

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

March 23, 2020

Dr. Steven Dillingham  
Director  
United States Census Bureau  
4600 Silver Hill Road  
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Dr. Dillingham:

In light of the unprecedented public health emergency caused by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic,<sup>1</sup> we write in strong support of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's request that you allow colleges and universities to respond to the 2020 Census using administrative data for both on-campus and off-campus students.

The rapid spread of the novel coronavirus and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendations for social distancing have led at least 24 colleges and universities in Massachusetts to move their classes online and instruct most students to leave campus.<sup>2</sup> This includes such large universities as Harvard University, Boston University, Northeastern University, and the University of Massachusetts system. As a result, Massachusetts's university students are currently dispersed all over the United States and the world.

We are deeply concerned that in the current circumstances, continuing to count students residing in institutions by collecting individual student surveys will result in a drastic undercount for Massachusetts. Your guidance to students and universities thus far has called for students to be counted at their university if that is where they would have resided on April 1, absent temporary closures; however, it will be exceptionally difficult to communicate that message to every student who has been temporarily displaced from their campus community. Because Massachusetts has a high concentration of colleges and universities, under-counting this group would result in the loss of essential funding and services that students rely on while they are living in the Commonwealth.

We therefore urge you to allow the Massachusetts Secretary of State to work with colleges and universities to determine accurate counts using administrative data for all the colleges' and universities' registered students. As Secretary Galvin wrote to you on March 10,<sup>3</sup> the Commonwealth is confident that directory records can be used to identify student populations accurately. Allowing for this flexibility will ensure that this unprecedented emergency situation

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Secretary William Francis Galvin to Dr. Stephen Dillingham, March 10, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> [WBUR](https://www.wbur.org/edify/2020/03/11/colleges-universities-remote-online-coronavirus), "All the Massachusetts Colleges That Have Canceled Classes," updated March 18, 2020, <https://www.wbur.org/edify/2020/03/11/colleges-universities-remote-online-coronavirus>.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Secretary William Francis Galvin to Dr. Stephen Dillingham, March 10, 2020.

does not result in a decade of inaccurate and inequitable representation and funding for our constituents.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress

William Keating  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress

Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress