



August 5, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer,

Since its foundation in the 1970s, the Southern Demographic Association (SDA) has supported demographic programs of educational institutions, research organizations, and state and local governments throughout the Southern U.S. SDA is composed of demographers working in private industry, in government, in non-profit organizations, and in educational settings. As users of Census data, we are concerned about the recent decision to shorten the 2020 Census response period to September 30, 2020 from the previous published date of October 31, 2020, and urge you to include imperative language in the next Senate COVID relief package (HEALS Act) that would extend the statutory reporting deadlines for the 2020 Census by four months.

Owing to its racial/ethnic diversity combined with areas of extreme poverty and the extensive and varied geographies in which our populations are located, the 2020 Census self-response rates in the South and for most of our states lag that of the rest of the country. Thus, a count cut short risks impacting our member states' representation in Congress and risks muting the voices of diverse communities including Black, Latinx, Asian, American Indian, immigrant, and rural populations living in the South. An incomplete count risks the Census Bureau's own credibility and will make it difficult for demographers to provide accurate and timely information and analyses for our constituent organizations and clients.

Our organization supports the US Census Bureau's original plan to extend the deadline to complete the 2020 Census through October 31, 2020 and further to extend the deadline for reporting of Apportionment counts to April 30, 2021 and Redistricting data to June 30, 2021 as previously requested by the Secretary of Commerce on April 13, 2020. The additional month for data collection helps to ensure a complete count. The additional four months between data collection and reporting are critical for ensuring the accuracy of the count through data review and quality control. We urge Congress to pass legislation to reflect these new deadlines.

The House of Representatives has already approved an extension of the 2020 Census operations as part of its most recent COVID relief package. We urge the Senate to stay the course by agreeing to an extension provision in its next COVID relief package (HEALS Act), so that the

Census Bureau is not forced to rush remaining enumeration operations and critical data review, processing, and tabulation activities.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for supporting the full and fair 2020 Census.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "P. Johnelle Sparks". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Johnelle Sparks,

President, [Southern Demographic Association](#)

CC:US House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform
US Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs