of incarceration: prisons are not a "usual residence".

As an elected representative, I am keenly aware that democracy, at its core, rests on equal representation. And equal representation, in turn, rests on an accurate count of the nation's population.

The reality is that when my constituents are incarcerated, they are often sent to prisons outside my district, but they still rely on me for representation. Over the course of their incarceration, the prison administration may move them between different prisons, located in many of the colleagues' districts, but they remain my constituents. Their home in my district remains their only stable, permanent, "usual" residence. Counting them as if they were residents of the facility where they happen to be held on Census day doesn't reflect the modern lived reality of our communities.

I note that your proposed method of counting the incarcerated population is inconsistent with how you count other groups that eat and sleep in a location that is not their usual residence. For example, I note that your proposed rules will count boarding school students at their home address even if they spend most of their time at school. The same approach should be taken when counting incarcerated people.

I am also concerned about the impact of your residence rules on racial justice in my state. Our state disproportionately incarcerates African-American or Latino people so when you count them in the wrong location, and that data is used for redistricting, it further undermines the political power of minority communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment of the Residence Rule and Residence Situations as the Bureau strives to follow the residence rule to count everyone in the right place. I believe that in order to produce an accurate 2020 Census, the Bureau must count incarcerated people at home.

Best Regards,


Representative Alan Powell
District 32