



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Interfaith Action Movement (I AM) Creating Decennial Census
Awareness for 20,000 people**

**Aiming to reduce undercounts of communities of color and other
hard to reach communities**

(State of New Jersey – August 14, 2020) Leaders from faith and community-based organizations, higher education institutions, law enforcement, state, and local government officials, and business leaders have come together to form New Jersey’s Interfaith Action Movement (I AM).

This diverse, action-oriented coalition is coordinating a state-wide strategy to peak awareness of the U.S. Census specifically focused on hard to count (HTC) populations¹ within the state of New Jersey. The I AM efforts centerpiece is a series of *Census Family Reunion Sundays* slated for September 6, 13, 20 and 27, in advance of the new Census deadline of September 30, 2020.

I AM is led by Rev. Dr. Derrick Green, Senior Advisor for Diversity, Faith, Urban and Regional Growth for New Jersey Governor Phil D. Murphy.

Dr. Green points to the mission of I AM “to address the spiritual, social and economic needs of underserved and marginalized communities” as the push behind this effort. “One of ways to help the underserved is to be counted.”

The goal of the decennial Census is to count everyone living in the United States of America accurately. On Monday, August 3, 2020, the Trump Administration announced the Census Bureau would end field data collection and self-response options by September 30, not October 31, as previously indicated. Concerns have emerged, especially in light of the crises of the COVID 19 pandemic, that this latest modification could create an adverse impact on the census count results for the nation. The decennial Census, mandated by the U.S. Constitution, directs close to 800 billion dollars in federal funding, including Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Section 8 Housing, road repairs, transportation, school funding, seats in government and districts, and Head Start. The census count also has a direct impact on decisions, such as the location of health and education services, businesses, and it impacts the choices made by community leaders, public officials, and private sector businesses nationwide.

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There are 93 million households, of which approximately 63% of all households in the nation have responded. Of the Census estimated 3,213,362 households in New Jersey, about 64.9% have completed the Census as of August 5, 2020, meaning close to 1,127,890 homes have not responded. I AM's goal is to assist with the reduction of possible undercounts of communities of color and immigrants that would yield the consequence of underfunding.

Goals and Partners

Census Family Reunion Sundays will be held at 5:00 pm on September 6, 13, 20, and 27. The programs will consist of online webinars aimed to encourage increased Census counts for hard-to-count areas of New Jersey, coupled with on-the-spot count methods to take place in parks state-wide following social distancing protocols. These events will include information on the Census, guest speakers, along with entertainment.

I AM is engaging libraries, family success centers, Greek organizations, companies and corporations, community and faith-based organizations, media, educational institutions, law enforcement, political officials, the arts community, advocacy groups, technology teams, famous/high profile influential individuals, foundations and community trusted voices in its efforts.

About the Interfaith Action Movement

I AM is an action-oriented coalition focused on addressing the spiritual, social, and economic needs of underserved and marginalized communities in New Jersey and across the nation.

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ⁱ Hard To Count (HTC) populations, including but not limited to, Africans; African Americans; Latinx; Caribbean Islanders; Asians; Non-Native English speakers; indigent; homeless persons; the disabled; college students; children under five years of age; men ages 18-49; the elderly; persons displaced by natural disasters; undocumented; the formerly incarcerated; members of the LGBTQ+ community