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Opening Statement Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney Reaching Hard-to-Count Communities in the 2020 Census January 9, 2020

Good morning. Thank you to everyone for being here today to discuss a topic vital to our democracy—the decennial census.

The 2020 Census is imminent, with counting set to begin in Alaska in less than two weeks and across the country on April 1.

The Constitution requires every person to be counted. Every single person living in the United States of America. Not just citizens. Not just people of a particular political party or race. Absolutely everyone.

I am gravely concerned that the Census Bureau may not be prepared to meet this high bar, and that the 2020 Census could leave communities across the country under-counted, under-represented, and under-funded.

The Government Accountability Office and the Department of Commerce Inspector General both agree that the Census is not where it should be.

Sadly, under President Trump, we are forced to ask whether the failure to address these concerns is due to incompetence—or is intentional.

The Census Bureau has been plagued by delays in hiring thousands of census workers needed to ensure every person is counted.

These delays hurt hard-to-count communities the most because outreach from trusted voices and non-response follow-up are essential in these communities.

The Administration's anti-immigrant policies and its illegal effort to add a citizenship question have made an accurate count even harder to obtain by sowing fear and distrust in communities across the country. But this appears to be the point.

As Republican operative Thomas Hoffeler—the so-called Michaelangelo of redistricting—put it, adding a citizenship question would be, and I quote from him, “advantageous for Republicans and Non-Hispanic whites.”

Ultimately, the Administration's goal in trying to add a citizenship question seems to be to take the hard-to-count—and make them the uncounted.

That is why I introduced a bill last year, the Census IDEA act, to remove the citizenship question and codify the process by which questions are added to the census form.

When the Supreme Court ruled that the attempt to add the citizenship question was illegal, the Administration refused for almost two weeks to accept the outcome before finally following the law.

Even still, the President is trying to use administrative records to collect citizenship data. But this has NOTHING to do with the 2020 Census.

The Census Bureau needs to make clear that everyone can participate in the Census without fear, that doing so will not hurt them or their family, and that their personal data will be secure.

The Census Bureau also faces a host of new challenges as it executes the largest census in history and the first to be conducted almost mostly and entirely online.

Cyber threats, limited broadband access, reduced language assistance, and gaps in outreach efforts all threaten the success of the census.

Data from this Census will determine the apportionment of every seat in the House of Representatives and the allocation of roughly 1.5 trillion in federal funding.

An undercount means fewer federal dollars for communities that need them most, including for essential public services like Medicaid, children's health insurance, foster care, and schools.

An undercount would also mean less representation for these communities at every level of government. If you're not counted, you're not represented.

Some states, including California and my home state of New York, are trying to fill the gaps in the Census Bureau's efforts to reach hard-to-count communities. I applaud these efforts and urge every state to do the same. The Bureau should coordinate with these states so that limited resources can be used most effectively and efficiently.

To be clear, I believe the career civil servants at the Census Bureau are working hard to achieve the mission of a complete and accurate census. But they need help—and they need it quickly.

Our witnesses today know these hard-to-count communities better than anyone. We should value their expertise and pay heed to their recommendations. I know I will.

In November 2018, my predecessor, our beloved Chairman Elijah Cummings, vowed that ensuring a fair, accurate, and nonpartisan census would be a top priority of the Oversight Committee on his watch. And he was good to his word.

As Chairwoman, I intend to honor that commitment. I want to thank everyone for coming and I look forward to their testimony.

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