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The State Senate
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

July 20, 2015

Ms. Humes
Chief, Population Division
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Ms. Humes:

I serve as a Senator in the Georgia State Senate, representing District 36, and I submit this comment in response to the Census Bureau's federal register notice regarding the Residence Rule and Residence Situations, 80 FR 28950 (May 20, 2015). I urge you to count incarcerated people at their home address, rather than at the particular facility where they happen to be located when the Census is taken.

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.

As you know, American demographics and living situations have changed drastically in the 225 years since the first Census, and the Census has evolved in response to many of these changes in order to continue to provide an accurate picture of the nation. Today, the growth in the prison population requires the Census to update its methodology again.

The need for change in the "usual residence" rule, as it relates to incarcerated persons, has been growing over the last few decades. As recently as the 1980s, the incarcerated population in the U.S. totaled less than half a million. But since then, the number of incarcerated people has more than quadrupled, to over two million people behind bars. The manner in which this population is counted now has huge implications for the accuracy of the Census.

By designating a prison cell as a residence in the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau concentrated a population that is disproportionately male, urban, and African-American or Latino into just 5,393 Census blocks that are located far from the actual homes of

incarcerated people. In Georgia, this results in decennial misallocation of constituents among state legislative districts. Additionally, about 35 of our counties, cities, and school boards have their districts skewed by the Bureau's 2010 prisoner miscount. The largest vote dilution is 36%.

Currently, four states (California, Delaware, Maryland, and New York) are taking a state-wide approach to adjust the Census' population totals to count incarcerated people at home, and over 200 counties and municipalities all individually adjust population data to avoid prison gerrymandering when drawing their local government districts. In our state alone 16 counties, cities, and school boards each adjusted the census data to avoid skewing their districts.

But this ad hoc approach is neither efficient nor universally implementable. It makes far more sense for the Bureau to provide accurate redistricting data in the first place, rather than leaving it up to each state and local jurisdiction to have to adjust the Census' data to incarcerated people in their home district.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Residence Rule and Residence Situations as the Bureau strives to count everyone in the right place in keeping with changes in society and population realities. Because our democracy relies on a population count that accurately represents communities, I urge you to count incarcerated people as resident of their home address.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nan Grogan Orrock". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Senator Nan Grogan Orrock
GA, District 36