

TESTIMONY OF THE JCRC-NY TO THE NYS COMPLETE COUNT COMMISSION, BROOKLYN HEARING

Good evening. My name is David Pollock and I am honored to serve as the Associate Executive Director and Director, Public Policy and Jewish Security of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York (JCRC-NY). I am very well aware of the importance of the Census to New York – this will be my fifth Census – and the inherent difficulties in achieving a complete count here. As part of our commitment to achieve a complete count, JCRC-NY organized 13 prominent, religious-based groups to join us to file an amicus brief in the Census citizenship question

case arguing that the addition of that question would lead to an undercount. Fortunately, that question will not appear during Census 2020. In my experience with

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past census outreach, government and private resources focused their efforts on many specific demographic groups, but not on the diverse Jewish communities of New York. As this Commission writes on its website: “Nationwide, hard-to-count population includes children under five years of age, peo-

ple who live in dense urban settings ... immigrants, people of color and people who live in poverty.” Not only does New York State have a disproportionately large

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number of people who fit into these categories, so do many Jewish communities. The U.S. Census Bureau posted a new tool last week at www.census.gov/roam -- a map of census tracts shaded by predicted mail non-response rate, otherwise known as Low Response Score (LRS). The LRS re-

flects a percentage of households predicted to *not* self-respond (emphasis supplied) to the Decennial Census. The higher the LRS is in a census tract, the harder that area may be to survey.

Given the research on low response rate attributes and the demographics of some predominantly Jewish communities, we

should not be surprised that neighborhoods with predominately Orthodox, Jewish populations pop out on the LRS map. Here in Brooklyn the

communities of Williamsburg, Borough Park, Crown Heights and Flatbush-Midwood have high-predicted Low Response Scores. The same is true in Far Rockaway, some areas in Nassau and Westchester, and especially in obvious areas of Rockland and Orange Counties (which are beyond the JCRC-NY catchment area). We also see signs of LRS in areas with heavily Russian-speaking populations.



DAVID POLLOCK DELIVERING
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“a choir of trusted voices should be identified and recruited., delivering culturally competent messaging to engage every household , especially the hard –to-reach.”

Most of these identified communities have mature communal infrastructures that can effectively network and mobilize existing institutions such as houses of worship, schools and other communal facilities. Through such organizations, a choir of trusted voices should be identified and recruited. Through such organizations, culturally competent messaging can be developed and deployed, in order to engage every household in every LRS community.

Unfortunately, most effective communal organizations with the abilities to reach and motivate the local householders are already stretched thin, because they are responsible for the delivery of a myriad of services. They will not be able to do the necessary work unless they receive the resources necessary for dedicated staffers. We of the JCRC-NY are able (assuming that we are able to access private funding) to provide guidance and expertise to communal organizations, but those organizations will need to execute the ground game.

Several months ago, JCRC-NY partnered with ABNY to host a focus group with leaders of Orthodox Jewish communities in the region. We learned a lot about attitudes concerning the census and that most broad-based messaging campaigns will not be effective in these communities. Remember, the proposed nationwide media buys will not even reach most of the households within these insular communities. We must develop a hyper-local media campaign that includes appropriate messaging in the very media outlets actually reaching these communities. There must be funding for culturally competent media placements to be developed and placed in appropriate outlets in order to deliver the most fitting messaging.

In short, we know what must be done, but we urge you not to repeat the past error of overlooking outreach efforts to the Orthodox Jewish and Russian-speaking communities. We urge this Commission to commit to funding outreach efforts to these populations so that together, we can reverse the LRS. To minimize the undercount New York State, New York City and other entities must join nonprofits to ensure that every New Yorker is counted.

Thank you.