

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: The 2020 Census and Current Activities of the U.S. Census
Bureau
March 23, 2021

I'd like to thank our witnesses for joining us today to discuss the 2020 Census and the U.S. Census Bureau's ongoing work on that effort. The 2020 Census is a national road map for the next ten years. This official count of our population directly impacts communities in Michigan and across the United States. It determines everything from representation in Congress to the amount of federal funds each state receives for critical health care programs, infrastructure projects, schools, and more.

Ensuring an accurate 2020 Census was especially challenging due to the Coronavirus pandemic, as well as interference from the Trump Administration. The pandemic forced the Bureau to delay its in-person data collection by three months, and delay data delivery by at least 4 months to ensure accuracy. The Bureau requested an extension of its statutory data delivery deadlines to provide additional certainty, and I fought for this legislation, but the Leadership of the previous Senate Majority opposed it. Nonetheless, the Bureau's nonpartisan career staff adapted, moved ahead with their delayed operations, and made good progress counting people.

But the previous Administration threw the census into question when the Commerce Department demanded the Bureau deliver data to the President by December. This move would have cut short data processing by 2.5 months, and would have resulted in harmful consequences, and inaccurate census results for communities in Michigan and across the nation. And of course, there was a climate of uncertainty and fear, created earlier by President Trump's untested citizenship question, and followed by his Executive Orders on citizenship data.

Fortunately, these misguided efforts to rush the census for political gain fell short. It is critical that lawmakers now work on a bipartisan basis, recognize the need for accurate census data, and respect the Census Bureau's career experts, who are committed to data accuracy, as they like to say: "counting every person once, only once, and in the right place."

There is no question that as the Census Bureau continues to process the data they have collected, and conduct robust data quality checks, their hardworking and dedicated employees not only deserve our gratitude, but the resources and time required to get it right.

To put this into perspective, in my home state of Michigan, at least \$1,800 in federal funding per person relies on an accurate census count.

This provides for critical programs that help hard-working Americans pay their bills, receive healthcare, send their children to school, and more. Michigan is also home to more than 800,000 "hard to count" residents.

These folks, who include rural residents, students, children, low-income households, and the homeless, often receive much-needed federal support and it is essential they are included accurately in the census.

An accurate census not only helps folks across our nation, but also our nation's businesses, who use the data to determine where to create jobs by building facilities, offices, and stores. They also use the data to market their services and products so they can grow their businesses and the American economy.

The 2020 Census will be a road map for every state and community, for the next ten years. We must ensure that *every* American is counted regardless of economic or social circumstance. The Bureau faced incredible challenges to this mission in 2020, and now we must work together to finish the 2020 Census and ensure it is a success.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize our federal data experts, who are working diligently to finish the census while ensuring it is accurate. I look forward to today's discussion about their work.