March 3, 2020

Steven Dillingham
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Mr. Dillingham,

We write to request information on the United States Census Bureau’s plans to address a potential outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, often called novel coronavirus. As the threat of such an outbreak in the United States increases, the Census Bureau should have a plan in place to protect census takers, the public, and ensure the integrity of census results.

An accurate and comprehensive census is fundamental to our democracy and the well-being of communities across the country. We urge the Census Bureau to be prepared to assess whether public health concerns about novel coronavirus are depressing census response rates, and develop contingency plans for mitigating measures to help ensure a full and accurate population count. Furthermore, if outbreaks of novel coronavirus occur in the United States, the Census Bureau must be prepared to provide guidance to census takers on appropriate health and safety precautions while conducting the census. The Census Bureau may also need to prepare for challenges in recruitment and retention of census takers in the event of coronavirus outbreaks.

Given the vital importance of the census, and the potential impact of novel coronavirus outbreaks in this country, we urge the Census Bureau to create a comprehensive plan to address those possibilities. Additionally, we request a briefing on the status of this planning no later than March 27, 2020.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue and your efforts to ensure a complete and accurate population count during the 2020 census.

Sincerely,

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator
Michael Bennet
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator