The Massachusetts Senate
Senate Committee on the Census
Hearing on "Privacy Protection, Data Sharing, and Governance of the Census"

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Good morning, Chairman Brownsberger, Vice Chairwoman Rausch, Ranking Member Fattman, and Members of the Committee. My name is Philip Rocco. I am Chair and Associate Professor of Political Science at Marquette University. I am also the author of a book, *Counting Like a State*, which focuses on what state and local governments can do to improve the quality of census data.[i] Given the findings of my book, it was a delight to learn that this legislative committee exists. As far as I can tell from my research, it is the only committee of its kind at the state level. I can only hope that legislatures across the country take a page from your book.

Allow me to begin by stating the obvious. The US Census is the backbone of American democracy—one of the very few things the US Constitution requires the government to do. By counting everyone once, only once, and in the right place, the census promises to fairly allocate representation and resources at all levels of government. Yet while census-taking is often thought to be the exclusive province of the federal government, the existence of this committee illustrates something that, until recently, has been far less obvious: state and local governments have a critical role to play in ensuring a complete count. As my testimony today will suggest, those roles are especially important in light of current developments in the larger census "environment".

As a scholar of federalism, much of my recent research examines in particular how intergovernmental relations shape the quality of official statistics. My most recent book, *Counting Like a State*, traces how intergovernmental partnerships shaped the 2020 US Census across a variety of domains. The bottom-line insight of that book is that, absent state and local investments in the census (ranging from address list construction in LUCA to outreach and mobilization efforts in the years leading up to the 2020 count, to a variety of data review operations), data quality in the 2020 Census would have suffered even more than it did during the "perfect storm" of political and operational challenges that confronted the most recent decennial count.

The Emergence of Census Federalism

When I talk about the role of state and local governments in the Census, I like to begin with these two images. The first image is one many have seen before (figure 1). This is the

beginning of the 2020 Census in Toksook Bay Alaska. This is months before most Americans will complete their 2020 Census questionnaires, and the director of the Census Bureau is participating in the ritual—now more than a century old—of conducting the first census interviews in remote Alaska. In January, the ground is still frozen there, allowing for slightly easier transportation to the most isolated villages. With an early start, enumerators can also get a more accurate count of the area's residents before they decamp to hunting and fishing grounds in the spring. The entire affair provides a dramatic bit of public relations for the Census Bureau. Enumerators arrive via bush planes and dog sleds, reinforcing an image core to the organization's public identity: the tireless census taker who will not be deterred from counting everyone "once, only once, and in the right place."

Figure 1: Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham (right) on a snowmobile in Toksook Bay, Alaska. Source: US Census Bureau.

Yet if the ritual of remote Alaska enumeration is intended to focus attention on the Census Bureau, a look behind the scenes illustrates the profound influence of local communities on what is often thought to be the exclusive domain of the federal government. One month earlier at Anchorage's Alaska Native Heritage Center, a group of twenty-five people—representing Gwich'in, Iñupiaq, Yup'ik, and Koyukon cultures—met to translate census questionnaires into seven Native Alaskan languages (Figure 2). This involved intensive dialogue between speakers and language experts, who worked to create language for census terms that are not easily rendered in Iñupiaq or Denaakk'e. Actions like these, as much as any visit from Census Bureau personnel, are vital to producing an accurate count of the remote Alaska

population. It is bottom-up action like this that constitutes the societal infrastructure of census-taking, and it is that I am primarily concerned with in my book.

Figure 2: Hishinlai' Peter (left), Amaya Shaw, and Mary Fields work on translating census education materials into Gwich'in at the Alaska Native Heritage Center, December 12, 2019. Source: Tripp Crouse, KNBA.

One question that often arises for state policymakers and the public is why state and local governments should make considerable investments in achieving a complete count of their populations, especially given that census-taking is, at least as a constitutional matter, a federal responsibility. In *Counting Like a State*, I show that over the last fifty years, census-taking has become increasingly "intergovernmentalized" for two interrelated reasons. First, the shift to "self-enumeration" made the US Census Bureau increasingly dependent on states and local governments. Not only are state and local officials the primary custodians of knowledge about residential addresses, they also enjoy far higher levels of public trust than the federal government. Census Bureau officials have long known this, which is why over the last four censuses, they have stepped up their efforts to stimulate state and local investments in census operations. Second, the explosion of intergovernmental aid, requirements for decennial redistricting, and the emergence of sophisticated data-driven city and regional planning have raised the "stakes" of state and local investment in measures to improve census accuracy.

Nevertheless, not all state and local governments who are likely to experience a census undercount choose to invest in a complete count. For example, Florida – whose population was undercounted by 3.48% in 2020 – allocated no state resources to census outreach. In short, "census federalism" is more pivotal than ever, but is unevenly institutionalized across the United States.

The reasons for this unevenness are essentially threefold. The first is that the census struggles to gain agenda status at the state level. Census-taking continues to be seen as a federal responsibility and is thus low on the priority list of state and local officials until late in the decennial cycle unless there are either institutions like this committee that can provide policymakers with appropriate cues about the importance of investing in a complete count or other sources of cognitive cues, such as a significant undercount in a prior census or a projection of a loss in congressional seats following the next census.

The second is that the census can sometimes be swept into the maw of partisan and ideological battles over a variety of issues—ranging from immigration policy to state budgets. The interviewees in my book struggled mightily to maintain the nonpartisan issue status of the census. Sometimes—though not always—they succeeded.

The third is that supporting a complete count is time- and resource-intensive, and not all states have the fiscal or organizational capacity to make those investments. In some states, cities, and counties, sophisticated State Data Centers and Planning Departments are given the resources necessary to build the necessary expertise and networks to data users that support census operations. In other states, responsibilities for census outreach planning are given to a catch-all state or local agency, with a diverse portfolio of tasks, rather than a specialized organization with deep experience working with census data.

I'd like to turn now to the question of how and why states might invest in a complete count. While my book covers the mechanics of intergovernmental partnerships across a wide range of census operations, I will focus today on just a few examples.

The Local Update of Census Addresses

First, state and local governments are pivotal to counting everyone "in the right place", so to speak, by assisting the Census Bureau in, ensuring that all living quarters are included in the Census Bureau's Master Address File. Since the 2000 Census, intergovernmental partnerships have supported the Local Update of Census Addresses Operation (LUCA), authorized by Congress in 1994, which allows governments to review and propose modifications to the Master Address File (MAF) for their area. In the program's "New Construction" phase, governments can provide further information on living quarters under construction with completion expected by Census Day. Following the creation of the American Community Survey, first implemented in 2005, the bureau also required more continuous updates to the MAF.

Why do state and local governments matter for keeping the Master Address File up to date? In the United States, accurate and up-to-date information about housing quarters is highly decentralized. Even with the advent of satellite technology, which has allowed the bureau to pioneer the technique of in-office address canvassing, the task of maintaining an up-to-date census address list in the face of frequent churn in the US address and housing stock would be impossible to manage without assistance from state, local, and tribal officials who have access to

property tax records and 911 data, as well as tacit knowledge about who can help to fill in missing data "on the ground." In the 2020 cycle, the MAF included 16.5 million addresses submitted by LUCA participants. Most of these addresses—13.3 million—have their origins in prior censuses or updates to the USPS Delivery Sequence File that occurred before 2020. The remaining 3.2 million addresses originated uniquely in the 2020 LUCA program.

Participating in LUCA generates benefits for state and local governments. Following LUCA 2020, officials in Hudson County, New Jersey calculated that the addition of over fourteen thousand new addresses had the potential to generate an additional $220 million in federal funding per year.

As I show in the book, however important intergovernmental partnerships might be to the quality of the address list, they are by no means easy to maintain. Especially for smaller and medium-sized jurisdictions, the barriers to participating in LUCA can be formidable (Figure 3).

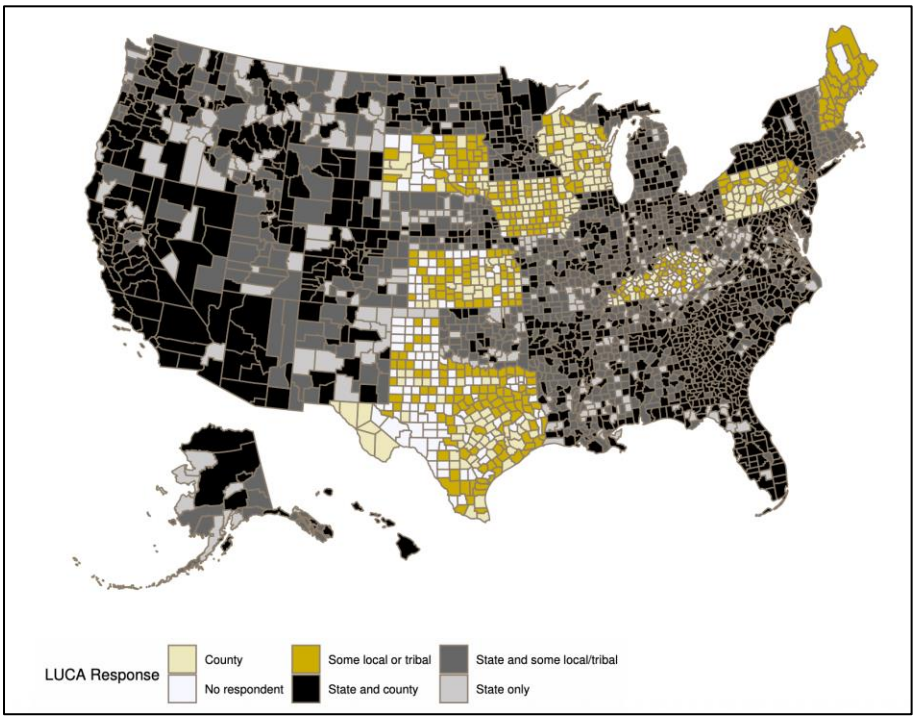

Figure 3: 2020 LUCA participation by county. Source: Author's analysis of LUCA respondent data. Note: Shading does not reflect contributions from multiple local units of government in a single county area. Tribal governments include Alaska Native Regional Corporations.

Beyond the relatively low visibility of the program, a scarcity of resources—including technical capacity and skill—remains a perennial complaint of state, local, and tribal partners. To the extent that the Census Bureau has been able to address these problems over the last three decades, it has been driven largely by deliberate efforts to generate feedback from state, local, and tribal partners. Nevertheless, this learning has been constrained by an adverse fiscal context.

Not only does the Census Bureau lack grantmaking authority to support state and local transmission of address lists and other geospatial data; it remains under constant pressure to keep the costs of census-taking in check. Reforms to LUCA over the last twenty years have focused instead on minimizing the burdens of participation, taking advantage of existing sources of institutional capacity (namely, state governments), and reducing the pressure on the once-per-decade LUCA process by moving toward a continuous update of address lists. Thus, even as the bureau has improved its technical capabilities for identifying addresses remotely, via satellite imaging, the local knowledge it receives from its partners remains essential for establishing where to count. Indeed, states can play a crucial role in reducing the administrative burdens for local governments' participation in the program by providing technical assistance, training, and resources to support LUCA submissions.

Investing in Self-Response

A second important variable state and local governments can affect is self-response to the census. Not only does self-response reduce the cost and effort associated with in-person enumeration during the Nonresponse Followup (NRFU) operation and other in-person enumeration operations, self-responses to the census produce higher quality data. Analyses of the last three decennial censuses reveal that self-responses result in higher percentages of correct enumerations than those collected by enumerators. Perhaps most importantly, as evidence from the Post-Enumeration Survey (PES) reveals, higher levels of self-response produce fewer omissions, that is fewer persons missed.[ii] The upshot here is that when areas have lower levels of self-response (including but not limited to areas with higher proportions of Hispanic and Black residents, foreign-born residents, and renters) are at greater risk of net undercount compared with other areas.

To bring the point home here, Massachusetts's self-response rate varied considerably across the state (Figure 4). Perhaps the most disturbing news about the 2020 Census for Massachusetts is that, the self-response rate for the state's seven largest cities declined between 2010 and 2020. In some of the state's largest cities, this decrease was as large as 8%.

Since publishing the book, I have been attempting to identify the effects of state investments in census outreach on tract-level self-response. As I noted before, state investments in census outreach ranged widely across the states. While virtually all states created State Complete Count Commissions (SCCCs), bodies that enable states to coordinate census outreach with local governments and community-based organizations, not all SCCCs were alike. Those created early, in 2017 or 2018, typically had well-developed outreach strategies. Commissions created in late 2019 or 2020 could tend towards the symbolic. Some public records requests revealed that these late-created bodies held no meetings and formulated no plans beyond a press conference. There was also variation at the local level. In a sample of 197 municipalities I analyzed, 81% created a local Complete Count Committee (CCC). But this result is driven by larger municipalities. Of the 28 municipalities with populations of 50,000 or less, only 39%

created CCCs. Those who did create these bodies tended to be in states that placed a stronger emphasis on census outreach.

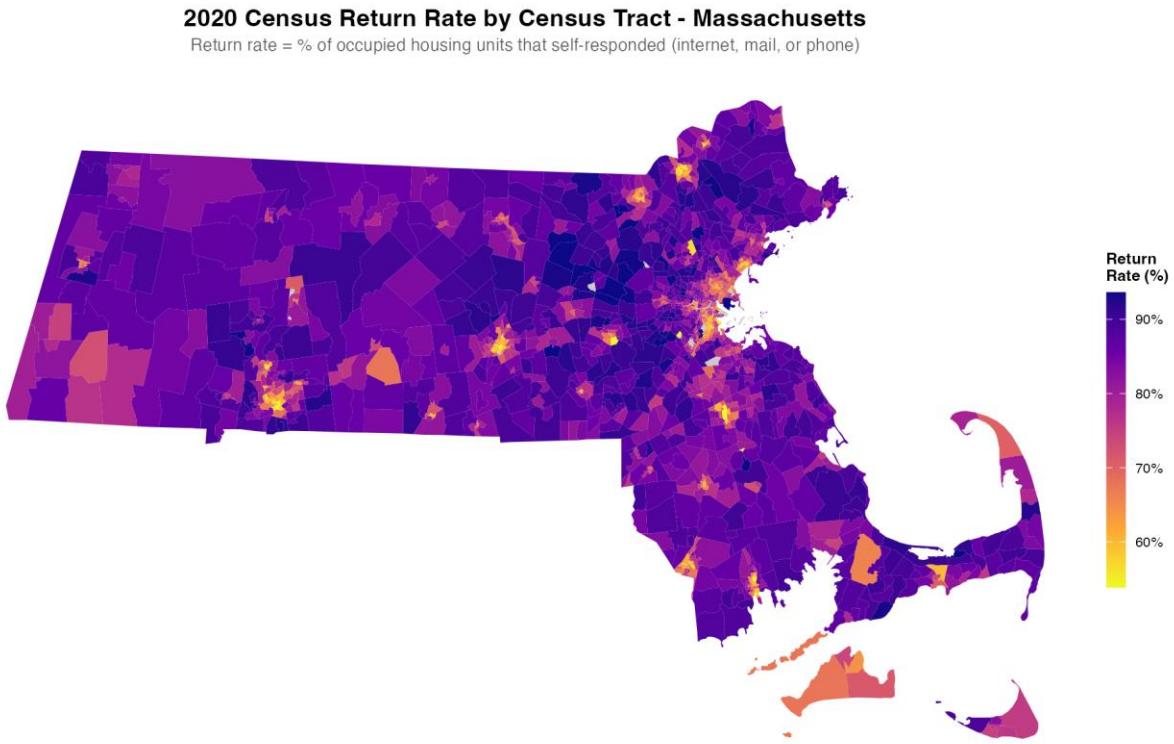

Figure 4: Tract-level self-response rates for occupied housing units in Massachusetts, 2020 Census. Source: US Census Bureau, 2024 Planning Database

Roughly half the states invested no resources in census outreach, while states like California invested as much as $187 million in the development of quite sophisticated census operations that amounted to a parallel infrastructure for census-taking. The value of these operations is that, especially given that states, local governments, and community-based organizations typically enjoy greater levels of trust locally than does the federal government, communications from an ecology of trusted messengers—ranging from mayors to ministers to sports mascots—have a better chance of generating higher response rates, especially in hard-to-count communities.

The question my ongoing research asks is what effect did these investments have on self-response, one of the most important indicators of census quality? While my results are quite preliminary, they are promising. A coarsened exact matching (CEM) analysis reveals that tracts located in states that made *any* investment in census outreach experienced self-response rates in occupied housing units nearly 1.5 percentage points higher than matched tracts in states that did not fund outreach campaigns. This is an extremely conservative approach to estimation, which does not take into account the effects of local outreach efforts, and treats all state investments equally even if – as in Texas – they arrived very late with little evident planning. Thus it is

conceivable that a more restrictive definition of the treatment would correspond to a larger effect size. In short, state-funded outreach contributed to improved participation and may help reduce differential undercount in future censuses.

Table 1: Sample Average Treatment Effect on the Treated (SATT) of State Census Investments on Tract-Level Return Rates, Coarsened Exact Matching[iii]

Specification	SATT (%)	Std. Err.	95% CI	Treated Tracts	Control Tracts
Main (2018–2022 ACS demographics)	1.46	0.11	[1.25,1.67]	45,699	26,563
Robustness (2014–2018 ACS demographics)	1.64	0.19	[1.25,2.02]	43,887	26,224
High-confidence 2014–2018 ACS crosswalk only (≥90% single source)	1.10	0.11	[0.89,1.31]	42,436	25,850

Group Quarters Enumeration

A third area of focus is the Group Quarters (GQ) population. While the vast majority of the US population resides in households, a sizable number (some 8.2 million nationwide) live in Group Quarters. These are places where people live in group settings that are "owned or managed by entities or organizations providing housing and/or services for the residents." That includes colleges and university housing, nursing homes, correctional facilities, and military quarters.

Collectively, Group Quarters residents made up 3.49% of the Massachusetts population in the 2020 census. To put that in perspective, Massachusetts had the sixth-highest share of its population living in group quarters among all states and the District of Columbia.

Table 2: Massachusetts Group Quarters (GQ) Population, by GQ Type, 2020 Census

	Number	Percent of total GQ Population
Total:	245,518	100%
Institutionalized population:	65,338	26.61%
Correctional facilities for adults	17,969	7.32%
Juvenile facilities	3,261	1.33%
Nursing facilities/Skilled-nursing facilities	42,089	17.14%
Other institutional facilities	2,019	0.82%
Noninstitutionalized population:	180,180	73.39%
College/University student housing	144,820	58.99%
Military quarters	357	0.15%

Other noninstitutional facilities	35,003	14.26%

Source: Decennial Census, DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171), Table P5.

In the 2020 Census, 59% of Massachusetts's GQ population, by far the largest share, were composed of college/university students residing in dormitories. 17% of this population resided in nursing facilities or skilled nursing facilities, while 7% were incarcerated adults (Table 2).

Not only does Massachusetts's relatively large GQ population matter for the allocation of representation and resources to the entire state, GQ populations can be even more essential to individual communities. Massachusetts's GQ population is not distributed evenly across the state. In some small college towns, residents of student housing can make up a significant share of the population. In Hampshire County, home to Amherst, Mount Holyoke, Hampshire, and Smith Colleges, as well as the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, the 2020 GQ population accounted for nearly 14% of the county's total population (see Figure 5).

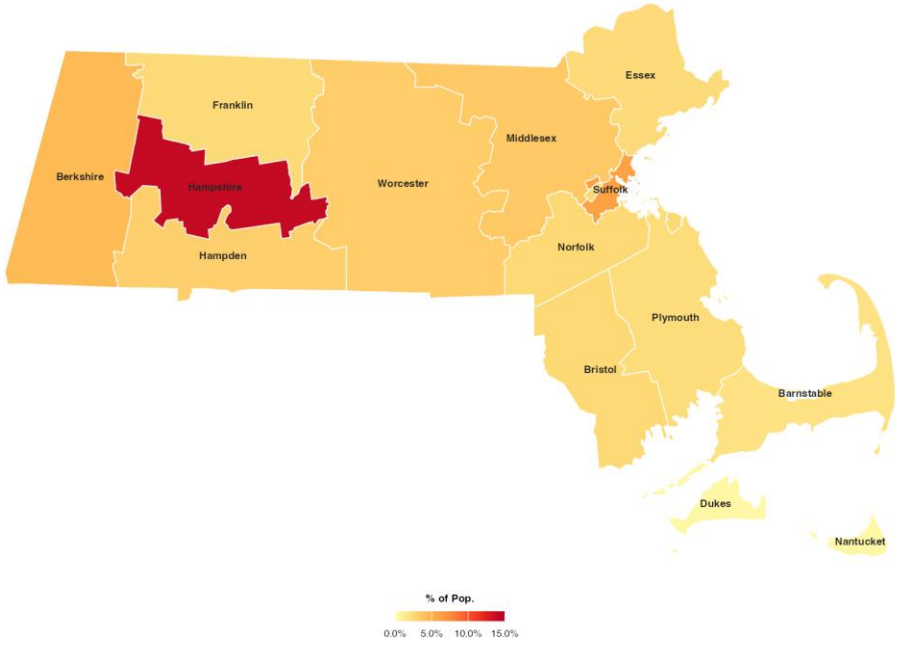

Figure 5: 2020 Massachusetts Group Quarters Population as a Percent of Total County Population. Source: 2020 Decennial Census, PL 94-171 Table P5 (GQ types) and Table P1 (total population)

It is important to recognize that the household population and the GQ population are enumerated in different ways. If fact, there is no single response method for GQ units. Instead, the Census Bureau uses a variety of methods to collect GQ data, including in-person interviews of facility residents, drop off and pickup of questionnaires to individual residents, as well as responses submitted for entire facilities by administrators via self-enumeration, paper response data collection, or electronic data transfer. Most types of GQ facilities have a choice about how

they respond to the Census. For example, in 2020, 58.1% of colleges and universities nationwide chose the eResponse option, in which GQ administrators submit electronic records to the Census Bureau, and a third chose the paper listing response.

In 2020, there were a range of operational challenges with GQ enumeration that mattered for the quality of census data. Some of these were related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit just as the GQ Advance Contact operation was wrapping up. This effectively scrapped plans for in-person enumeration, and necessitated a greater emphasis on eResponse.

COVID also exacerbated the struggle to enumerate college and university housing. There has long been a misalignment between census demographic data requirements, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which generally prohibits universities from releasing this information without students' direct consent. When students left campus during the pandemic, the Census Bureau had to pivot to eResponse, which meant a heavier reliance on university administrative records, the pathway FERPA restricts. The upshot here was high rates of missing race, ethnicity, and sex data in the college/university GQ population.

Given the extent of missing information, the Census Bureau used count imputation for the GQ population. Across the country, roughly 9% of GQs were eligible for count imputation, and about 2% of all GQ facilities received imputed counts.

The challenges with the 2020 GQ operation had important consequences for the count. But once again, state and local officials played an important role in attempting to mitigate some of the problems that emerged here by pushing for the creation of a new Post-Census Group Quarters Review (PCGQR) process, a new one-time operation in which governments could request that the Census Bureau review GQ counts they believed were incorrect. As a result, 74 governmental units submitted PCGQR cases. The State of Illinois, for example, documented 46,400 uncounted residents in its Post-Census Group Quarters Review (PCGQR) filing.[iv] Boston's PCQGR challenge submission—one of the largest in the country—identified 6,026 students missed in the 2020 count. These updated counts do not affect redistricting, but they will nevertheless improve the quality of census data used for other purposes, including the allocation of federal resources and local planning efforts.[v]

While state and local census efforts generally focus the bulk of their resources on promoting self-response by households, they nevertheless have multiple channels to provide valid information to GQ administrators about the importance of responding to the census, as well as the options they have for doing so. Given that states license and regulate nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities, state health departments can include census preparation in their routine correspondence with these facilities. Similarly, state developmental disability agencies can include census messaging in regular communications with group homes and intermediate care facilities. State university system offices can serve as single points of contact for campuses on

Group Quarters Enumeration. These are just a few examples, but they give a flavor of the way that states can use their existing relationships with GQ facilities to provide accurate information about the census.

Strategic Non-Cooperation

It goes without saying that some of the most important work state and local governments did to improve the 2020 Census was adversarial rather than cooperative. The last census cycle saw unprecedented efforts by the Trump administration to include a citizenship item asked of all respondents to the decennial questionnaire and to remove undocumented persons from census counts used to apportion Congress, efforts that were later revealed to be part of a rather deliberate strategy to tilt the political playing field. As I show in Chapters 2 and 5 of my book, state and local governments collaborated with one another to file lawsuits that either halted or significantly slowed the implementation of these measures.

In other cases, when subnational officials perceived threats to census integrity or potential violations of state laws, they ultimately chose not to cooperate in the provision of data from programs like SNAP, WIC, and TANF, as well as data from Departments of Motor Vehicles. The refusal to cooperate happened, I should emphasize, on a bipartisan basis. Officials in Wyoming, for example, cut off negotiations over sharing TANF data with the federal government, citing confidentiality concerns. In other states, the bureau's contacts cited a lack of resources or staff capacity. By the summer of 2020, 15 states, including states with large undocumented populations—such as Texas and California—had no agreement with the bureau to share data from SNAP, WIC, or TANF.

Attempts to persuade state DMVs to share driver's license records—which unfolded only after the issuance of Executive Order 13880—fared even worse. As Maine's Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap put it: "We sort of believe that the information that's in our databases belongs to the citizens to whom it refers. So we're the custodians of that information— it's not ours to give away." In the end, the federal government only successfully established agreements to share driver's license data with four states. In sum, this is one instance in which "uncooperative federalism" helped to preserve the integrity of the census in the face of a political power grab by the White House and the Commerce Department.

Looking Ahead to 2030

Looking ahead to 2030, there are a number of developments at the federal level that create risks for census accuracy. In recent weeks, we have learned of plans to jettison important components and sites the 2026 Census Test, operationally risky plans to use US Postal Service workers to carry out enumeration tasks during the 2026 test, plans to eliminate the non-English version of the questionnaire, and plans to inappropriately use the American Community Survey (ACS) questionnaire in the test. Moreover, while the redesigned Census Test eliminated 4 of 6 key sites that were intended to capture the diversity of the populations and geographies the US

Census Bureau must count. The only remaining sites (Spartanburg, SC and Huntsville, AL) are medium-sized southern cities with low levels of diversity (including linguistic diversity). Among the primary rationales for choosing these sites was that they had a wide variety of types of Group Quarters. Yet Group Quarters Enumeration is no longer included as part of the 2026 Census Test, despite plans to include a new internet self-response method for individuals in GQ units.

Table 3: Summary of Six Sites Initially Selected for 2026 Operational Test
(Remaining Sites in **Bold**)

	Western TX	Tribal Lands Within AZ	Colorado Springs, CO	Western NC	**Spartanburg, SC**	**Huntsville, AL**
GEOGRAPHY						
Rural area with historically undercounted populations and lower self-response rates	X	X		X		
Area with a colonia	X					
Tribal area		X		X		
Area with nonmailable addresses	X	X		X		
LIVING QUARTERS						
Seasonally vacant housing	X			X		
Complex housing units			X	X	**X**	**X**
High instances of new construction			X			
Multiunit structures and/or hidden housing units			X	X	**X**	**X**
Wide range of group quarters types			X	X	**X**	**X**
STAFFING						
Recruiting field staff has been historically challenging						**X**
Low unemployment						**X**
TECHNICAL						
Little to no cell phone or internet service	X			X		
Comprehensive and minimal administrative record data			X			

Source: 2026 Census Test: Site Selection, Webinar Slides, July 22, 2024, https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/newsroom/press-kits/2024/20240722-webinar-slides-2026-census-test-site-selection.pdf.

What makes these revisions to the 2026 test even more concerning is that they are occurring in a political and policy environment that will likely increase the trust deficit census outreach efforts must overcome in historically undercounted communities. It is my understanding that this committee has already heard testimony on the challenges community-based organizations envision for 2030. I would echo those concerns. As a 2025 KFF/*New York* Times poll revealed, more than one in five (22%) immigrants say they "personally know someone who has been arrested, detained, or deported on immigration-related charges over the last year." Four in ten immigrants, as well as three in ten legal immigrants, say they "they personally worry they or a family member could be detained or deported."[vi] These survey findings only reinforce the importance of state and local investments in early planning of outreach and mobilization strategies, and they reinforce the need to deal with the weaponization of distrust as a way of depriving communities across the country of the resources and representation to which they are entitled.

Finally, the disbanding of census advisory committees has created new demands for oversight by other means. This is particularly concerning given operational concerns identified by the Office of Inspector General that the Census Bureau has not effectively implemented "data collection and quality control procedures to ensure that ACS estimates were reliable."[vii] Again, this signals the importance of the accountability function that state and local governments can perform by establishing committees like this one, capable of both monitoring developments in the census environment, strategically planning for a complete count, and adapting to contingencies that arise over the course of the census cycle.

While Congress will have an important role to play in putting the 2030 Census back on course, state and local efforts will also be important. In the end, as evidence in *Counting Like a State* shows, states, cities, towns, and counties have a variety of tools at their disposal to improve census quality. The time is now to begin leveraging those tools. Indeed, my book reveals that the timing of state census planning efforts is crucial. States that failed to invest in outreach until the census year (e.g., Texas), and relied exclusively on local governments and nongovernmental organizations to lead planning, struggled to boost self-response rates.

Among the most important first steps states can take right now, if they have not already begun to do so, is to conduct a 2030 Census readiness assessment.[viii] Essentially, this assessment would identify current undercounting risks, map community assets for addressing those undercount risks, and survey state, local, and nongovernmental stakeholders about their knowledge of strategies to ensure a complete count and the current state of their planning to implement these strategies. This assessment, combined with a thorough review of the state-level results of the 2020 Census could help to kickstart state funding and planning efforts for 2030, including and especially the establishment of a State Complete Count Commission.

Further, investments in outreach can leverage the state's role as a convenor institution and a powerful agenda setting actor for local governments and community-based organizations. In 2020, successful states used their resources to identify, convene, and support local government and community-based stakeholders, as well as state agencies, to promote census education and awareness. State Data Centers played an important role in imparting locally specific lessons about the value of investing in census outreach as well as toolkits of strategies for improving self-response. Building a strong planning network early allowed these states to build outreach campaigns sensitive to local conditions in areas at risk of low self-response and pivot quickly in the midst of an unpredictable pandemic environment.

One additional point that I would emphasize is that even if states cannot provide resources to support local census efforts, they can nevertheless subsidize their work. For example, local jurisdictions with limited capacity can opt to have their county or state conduct LUCA review on their behalf. States can also encourage local and community-based participation in outreach grant programs by lowering the administrative burdens associated with applying for funds as well as providing technical assistance to applicants. This kind of assistance is a powerful, but underutilized, way of subsidizing action in low-capacity jurisdictions.

Finally, among the most important technological innovations that states developed in the 2020 cycle were data-driven tools to support real-time outreach efforts. California provides an excellent example here. The state built the Statewide Outreach and Rapid Deployment (SwORD) database that "offered maps and high-quality data for users to quickly learn more about Hard-to-Count areas and to plan outreach efforts, encouraged collaboration and coordination, enabling users to work together on outreach and guided decision-making, and provided regularly updated data on outreach activities and monitoring for rapid response to achieve a complete count."[ix]

In short, as the evidence in my book illustrates, "counting like a state" is anything but a top-down process. Instead, it is the work of the many hands of actors at all levels of government, federal, state, local, and tribal, often in concert with nongovernmental organizations. When any of those hands are absent, under-resourced, or distracted, the cost often falls on the most marginalized communities. In creating this committee, Massachusetts has an opportunity to be a leader in census preparedness. As a leader, the investments the state makes now may well have a sizable impact not just on the quality of the census count here, but on the actions of other states around the country. I am grateful for the committee's attention to these issues, and I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

[i] Philip Rocco, *Counting Like a State: How Intergovernmental Partnerships Shaped the 2020 US Census* (University Press of Kansas, 2025).
[ii] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2023. *Assessing the 2020 Census: Final Report* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.), p. 147.
[iii] The dependent variable in this analysis, drawn from the Census Bureau's 2024 Planning Database, is tract-level return rates for occupied housing units. This reflects the percent of occupied housing units in a tract providing a sufficient internet, paper, or phone response. Tracts in states that made any investments in census outreach are considered "treated". Tracts in states that made no investments are considered part of the "control" group. Using CEM, all tracts in the main analysis are matched on 11 tract-level covariates drawn from the 2018-2022 American Community Survey five-year estimates. These include racial and ethnic composition (shares of non-Hispanic white, Black, Asian, and Hispanic population), total population, foreign-born share, limited English proficiency share, renter share, poverty rate, share with no internet access, and the share of the tract population under five years old. To match tracts, matching covariates were "coarsened" into five bins. Only treated and control tracts that fall into each bin on every covariate are retained. One-to-one matching was not enforced. As a result, multiple control tracts could be matched to a single treated tract. Average treatment effects on the matched sample were calculated with survey-weighted difference-in-means. Weights were derived from CEM stratum assignment. A robustness check substitutes 2014–2018 ACS five-year estimates crosswalked to 2020 tract boundaries. To address measurement error in this analysis, a sensitivity check restricts the analysis to crosswalked tracts where the dominant 2010 source tract contributes at least 90% of the 2020 tract land area.
[iv] NORC Updates Census Undercount of Illinois Residents, May 2024, https://www.norc.org/research/library/norc-updates-census-undercount-illinois-residents.html
[v] UMass Donohue Institute, " Boston Wins Back Student Populations and Others in U.S. Census 2020 Challenge," May 3, 2023, https://donahue.umass.edu/news-events/institute-news/institute-a-key-player-in-bostons-challenge-to-the-2020-census
[vi] Shannon Schumacher, Isabelle Valdes, Julian Montalvo III, Liz Hamel, Samantha Artiga, Drishti Pillai, and Ashley Kirzinger, "KFF/New York Times 2025 Survey of Immigrants: Worries and Experiences Amid Increased Immigration Enforcement," KFF, November 18, 2025, https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/kff-new-york-times-2025-survey-of-immigrants-worries-and-experiences-amid-increased-immigration-enforcement/
[vii] U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Inspector General, Audit of Data Collection and Quality Control Procedures for the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, March 12, 2026, https://www.oig.doc.gov/wp-content/OIGPublications/OIG-26-010-A_FinalReport-SECURED.pdf
[viii] An example of some, though certainly not all of the questions this assessment could ask can be found here: State Data Center Clearinghouse, " States' Preparations for the 2020 Census: Findings," November 22, 2017, https://sdcclearinghouse.com/2017/11/22/states-preparations-for-the-2020-census-findings/.
[ix] California Census 2020 Outreach and Communication Campaign Final Report, https://census.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/05/California-Census-2020-Outreach-and-Communications-Campaign-Final-Report-5.11.2021.pdf