

October 14, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families a priority in federal budget and policy decisions, we write with an urgent request to include extended deadlines for 2020 Census processing and reporting in critically needed COVID relief legislation or another timely vehicle.

As an organization who understands the importance of investing in our nation's children, we know that an accurate 2020 Census that counts all children is critical to ensuring not only the future success of our children, but our nation as a whole.

After field operations cease, the Census begins a painstaking, complex, and highly specialized series of activities to process and review the raw data before it is ready for use in apportioning representatives among states, redistricting, and allocating federal funding. For example, the Census Bureau must remove duplicate responses from the Census count, a problem that frequently arises because two people in the same household both respond. Adequate time is needed to validate the data and reduce errors in the final counts before they are reported to be used for electoral apportionment and redistricting.

The 2010 Census missed counting one in ten children under age five, the highest rate for any age group. The 2020 Census has been buffeted by a number of problems not experienced in the 2010 Census. Due to the delays and difficulties caused by the pandemic, extended deadlines are needed to make sure the Census Bureau has time to produce high-quality data in the 2020 count. Without this extension, the 2020 Census count of young children will be even worse than ten years ago, leaving families without their fair and legislatively allocated share of resources for children's health insurance, child care, schools, foster care, and other essential services.

The Census Bureau originally built 153 days for data processing into their pre-pandemic census plan; with the Trump administration's support, they asked for about 180 days in their COVID-adjusted operational plan. Without adequate time to process the data supplied by respondents, the Census cannot achieve the quality standards they strive for. [A Census document notes](#) that: "A compressed review period creates risk for serious errors not being discovered in the data – thereby significantly decreasing data quality."

On April 13, 2020, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham announced that due to the pandemic, they would be delaying the end of 2020 Census field operations until October 31. At the same time, Secretary Ross and Director Dillingham asked the Congress to **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."**

These requested extensions were included in bipartisan legislation, S. 4571, sponsored by Senators Schatz, and Murkowski, and cosponsored by Senators Cramer, Daines, Leahy, Peters, Perdue, Rounds, Sullivan and Tester. First Focus Campaign for Children has endorsed this bill, joining more than 200 organizations that affirm the need for adequate time for a fair and complete count, including the AARP, National Association of Counties, U.S. Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities, Partnership for America's Children,

National Organization of Black County Officials, National Council of Nonprofits, National Congress of American Indians, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, NALEO Educational Fund, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, and MALDEF.

In August, in an abrupt about face from their position in April of 2020, the administration rescinded its request to extend the statutory deadlines. The final date for the field operations remains under litigation. And the accuracy of the Census count hangs in the balance.

Due to the urgency of this issue and widespread impact of flawed census data, we urge you to end the uncertainty and ensure a more accurate Census by including extensions for reporting apportionment counts and redistricting data in the COVID relief package. Without an extension, Americans will suffer the harmful consequences of an inaccurate census for a decade to come. There are many reasons to believe the data for young children will be particularly flawed if the extensions are not given.

Please don't let a bill leave the Senate without these Census deadline extensions included. Our nation's children are counting on you.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley  
President

CC: All Members of the U.S. Senate