



LATINO ACTION NETWORK FOUNDATION

NJ Complete Count Commission Public Hearing
Wednesday, April 24th, 2019

**PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON CENSUS 2020 BY LATINO ACTION NETWORK
FOUNDATION**

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My name is Dr. Jesselly De La Cruz and I am the Executive Director for The Latino Action Network Foundation (LANF). Established in 2010, The LAN Foundation is a nonprofit, charitable organization with the goal of uniting New Jersey's diverse Latino communities and advancing our economic and social empowerment. The LAN Foundation believes that the integration and representation of Latinos at all levels of society benefits all New Jerseyans.

With that said, I would like to speak to the Commission about the benefits and barriers to ensuring Latino representation in the upcoming Census in 2020. The Census was established in the Constitution as a way of capturing America's diverse demographics. However, current federal administration efforts to include a citizenship question threatens NJ's goal of obtaining a full and accurate count. Efforts to deter participation of Latinos, immigrants, and all other Hard-to-Count (HTC) communities in the Census will negatively affect all of NJ by concealing the valuable contributions of NJ's diversity. Latinos currently represent approximately 20% of New Jersey residents throughout the state including in urban and rural communities. NJ's Latino population is diverse from farmworkers to U.S.-born youth of immigrants attending local schools. Latinos are generally younger in age in comparison to other racial and ethnic communities; and, we proudly contribute to the state's economic growth and labor workforce.



The LAN Foundation would like to highlight some important matters to keep in mind as the Commission begins to operationalize efforts for a full and accurate count. First, Latinos currently represent the largest group at risk of an undercount with 32% of Latinos living in HTC areas. Latino youth make up 26% of children living in NJ but also represent a large portion of the undercount for children under the age of 5. The risk of excluding Latino youth in the Census is further compounded by anxiety and fear of mixed-status families being separated or targeted by local municipalities because of their immigration status. If we are unable to capture all of NJ youth and their families, we put at risk the future needs of the entire state. Latino civic organizations and nonprofit organizations, such as LAN and the LAN Foundation, work closely with NJ government because we believe in democratic participation, including Census participation. We ask that, in NJ's efforts to pursue a full and accurate count, that we also collectively take measures on statewide and local levels to gain and maintain the community's trust by ensuring safe participation of all NJ residents. We support legislative bill A5056/S3478 that appropriates funding toward NJ's full count efforts. We also hope that community fears are addressed adequately and that the outreach needs of NJ Latinos are provided equitable resources that are representative of our valuable presence and contributions to this state.