



October 14, 2020

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the more than 170,000 members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to co-sponsor the bipartisan 2020 Census Deadline Extensions Act (S. 4571) to extend the statutory deadlines for apportionment and redistricting by 120 days each and extend the data collection timeline through October 31, 2020.

Obtaining an accurate Census count is always difficult, but the impact of COVID-19 has only exacerbated those challenges to ensure a fair, accurate, and complete census count. The effects of this count will be felt for the next 10 years as the data collected has vast implications for American life. It establishes how much federal funding is allocated to states and local communities to receive vital services and determines the size of each state's congressional delegation. Importantly, an accurate count will support the equitable distribution of federal funds for both the economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic as well as emergency preparedness and response in natural disaster zones.

In April the administration asked Congress to extend the statutory deadlines, however, recent court decisions add greater uncertainty to a process already disrupted by the pandemic. Contradictory court rulings, culminating with the recent SCOTUS decision to end the census count, mean that the Census Bureau cannot produce accurate, high-quality census numbers by the current reporting deadlines for apportionment and redistricting data. Not only will this undermine the vital work local leaders undertook to make sure everyone is counted, it will disproportionately harm our most vulnerable and marginalized communities; people of color, children, seniors, undocumented immigrants, people with disabilities and LGBTQ persons have a history of being undercounted. Native people on tribal lands, the homeless, and low-income people are among the least likely to be counted accurately in the census. A shortened timeline will require the Census Bureau to streamline critical components of post data collection activities, which ultimately pose myriad risks to accuracy and completeness. For historically undercounted communities, these potential inaccuracies jeopardize the equitable distribution of an estimated \$1.5 trillion a year in federal dollars to meet vital needs.

The 2020 Census Deadline Extensions Act follows a previous request made by Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham to extend the deadlines for apportionment and redistricting, citing the pandemic for delaying census operations. The bill would require the Census Bureau to return to the original end date of 2020 Census field operations—October 31, 2020—to give the agency enough time to ensure a full count in hard-to-count communities. It would further extend the deadline for the delivery of apportionment data to the U.S. House of Representatives to April 30, 2021 from December 31, 2020 and would extend the statutory delivery of redistricting data to the states to July 31, 2021 from March 31, 2021. This ensures the Census Bureau can do the required data processing and quality checks necessary to tabulate acceptably accurate results and catch any serious errors in the data before they can no longer be fixed.

To date, more than 200 groups have endorsed the legislation. Congress must set a clear path forward by pushing back the deadlines for apportionment and redistricting data by 120 days each. We urge you to co-sponsor the 2020 Census Deadline Extensions Act and press Senate leadership to pass this crucial legislation. With the Census occurring once every decade the stakes are much too high to get it wrong. Our futures depend on it.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202.728.7617 or Leticia Bustillos, Federal Policy Manager, at 202.503.7889 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Nielson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kate Nielson
Director of Public Policy and Legal Advocacy