



August 7, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Ross

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice is greatly alarmed by the announcement that the U.S. Department of Commerce intends to end 2020 census operations on September 30, one month short of the previous deadline, and with only 63% of households currently counted. Rushing the census will most certainly hurt a diverse range of rural and urban communities, including Native Americans, people of color, low-income workers, immigrant families, the undocumented, the homeless, and children.

These populations are historically undercounted, leaving them underrepresented locally and in Congress, and cutting their fair share of federal funding for Medicaid, economic development grants, child care, schools, road and public transit improvements, home heating assistance for senior citizens, and many more vital services. Prematurely shortening the time given the Census Bureau to do its work will necessarily result in an even greater undercount than we have seen before.

According to the Constitution, the purpose of the Census is two-fold: 1) to determine how many seats each State has in the House of Representatives, and 2) to determine how to distribute federal funds to localities.

For every person counted, their community receives approximately \$2000 in federal and state funding. If someone does not get counted, that community loses out on that money. If a person does not get counted and they are not counted for another 10 years, that is \$20,000 per person. In 2010 over 3 million folks were not counted. That is \$60,000,000,000 in federal funding for services that was lost. The Census affects budgets for programs and services such as HUD funding for low-income housing, free and reduced school lunch, SNAP (food stamps), transportation, Medicaid and Medicare, student loans, and many other programs.

Money follows the numbers, so if the elderly, minorities, homeless, young children, undocumented immigrants, go uncounted or undercounted, then services for those populations are underfunded. Young kids who do not get counted – it will be another ten years before they get another chance, and ten years of funding that is lost during the most crucial period in a child's development.

Shortening the census will result in an inaccurate count, distorting the true picture of America for the next decade. It does not have to be this way. Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice calls upon you as the Secretary of Commerce and President Trump to fulfill your constitutional mandate to **count every person in US America!** We lift our voice at this critical moment because communities deserve to be fairly and accurately counted, resourced, and represented. If the Trump Administration fails to honor this basic constitutional requirement, we call on Congress to extend the 2020 Census reporting guidelines in their next Covid-19 relief package so that all can be counted!

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