

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 11, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Steven Dillingham
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Secretary Ross and Dr. Dillingham,

As members of Oregon's congressional delegation, we write today to express our deep concern over your announcement ending the field collection of Census data a mere 50 days from today.

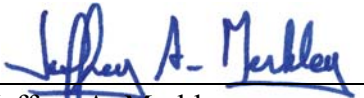
According to data available through the Census Bureau, Oregon's self-response rate is at 65.6%.¹ However, some counties fall far below this rate. In Gilliam, only 25.2% of households have responded to the Census, and in Wheeler, only 27.2%. Washington County has one of the highest reporting-rates in the state at 74.1%, but there could be approximately 150,000 people in that county alone who have not been counted yet. At our current self-response rate (ranging around 0.1% per day),² our state will barely see a 70% response rate by the end of September — a month earlier than previously announced and widely advertised and promoted.

Oregon has roughly 1.3 million Hard-to-Count (HTC) individuals, in 36 counties. Without a robust response rate, the Census will be unable to capture these individuals, depriving communities of lifesaving and life changing government resources, including SNAP, housing assistance, Head Start, and fair representation in Congress.

We recognize the challenges the Census has faced in data collection through the COVID pandemic. This collection has faced historic obstacles, and at the same time, our state faces a historic need for resources. Depriving individuals the opportunity to be counted not only undercuts our democracy, but results in the failure to allocate millions of dollars in resources.

We request that you immediately return the collection deadline to October 31, 2020, to give Oregonians the necessary opportunity to respond to this important count.

Sincerely,



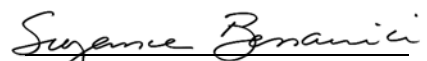
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

¹ <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html>

² <https://www.gc.cuny.edu/Page-Elements/Academics-Research-Centers-Initiatives/Centers-and-Institutes/Center-for-Urban-Research/CUR-research-initiatives/Census-2020-Response-Rate-Analysis-Weeks-12-and-13>