Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 13, 2020

Dr. Steven Dillingham, Ph.D
Director
United States Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Director Dillingham:

As Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, we respectfully urge you and to extend the 2020 Census enumeration by three months ending October 31, 2020. Given the grave concern for public health and well-being we have for our constituents and communities regarding the impacts of the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), we believe that this is a necessary measure to protect both American citizens and the integrity of the Census. The public health emergency impacting all areas of this country threatens the ability of the Census Bureau to safely and fully conduct the decennial census. Given the instructions and recommendations of the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to avoid direct contact with symptomatic persons and the known method of COVID-19 transmission from person-to-person, we foresee that adhering to these principles will limit the ability of enumerators to undertake the non-response follow-up process and will hamper the participation of Americans nationwide. This will particularly impact the ability of the Census Bureau to reach individuals in already hard to count and undercounted communities.

Under the provisions of the U.S. Constitution, the Census Bureau must deliver apportionment counts to the President and Congress by December 31, 2020. While the current end date of July 31, 2020 for collection of enumerations is intended to allow the Census Bureau enough time to tabulate the responses from the enumeration, present circumstances require a change. As COVID-19 and changes to individual and collective social habits could severely depress both the self-response rate and follow-up rate, it is preferable to extend the collection of responses to ensure that everyone is counted, rather than accept what may be a massive undercount. Recognizing that the extension of the enumeration will place a burden on the Census Bureau to provide the official apportionment in time as required by law, we urge the Census Bureau to utilize its contingency funds, and we are supportive of providing emergency funding to the Census Bureau, both for the extended enumeration and expedited tabulation process.

We thank you for your work to ensure that every person in this country is counted. We request that Congress be consulted on any changes to the Census timeline, and that all necessary protections are taken to ensure that communities of color and undercounted communities are

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counted. Hand and hand with a full count is the need for accurate reporting of data, and the Census Bureau must ensure that this undertaking is also handled with the utmost care. We trust that you share our concerns regarding the effects of COVID-19 on the 2020 Census. As such, we urge you to accept this request for extension, and to work with Congress and our partners across the country to ensure a complete and accurate enumeration.

Sincerely,

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

ADDITIONAL SIGNATORIES

Rep. Veronica Escobar
Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva
Rep. Jim Costa
Rep. Juan Vargas
Rep. Ruben Gallego
Rep. Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Rep. Gilbert R. Cisneros
Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Rep. Ben Ray Luján
Rep. Sylvia Garcia
Rep. Vicente Gonzalez