

**DATE: August 26, 2020**

**TO: Census Stakeholders in Minnesota**

**FROM: Minnesota State Demographer Susan Brower**

**SUBJECT: Census Field Operations in Hennepin County**

We have recently learned that the Census Bureau is set to complete its regular field operations in Hennepin County sometime soon, even as early as this week. During NRFU (Non-Response Follow-Up), census takers make in-person visits to collect information from households that have not responded to the census on their own. NRFU field operations for many parts of the U.S. are expected to continue into late September, but the Census Bureau is signaling that in-person visits in Hennepin County are coming to an end in late August. Hennepin County is the largest county in Minnesota, and home to 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the state's BIPOC communities. The prospect of Hennepin County's field operations ending now is concerning to us.

While we do not currently have the full picture of the completeness of the field operations in Minnesota, we do have a number of indicators that raise serious questions about the quality of Census operations in Hennepin County and the state overall:

- As of August 24, only 10.6% of censuses have been completed during the NRFU in Minnesota. NRFU Operations in 36 other states have yielded better results. The poor results from NRFU have impacted Minnesota's census response rate to such a large extent, that the state now ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation in total census response (84.1%), while maintaining its number 1 ranking in self-response (73.5%).
- My office has learned of a number of cases in Hennepin County where non-responding households have not received a single visit from a census taker. We have also heard several first-hand reports of enumerators frustrated with bad data for apartment units. This results in the census taker not being able to determine which units have and which units have not responded to the census. In addition, multiple census takers in Hennepin County have reported that they have had serious, on-going issues with insufficient access to apartment buildings.

We ask the Census Bureau to:

1. provide the Minnesota State Demographic Center with additional information to demonstrate that the 2020 Census has been thoroughly and accurately completed in Hennepin County;
2. continue field operations in all three Minnesota offices, including Hennepin County, to the end of the NRFU period;
3. add additional visits to addresses that have not resulted in an interview with a household member;
4. revisit apartment buildings that include large numbers of units that have neither responded to the census on their own or been successfully interviewed by a census taker, and

5. expand the use of Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Centers to include more tracts in Minnesota that have high non-response rates.

Minnesota communities have worked very hard to make sure that the 2020 Census is a success in our state. We are calling on the Census Bureau to do its job to continue the count in Minnesota just as it is doing all over the nation.