August 6, 2020
The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
U.S. Senate
230 South Dearborn St. Suite 3900
Chicago, IL 60604

Dear Senator Duckworth:

As you know, Forefront’s IL Count Me In 2020 coalition has spent the last few years actively working for a fair and accurate Census count in Illinois. We have also been working closely with other Census advocate organizations across the State. We want to thank you for your continued support and leadership in ensuring a full and accurate Census count. Collectively, many of us are writing to you in regards to the U.S. Census Bureau’s recent statement reducing and rushing 2020 Census operations to conclude on September 30, 2020 rather than October 31, 2020. As Census advocates, we are concerned that this shortened period will affect the Census count in communities across the State, particularly in historically undercounted communities.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted Census field operations across the nation. In March 2020, the Census Bureau decided to suspend field operations to ensure the safety and wellness of their employees. This field operations suspension has led the Bureau to postpone many field operations such as group quarters (counting colleges/universities, jails, nursing homes, etc.) and the mobile questionnaire assistance program. Due to these field operations being postponed, the nonresponse follow-up operation is now under more pressure for getting a complete Census count. At the request of the Administration, the Bureau had extended the Census count to October 31 due to the pandemic. Now, the Administration is backing away from their initial request to extend the self-response period.

That said, the Census Bureau had previously indicated they don’t have the time needed for a thorough enumeration of households that haven’t yet responded on their own to the 2020 Census. Already, the 2020 response rates are behind the 2010 rates because of the deep impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, especially for communities that have been undercounted for decades. The Census Bureau is entering the door-to-door counting operation with the lowest response rates in recent memory.

In Illinois alone, the self-response rate is at 67.9% (as of August 5, 2020). Yet in 2010, we were at a 70.5% self-response rate. Illinois is one of many States across the country lagging behind in self-response rates. This rush to the Census puts our State in even more danger, as we are at risk of losing potentially two Congressional seats and billions in federal funds for necessary resources for residents across our State.

In the past few years, the State of Illinois, Cook County, the City of Chicago, and Forefront’s IL Count Me In 2020 Funders’ Collaborative have invested millions of dollars to ensure our communities are counted fairly and accurately. Through this investment, hundreds of Illinois Census advocates have been working tirelessly and diligently to get out the count.
Additionally, this recent deadline change now causes more confusion on whether communities should still respond. The Census Bureau and many advocate organizations have created and shared numerous materials with the October 31, 2020 deadline. With this latest change, this is adding a layer of confusion. It is vital for our communities to get counted in the 2020 Census.

Given all these recent updates, we, IL Census advocates, urge the U.S. Census Bureau to strongly reconsider moving the full self-response deadline back to October 31, 2020. This October 31 deadline would allow more time for the Census Bureau to collect and process the collected data.

We, IL Census Advocates, appreciate you taking the time to listen to our concerns for a fair and accurate 2020 Census count. As Illinoisans, we deserve a full Census count for a better future.

Sincerely,

Forefront
ACLU of Illinois
Active Transportation Alliance
AgeOptions, Inc
Alsip Chamber of Commerce
Arts Alliance Illinois
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago
Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry
Aurora Complete Count Committee/College of DuPage
Aurora Public Library District
Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce
Aurora Township
BCMW
Better Government Association
Black United Fund of Illinois, Inc.
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
Carl L. White Jr. Charity Golf Classic
Center for Changing Lives
Center on Halsted
Champaign County Regional Planning Commission
CHANGE Illinois
Chicago Commons
Chicago Reader/ CIMA
Chicago Urban League
Chicago Veterans
Chinese American Service League
Chinese Mutual Aid Association
City of Aurora
City of Aurora Interfaith
City of Berwyn
City of Champaign
City of Chicago Heights
City of East St. Louis
City of Harvey
City of Mt Vernon
City of North Chicago
City of Prospect Heights
City of Rockford
Common Cause Illinois
Community Assistance Programs
Community Organizing and Family Issues
Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago
County of McHenry
Cunningham Township
Eagle Christian Academy & Daycare
East Aurora School District 131
Elgin Complete Count Committee
Enlace Chicago
Equiticity
Erie Neighborhood House
Faith Coalition for the Common Good
Faith in Place
Family Focus
Far South CDC
Fathers Who Care
Fathers, Families and Healthy Communities
Ford County Public Health Department
Fox Valley United Way
Gathering Point Community Council
Greater Chatham Alliance
Habilitative Systems, Inc
Housing Action Illinois
Howard Brown Health
HRDI
IL Muslim Civic Coalition
ILCMA
Illinois Action for Children
Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Illinois Democratic Women
Illinois Library Association
Illinois Partners for Human Service
Illinois Primary Health Care Association
Illinois Public Health Association
Illinois State Data Center - Northern Illinois University
Industrial Welder Rebuilders
Introspect Youth Services, Inc.
Kendall County
Kendall County Complete Count Commission
Korean American Association of Chicago
La Casa Norte
Lakeside Community Committee
League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford
League of Women Voters of Illinois
Lee County Health Department
Lifebuilders Outreach Mission and Ministries
Lights of Zion Ministries
Literacy Works
LUCHA
Mano a Mano Family Resource Center
Marie Wilkinson Food Pantry
Men Making A Difference
Mercer County Better Together
Metropolitan Tenants Organization
Midwest Asian Health Association
Montgomery County Clerk
Mujeres Latinas en Acción
Northwest Side Housing Center
Oakdale Christian Academy
ONE Northside
PASO - WEST SUBURBAN ACTION PROJECT
Peoria Citizens Committee for Economic Opportunity (PCCEO)
Phalanx family services
Public Narrative
Quad Cities Interfaith
Quad City Community Development Center
Quad County Urban league
RAMP
ReadyNation Illinois
Real Freedom
Roll Call
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
SGA Youth & Family Services
South Asian American Policy and Research Institute (SAAPRI)
South Suburban Mayors & Managers
Southland Ministerial Health Network, NFP
Southwest Organizing Project
Spanish Coalition for Housing
Teens Against Killing Everywhere
The Neighbor Project
The Refugee Center
The Resurrection Project
The Southwest Collective
Total Resource Community Development Organization
Town of Cicero
Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
Trinity Services, Inc.
True Love Center
UIC Census 2020 Project
United Way of Lake County
United Way of Southern Illinois
Valley Industrial Association
Victory Christian International Ministries
Village of Alorton
Village of Alsip
Village of Bellwood
Village of Calumet Park
Village of Dolton
Village of Glen Carbon
Village of Hazel Crest
Village of Hoffman Estates
Village of Maywood
Village of Mount Prospect
Village of New Athens
Village of Orion
Village of Phoenix
Village of Richton Park
Village of Rive Forest
Village of Sauk Village
Vive En Forma
Voices for Illinois Children
Wayside Cross Ministries
Whiteside County Health Department
Worth Township Supervisor
YMCA of the University of Illinois
YWCA Metropolitan Chicago
YWCA of the Sauk Valley