



MINNESOTA COUNCIL
ON FOUNDATIONS

August 31, 2020

Secretary Wilbur Ross
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dr. Steven Dillingham
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Secretary Ross and Director Dillingham,

We, the undersigned Minnesota 2020 Census stakeholders, are asking you to remain committed to your mission of counting everyone once and in the right place. As of today August 31, 2020, only 14% of Minnesota housing units has been enumerated by Non-response Follow Up (NRFU) field operations. This low NRFU percentage brings Minnesota's overall response rate, including self-response, to 87.9% (11th in the nation). While this may be considered "high" Minnesota's immigrant and non-English speaking historically undercounted communities, especially of Somali and Hmong descent, face unique language and community challenges.

We estimate that Hennepin County itself makes up approximately 20% of Minnesota's NRFU addresses. Yet, we are hearing first-hand accounts of Hennepin County residents not getting any visits from enumerators. Using a list of Hennepin County residents from our phone banking work, our outreach associates spoke with 70 Hennepin County residents, between August 23-25, who had previously indicated that they had not yet filled out their form. 18 reported that they had not received a single visit from an enumerator. 11 reported that they had received at least one visit. 10 were unsure if they had been visited. The rest had already self-responded since they were last called.

In addition to that small survey, we have our very own partnership leader who lives in Hennepin County who has yet to be enumerated. We also have several first-hand reports of enumerators with incorrect data for apartment units, as well as information that they are unable to access some multi-unit housing. With these concerns in mind, our state demographer Susan Brower says, "While we do not currently have the full picture of the completeness of census operations in Minnesota from our vantage point, we do have a number of indicators that raise serious questions about the quality of the count in Hennepin County and the state overall."

The low rate of NRFU completions reported by the Census Bureau for the state overall appears to be stemming from field operations based in the Duluth and Rochester Area Census Offices (ACOs). These two offices serve all counties in Minnesota except Hennepin County. NRFU is 82% complete in the



Minnesota is better
when everyone counts

The count starts now.
2020 Census / American Community Survey



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Minneapolis ACO, 49% complete in the Duluth ACO, and 53% complete in the Rochester ACO as of August 28, 2020. Note that these are not census response rates; they are indicators of the field work that remains.

Therefore, we urgently request that the Census Bureau:

1. Re-extend field operations to October 31st, to ensure enough time to complete field operations statewide;
2. provide the Minnesota State Demographic Center with additional information to demonstrate that the 2020 Census has been thoroughly and accurately completed in Hennepin County;
3. continue field operations in all three Minnesota offices, including Hennepin County, to the end of the NRFU period;
4. add additional visits to addresses that have not resulted in an interview with a household member;
5. revisit apartment buildings that include large numbers of units that have neither responded to the census on their own, or been successfully interviewed by a census taker, and
6. expand the use of Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Centers to include more tracts in Minnesota that have high non-response rates.

On top of that, our Minnesota Census Mobilization Partnership* and allies are rallying our members for this home stretch of 2020 Census engagement. From Hennepin County to Red Lake Nation, the quantity and quality of our NRFU operations is now in question more than ever. Our 8th Congressional seat is on the line. Billions of federal and private dollars that would benefit our historically undercounted and BIPOC communities over the next 10 years are on the line- including COVID-19 recovery funds. The lives and livelihoods of Minnesotans from prenatal to hospice care are on the line. Therefore, we are raising our collective voices to urge you to remain committed to a complete, accurate, and equitable 2020 Census count of all Minnesotans, without any sacrifices.

Sincerely,

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*The Minnesota Census Mobilization Partnership (MCMP) is a cross-sector collaboration of organizations and individuals working together to advocate for policies and resources, and engage Minnesotans to achieve the goal of a fully inclusive, honest and accurate 2020 Census in Minnesota.

www.MCF.org/census