

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

July 9, 2020

Dear President or Chancellor:

As you know, institutions of higher education play a crucial role in Massachusetts's economy and community. An accurate count of Massachusetts students in the 2020 Census is essential to ensuring that the Commonwealth is fairly and accurately represented for the next decade. For this reason, we strongly urge you to cooperate with the U.S. Census Bureau's recent request for directory information for your off-campus students.

The coronavirus pandemic has created unprecedented disruption for institutions of higher education in Massachusetts and across the country. We deeply appreciate your extraordinary efforts to keep your students, employees, and communities safe and learning during this difficult period. Although it is just one of many challenges created by campus closures, we want to emphasize that the disruption to the 2020 Census count could have far-reaching consequences for your institutions and for the entire Commonwealth. This year's Census will inform federal funding allocations and Congressional representation for the next decade, directly affecting the communities that you and your students call home.

The Census Bureau has instructed students to be counted at their usual residence (that is, where they would have been living as of April 1, 2020), even if they are temporarily living in a different location due to the pandemic.<sup>1</sup> For on-campus students, the Census Bureau conducts a Group Quarters count that allows directory information to be submitted directly from your institution. This year, due to the special circumstances of the pandemic and the challenge of collecting accurate information from each student, the Census Bureau has requested that institutions of higher education follow a similar process for students residing off-campus as well.<sup>2</sup> This process complies with the *Federal Educational Records Privacy Act* (FERPA), which permits colleges and universities to disclose students' directory information, such as their name, date of birth, and address, to the Census Bureau without the student's consent.<sup>3</sup> The Census Bureau is not permitted by law to publicly release any identifying information and can use this information only to produce statistics.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Census Bureau Statement on Modifying 2020 Census Operations to Make Sure College Students are Counted," March 15, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/modifying-2020-operations-for-counting-college-students.html>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Ensuring an Accurate Count of College Students and Towns in the 2020 Census," press release, June 18, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/2020-college-students.html>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Letter to Institutions of Higher Education re the 2020 Census, January 29, 2020, [https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource\\_document/file/ED\\_SPPO%20Letter%20to%20IHEs%20re%202020%20Census\\_v\\_01292020.pdf](https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/ED_SPPO%20Letter%20to%20IHEs%20re%202020%20Census_v_01292020.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> 13 U.S. Code § 9.

Your institution should have received information on how to complete this process in late June, with responses due July 31, 2020.<sup>5</sup> You should also already have received a request from Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, similarly encouraging you to provide this information to the Census Bureau.<sup>6</sup>

We strongly urge you to ensure that your institution completes this process in a timely and accurate manner. An undercount of Massachusetts students would negatively affect our campus communities and our entire state, but it can be avoided with your help.

Secretary Galvin's office and our state staffs are available to assist with any questions you may have. The Massachusetts Census Division can be reached at [MA2020census@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:MA2020census@sec.state.ma.us).

Thank you for your service to Massachusetts's students and your cooperation with this important effort.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress

Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

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<sup>5</sup> Letter from Steven D. Dillingham, Ph.D., Director, U.S. Census Bureau, June 15, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/newsroom/press-kits/2020/addp-21-students-2020-letter.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Secretary William Francis Galvin to presidents of institutions of higher education, June 19, 2020.