

***Statement  
Of  
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Director  
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Executive Office  
Washington, DC***

***Information Policy, Census, and National Archives Subcommittee  
Oversight and Government Reform Committee***

***2154 Rayburn House Office Building  
Wednesday, December 2, 2009  
2:00 p.m.***

***"The 2010 Census: How Complete Count Committees, Local Governments, Philanthropic Organizations, Not-for-Profits and the Business Community Can Contribute to a Successful Census."***

Good Afternoon Chairman Clay, Ranking Member McHenry, Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to be here today and I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on such a vital issue to Washington DC's Latino community.

My name is Mercedes Lemp, I serve as the Director of the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs (OLA), here in Washington DC. The mission of the office is to improve the quality of life of the District's Latino population by providing community-based grants, advocacy, community

relations and outreach services to residents so they can have access to a full range of human services, education, health, housing, economic development and employment opportunities. The population that is served by our office includes over 50,000 Latinos living and working in Washington DC. They account for approximately 1 out of every 10 District residents. As part of our mission is to ensure appropriate resources are available to DC's Latino community, the 2010 Census is of vital importance in our office.

While the government of the city as a whole has launched an aggressive campaign to ensure a full count of the city's residents, OLA has expanded on this effort knowing that the population we serve is especially hard to count and at the same time, especially in need of the services and resources that would result from an accurate count. Many Latino families share homes or apartments and may not all be identified as residing in these shared dwellings. In addition, they are also more likely to move from place to place and have short-term living arrangements. Most are low income, have little formal education, many

have children and speak little English, these are families in need of many resources.

Washington DC has been identified as one of the hardest to count municipalities. With the Latino community we face the challenges described above, in addition to a fear of government, immigration authorities and a general distrust of government based on experiences from their home countries.

Starting with our FY09 performance plan, the office included partnering with the Census as a key initiative. My staff and I began communicating and working with the Washington DC Census representatives in the fall of 2008. Since then we have collaborated in several ways.

We have worked with Census to help reach out to potential DC Latino Census workers. We hosted an employment training, and the employment test, in our office, a location the community knows well and is comfortable with. We have hosted additional meetings and workshops in the office and out in the community as well. OLA and Census, as partners, have presented at several majority Latino resident

apartment buildings to tenant groups about Complete Count Committees. We recently held a workshop for case managers and frontline staff of agencies and non-profits that serve Latinos. A majority of Latino serving organizations in the city have served the community for many years and are seen as trusted resources. We have connected with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute and will partner with them to reach out to Latino Student Associations across the city and are working with Latino churches through the organization, the Downtown Cluster of Congregations. Our staff member in charge of educational outreach will focus a majority of her time for the next few months leading up to April 1 on educating Latino parents, English as a Second Language teachers and counselors on setting up complete count committees in Latino majority schools.

Key to our success in communicating is culturally and linguistically appropriate materials. Outreach must be done using culturally and linguistically appropriate messages, simple translations of materials will not suffice. Information must be developed specifically for the community, specifically targeting the education levels and particular

situations for the community. With the financial assistance of the Census, we created our own materials in this manner and they are the centerpiece of the presentations and census talks we have been holding at community centers, clinics, schools, homeless service providers, street corners where men wait for work, etc.

Both the materials and the presentations focus on a few key items beyond the dates, forms, and other essential information which is key to our community - the fact this information will not be shared with any other agency under penalty of incarceration to the census worker, the importance of the community services they currently utilize being adequately funded should an accurate count be done, and the importance of taking action through this simple 10 minute questionnaire. We have also stressed that this is an opportunity to stand up and be recognized in their new country and that they are just as deserving to be counted and served by their new government as any other resident of the United States.

As partners, OLA and the Census have been able to better reach the community and more effectively deliver the message of the importance of the Census. As a trusted member of the community working with community leaders and frontline workers we have been able to give Census access based on a trusted relationship that has been developed over 30 years of working in the DC Latino community.

As Director of the office, I also serve on the city's Complete Count Committee in addition to chairing the Latino Complete Count Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee includes the members of the Latino Community Development Commission, a commission made up of Latino leaders from the city, with the mission of advising the Mayor and the office on Latino issues. My presence on the city's Complete Count Committee ensures that not only is my office focused on reaching the city's Latino community but that the city's overall campaign also considers our Latino residents and the best way to reach them.

Starting a relationship with the Census early, working closely with community based organizations and front-line staff, using culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, meeting the community where they

are, and ensuring a Latino voice in the city's overall campaign we hope will lead to a full count of DC's Latino community.

Again, I thank you for this opportunity and want to especially thank Rita Castillo and Ron Claiborne both Partnership Specialist with the US Census Bureau for reaching out to us early in the process and continuing to do great work with us throughout the process.