**The US Census Undercount Could Be the Next Big Tragedy of 2020**

Blog Message from Greg Moore

The year 2020 will forever go down in history as a consequential year that will be defined by the many tragic events that have unfolded in our nation: the deadly COVID 19 Pandemic, the shutdown of the US economy, and the chronic unemployment and economic hardships that followed. But it will also be forever marked by the national (and international) recognition and awareness of a longtime American pandemic of racism and police brutality.

The tragic deaths of George Floyd, Brianna Taylor and Rayshard Brooks and the many other African Americans that came before and after them have finally opened the squinting eyes of our nation. The *Black Lives Matter* protests and uprisings have launched a new movement for racial justice and began a long overdue national dialogue on racism and its lasting impact on our society.

However, there is one more much less public tragedy taking place throughout the US that has been under the radar screen: the severe under count of Black, Brown, urban and economically under-served communities in the 2020 Census. Already woefully underfunded by federal and state government, the census undercount of our communities could wield yet another tragic and devastating blow to our region and state of Ohio as well.

*By the June, 2020 only 46.6% of Cleveland resident had completed their census form compared to 66.3% statewide. The percentage in East Cleveland was even worse with less than 33% of its residents responding.*

Cleveland and the Northeast Ohio region could lose hundreds of millions of dollars and a Congressional Seat in the US Congress if we don’t pull together as a community and ensure that every household has been counted before the October 31st deadline. So while we are in the midst of deadly pandemics of sickness and racism, we face the crucial challenge to take the necessary steps now while it is still possible to stop the diversion of hundreds of billions of dollars from our communities in Ohio and throughout the US.

It is in that spirit that the *Promise of Democracy Foundation* is partnering with the *Ohio Voter Fund, the Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition*, the *Cleveland Foundation* and a number of Community partners to coordinate a targeted outreach campaign to reach Hard to Count communities in the Greater Cleveland area. Our communities must live with the consequences of a census 2020 undercount for the next 10 years with no avenues to remedy the economic disparity and political disenfranchisement that’s certain to follow as we move into the re-apportionment and redistricting process that is all based on the results of the US Census.

It’s time for us to *bend the curve* of our Census response rate *upwards* while there’s still time to make a difference.

Gregory T. Moore is the President of the *Promise of Democracy Foundation*