

Friday, September 18, 2020

Honorable Jared Polis
Governor of Colorado
200 East Colfax Avenue
Room 136
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Governor Polis,

As members of the non-profit and philanthropic community working to support a fair and accurate 2020 Census count of everyone in Colorado, we write to express our frustration regarding the state's limited contributions to the effort needed to enumerate all Coloradans during a particularly challenging time. Due to the public health emergency and operational shifts from the Census Bureau, we believe that the state, and particularly the department of local affairs (DOLA), should have done more to ensure that all individuals, families and households complete the 2020 Census form.

We recently learned that \$371,841.51 from the state's Census grant fund created by HB19-1239 to ensure a complete count of all Coloradans went unspent and was returned to the general fund. We are aware that the money was originally distributed, but then returned prior to the statutory deadline set forth in HB19-1239.

This is true even though the Census count is still underway and runs through at least the end of this month. This is also true even though DOLA could have requested means by which the \$371,841.51 appropriated by the legislature could be reallocated to other Census-related uses, perhaps by executive order.

The importance of full participation in the 2020 Census to Colorado cannot be stated enough. Our organizations and associations have worked tirelessly over the last three years to make the process and operation for enumeration as easy for our fellow Coloradans as possible. This includes investments from private philanthropies, businesses, local governments, and also includes re-allocation of resources, particularly by many nonprofit organizations, to ensure that the most vulnerable members of our state's population get counted.

As we enter the final push before the September 30 deadline of the enumeration period, we encourage Colorado's state government to do more and to specifically address low response rates among the populations and geographies in our state that have been the most difficult to count. Many counties across our state have yet to cross the 50% threshold in responses – many of them rural and frontier – and we fear Colorado is heading towards an undercount of large segments of our population unless additional action is taken immediately.

There *is* still time to do something, and we urge you to use your voice, as well as the state's resources in the time that is remaining. Elevate your voice within traditionally hard-to-count communities, or use targeted social media posts to reach rural areas with low response rates. Should the census be extended by another month, we are happy to work with you and your office to make a meaningful impact in the time that remains.

If you or your staff have any questions or comments for us about how we can work together to ensure a complete count of all Coloradans, please direct those to Jin Tsuchiya, public policy officer at The Colorado Health Foundation (jtsuchiya@coloradohealth.org, or 303-956-4885).

Sincerely,

*9to5 Colorado
American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado
Caring for Colorado Foundation
Colorado Association of Local Public Health
Officials
Colorado Children's Campaign
Colorado Common Cause
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
Colorado Fiscal Institute
The Colorado Health Foundation*

*Colorado Rural Health Center
Colorado Senior Lobby
Council for a Strong America
Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
Hispanic Affairs Project
Jeffco Council Parent Teacher Association
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry - Colorado
Mile High Health Alliance
Support Jeffco Kids
Together We Count*

CC:

Kerry Tipper, State Representative
Yadira Caraveo, State Representative
Faith Winter, State Senator
Kevin Priola, State Senator
Rick Palacio
David Oppenheim
Crestina Martinez
Rick Garcia
Natriece Bryant