

MONTEREY COUNTY



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

LUIS A. ALEJO, *District 1*
JOHN M. PHILLIPS, *District 2*
CHRIS M. LOPEZ, *Chair, District 3*
JANE PARKER, *Vice Chair, District 4*
MARY ADAMS, *District 5*

March 24, 2020

The Honorable Secretary Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Re: Request to Extend the 2020 Census Operations Deadline

Dear Secretary Ross:

On behalf of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to formally request that the U.S. Department of Commerce, grant an extension of the 2020 Census Operations deadline beyond the currently scheduled date of July 31, 2020 to, at minimum, November 30, 2020 due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus.

The U.S. Census Bureau launched the first phase of operations, the self-response period on March 12, 2020 and is scheduled to end on April 30, 2020. While it is expected that nearly 60% of the nation's population will self-respond, communities in Monterey County continue to face challenges and barriers concerning web access and language assistance needs. In Monterey County, a Complete Count Committee was established in 2018 with the support of the State of California and in partnership with numerous community-based organizations and trusted messengers.

The Complete Count Committee was poised to provide local access to technology and language support to ensure a complete and accurate count. The Census Bureau currently plans to begin enumeration of various in-person operations on April 1, 2020 including Group Quarters Operations and Service-based Operations, followed by a series of non-response follow-ups using door-to-door canvassing strategies to conclude by the end of July.

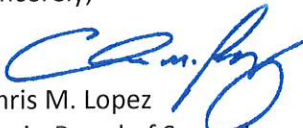
impact of COVID-19. Monterey County currently has 20 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and mobilization efforts to take preventative measures are in full effect. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic and communities across the nation, including Monterey County began to build upon initial preventative measures and began to close non-essential operations to help prevent the spread of the virus. On March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease Outbreak.

The 2020 Census Complete Count Committee is comprised of a cross sector of jurisdictions and as all are now forced to redirect their capacity to respond to the outbreak, there is a diminishing capacity to administer the Census in addition to pragmatic and logistical challenges caused by the outbreak itself. Setup and launch of local operations including community kick-off events focused on raising awareness about the importance of the census and instantly provides internet access for marginalized communities have been drawn to a halt. Any count conducted under these circumstances would undoubtedly result in a severe undercount and the negative impact will specifically target historically disadvantaged communities by the census process.

Following the recommendations from local, State and Federal health officials to effectively prevent the spread of the outbreak will inadvertently impede an accurate and complete census count. Social distancing described as the closing of public gathering locations, canceling large social events and limiting or closing non-essential workplace operations are in full effect in Monterey County and across the nation. Self-reporting will be difficult if not impossible, without the awareness about the importance of the Census that social gathering and community event environments bring. College campuses under group quarters operations are now closed and many students have had to relocate temporarily, long term residences for the elderly such as skilled nursing facilities required enumerators to conduct in-person interviews for a count and are now limiting visits or eliminating them altogether, homeless populations would be counted in service organizations such as soup kitchens and shelters, such programs are impacted by closures or limited service delivery.

Considering the necessary halt on local Census efforts to build community awareness, increase access to the online census survey and the preexisting challenges with ensuring a complete count in the 2020 Census for Monterey County, we urge the Census Bureau to extend the enumeration period at minimum through November 30, 2020 to allow for further outreach after the immediate response to the virus subsides. The Constitutional mandate to conduct a decennial census includes the provision for an extension of the enumeration window to the end of the calendar year.

Sincerely,


Chris M. Lopez
Chair, Board of Supervisors

Cc: Hon. Dianne Feinstein, U.S. Senator for California
Hon. Kamala Harris, U.S. Senator for California
Hon. Jimmy Panetta, 20th Congressional District
Hon. Bill Monning, 17th Senate District
Hon. Anna Caballero, 12th Senate District
Hon. Mark Stone, 29th Assembly District
Hon. Robert Rivas, 30th Assembly District
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)