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COMMITTEES:
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Dr. Steven Dillingham
Director
United States Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, D.C. 20233

Dear Director Dillingham:

We write today to request an on-site tour of New Mexico from U.S. Census Bureau's national headquarters and regional office to ensure an accurate count of every resident in the state. We believe the Bureau must adequately plan and prepare to address the state's unique data collection challenges. Our goal with this request aligns with the Bureau's mandate to accurately count each state's population, irrespective of residents' living circumstances, race, socioeconomic status, or language.

New Mexico has rich diversity and we must ensure that all underrepresented communities, including rural and Tribal communities, colonias, and all non-English and limited-English speakers are counted. An on-site visit will allow the Bureau to address New Mexico's geographic challenges, including limited infrastructure, lack of access to many households, and difficulties contacting multiple families and homes co-located on a single tract of land that lack individualized mailing addresses.

Further, the Bureau must adequately plan for New Mexico's lack of access to broadband and low adoption rates in areas with broadband access. Approximately 60 percent of rural communities and nearly 80 percent of rural Tribal communities lack such access. We are deeply concerned with the Bureau's plan to move to an online counting system, as the lack of broadband infrastructure in our state puts communities at risk of being severely undercounted. While the Bureau has plans in place to reach out to households who do not respond online, we believe that there will be large populations who will be put off by this approach and lower the response rate.

An undercount would have devastating effects in New Mexico, namely a reduction in our state's proportional representation in Congress and a reduction in our fair share of federal funding. We all have a stake in ensuring an accurate count in New Mexico. State and local governments, businesses, nonprofits, academic, and others all rely on the best and most accurate census data. An on-site visit from the Bureau's team will serve as an opportunity to meet with various stakeholders that we will convene to discuss these and other challenges and to develop solutions for hard-to-count areas.

Again, we believe the Bureau must take adequate steps now to prepare for the challenges in New Mexico in 2020 and we look forward to working with you to ensure all New Mexicans are counted. If you have, any questions related to this matter, please contact Elizabeth Hill at 202-228-1386 & Elizabeth.Hill@Heinrich.Senate.Gov; and Alyson Sincavage at 202-224-6621 & Alyson.Sincavage@Tomudall.Senate.Gov. We look forward to working with your agency to plan the visit to our state. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,



TOM UDALL
United States Senator



MARTIN HEINRICH
United States Senator

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