

*Congress of the United States*  
**Washington, D.C. 20510**

August 12, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-230, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-220, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

We write to express our concern regarding the Administration's decision to end census field data collection activities by September. We urge you to extend the statutory deadlines for the delivery of apportionment data and redistricting files following the 2020 Census in the next coronavirus (COVID-19) relief package and require the enumeration period to be extended through October 31, 2020.

On April 13, 2020, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham announced that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they would be adjusting 2020 Census operations. Specifically, they requested that the Congress extend the statutory deadlines "for apportionment counts to be delivered to the President by April 30, 2021, and redistricting data to be delivered to the states no later than July 31, 2021." However, on July 30, 2020, the Trump Administration shortened the enumeration period from October 31, 2020 to September 30, 2020, citing statutory constraints.

The 2020 Census faces unique challenges as field operations were delayed and reduced significantly to ensure the health and safety of employees and respondents. In Colorado, only sixty-six percent of households have responded to the census questionnaire, a rate that is lower than the 2010 Census self-response rates. In some counties in Colorado, the current self-response rate is lower than thirty percent. That leaves a large percentage of the population uncounted - especially in rural communities. Census Bureau staff indicated they cannot meet the current statutory deadlines, stating the remaining field data collection cannot be completed in less than two months.

As you know, the census count dictates the percentage of federal funds Colorado is allocated in many programs, including Department of Transportation grants and Housing and Urban Development Block Grants. Colorado is one of the fastest growing states in the country. Failing to accurately account for that growth in the 2020 Census will mean Colorado will lose out on its fair share of federal funding, putting additional strain on state and local resources as they work to rebuild over the next decade after the COVID-19 pandemic. The census count also is used to determine the apportionment of representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives, meaning that an inaccurate count may compromise our ability to be fairly represented at the federal level.

Extending the deadlines for the delivery of census data and requiring the enumeration period to extend through October 31, 2020 in the next COVID-19 relief package will ensure the Census Bureau has adequate time to complete a full, fair, and accurate 2020 Census. It will also ensure both the Congress and the states receive accurate data for apportionment and redistricting. The Constitution requires a full accounting of everyone present in the United States which is critical to the allocation of federal funding. Inaccurate or incomplete census data collection will have lasting negative impacts for states and localities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



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Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



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Jason Crow  
Member of Congress



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Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



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Ed Perlmutter  
Member of Congress