

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: Reviewing the 2022 Census: Local Perspectives in Michigan
July 25, 2022

Today's hearing will examine the 2020 Census and its operations and impacts in Michigan, as a local case study that illuminates national trends.

I want to acknowledge Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence, whose district we are in today, who has also been a champion on census issues and a key partner. Throughout the census, Congresswoman Lawrence has also fought to ensure every person is counted, and we continue to work together on these issues. She has sent us a statement for today, and without objection I will enter it into the hearing record.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about your communities' experiences with the census, including successes and challenges during the count, your incredible public outreach efforts, the concerns we are now facing with undercounts of our communities, and lessons learned for the 2030 Census.

While my Committee has examined these trends at the national level, it is essential to get local perspectives, since the impacts are felt here at home.

Every ten years, the census serves as a national roadmap, determining how billions of dollars in federal resources are dispersed, as well as Congressional representation. The census affects everything from school funding and classroom sizes, to money for road construction, to where businesses decide to locate. In Michigan, at least \$1,800 in federal funding per person is on the line if there is an inaccurate census count.

Every census is a monumental task, and the 2020 Census proved especially challenging due to the public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and attempts by the former administration to politicize the census, which compromised the collection of critical data.

Census Bureau professionals ultimately resisted political interference and have worked diligently to deliver census results in 2021 and 2022. And community groups in Michigan, met the moment, with historic and robust efforts to help people get counted. I believe these "get out the count" efforts, and your work, serve as a model for the nation.

Under the new Census Bureau director, Robert Santos, who my committee confirmed last year – the Bureau is working to be transparent about 2020 Census results and challenges, determine what improvements can be made, and help communities move forward.

As Chair of this Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Census Bureau, I led oversight throughout the count, fought against political interference, and consistently pushed the Bureau to improve its efforts to count all Michiganders, particularly in "hard to count" communities.

While we won many victories for an accurate census, there were also many aspects that fell short. There were significant undercounts of minorities across the nation, as well as young children, renters, and other disadvantaged groups.

And according to scholars at the University of Michigan and Wayne State University, the 2020 Census likely undercounted Detroit's population by about 8% in certain neighborhoods, a potential undercount of tens of thousands of people.

This translates into real challenges for cities like Detroit, leading to decreased funding for services like Medicaid and Medicare, SNAP benefits, Head Start, and more. I look forward to hearing from our panel today about how residents in Detroit and other Michigan communities would be hit hard by these results, and the efforts led by Mayor Duggan and other critical organizations to address them.

As we examine ways to improve the census for our communities, we must also discuss how current categories limit representation for Michigan's Arab and Muslim American communities.

Currently, the census does not include a designation for people of Middle Eastern and North African descent, which means this vibrant community may not be receiving the right federal support and resources to meet their unique needs.

For years, I have been urging the Office of Management and Budget, which sets all federal data collection standards, including for the Census Bureau, to add a specific MENA designation to ensure this community is accurately counted. I look forward to discussing how this additional category will help communities here in Michigan.

Today's hearing is an important opportunity to put our distinguished panel's perspectives on the 2020 Census into the record, and identify solutions that will help us move forward, and support every Michigander.