Libraries Count: Census 2020
$40M for Library-Based Complete Count Initiatives

Background

• The 2020 Census will be conducted primarily online for the first time, threatening a catastrophic undercount
• In NYS, studies show that populations historically subject to undercounting - low-income households, New Americans, and communities of color -- disproportionately lack broadband internet access at home
• A 2020 undercount threatens our state budget & federal representation; in FY2019, NYS received $60B in federal funding through Census-based formulas & the 2010 undercount cost NY two Congressional seats

Libraries as Crucial Partners

• Statewide, at least 18% of households lack internet access, or rely on dial-up access; according to multiyear Siena Research Institute data, 25% of NYS households earning less than $50k annually indicate their local public library is their primary point of internet access.
• 100% of NYC’s “Hard-to-Count” (HTC) communities are within one mile of a library, with nearly 99% of NYS HTC tracts within 5 miles.

Community Based Partnerships

• Libraries and library advocates across New York, in partnership with the NYS Complete Count Commission and New York Counts 2020, will serve a critical role as primary points of service for New Yorkers who need help completing the online Census.
• For public libraries to effectively serve an influx of New Yorkers as the local, trusted places for reliable Census information and/or to complete their questionnaire, immediate infrastructure investment is needed.

Recommendations

• Funding for cybersecurity measures: libraries store legally-protected personal information for nearly 10 million New Yorkers statewide; the recent Australian census was hacked, causing prolonged services outages, tens of millions in damages, and compromised sensitive personal information
• Support for staff resources: approximately 1.4M New Yorkers rely on libraries for internet, and hundreds of thousands more will seek library staff support; estimates range from 150,000-175,000 total library staff hours.
• IT infrastructure investments: many libraries will find it necessary to upgrade hardware and software resources, increase available bandwidth, and potentially hire (even temporarily) additional IT staff.