

In the Year Two Thousand and Twenty

Upon the Recommendation of Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra and Councilor Alex Jarrett

R-20.116

A RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 2020 CENSUS AND ENCOURAGING RESIDENTS OF THE CITY OF NORTHAMPTON TO PROMOTE AND COMPLETE THE CENSUS TO ENSURE A FAIR AND COMPLETE COUNT

Be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Northampton, in City Council assembled as follows:

WHEREAS the U.S. Census Bureau is required by the U.S. Constitution to conduct a count of the population every ten years, and this count provides a historic opportunity to help shape the foundation of our society and play an active role in American democracy;

WHEREAS the City of Northampton is committed to ensuring every resident is counted;

WHEREAS the City of Northampton includes hard to count communities, which are those that face barriers to full and equitable representation in the data collection process, and that historically have been undercounted;

WHEREAS the federal government recently decreased the time for non-response follow up to the census by a crucial month and instituted a new deadline of September 30, 2020, endangering a complete count;

WHEREAS this reduction of time is another attempt to impede the complete count by the executive branch, as the former director of the Census Bureau, Kenneth Prewitt, testified in an emergency congressional hearing on July 25, 2020 that “With approximately a third of the population still to be counted, the President is sending a powerful signal that the 2020 census is a partisan tool, greatly complicating the task of a census still in the field.”

WHEREAS this reduction of time is also coming in a census year with extraordinary challenges for the door-to-door census operation due to the Covid-19 pandemic and because of fear of divulging personal information and distrust of the federal government in the current political climate;

WHEREAS despite the fear engendered and stoked by the political climate, it is completely safe to respond to the census. The information collected by the census is confidential. Title 13 of the U.S. Code prohibits the Census Bureau from releasing any identifiable information about individuals, households, or businesses. The information can only be used for statistics and by law cannot be used against someone;

WHEREAS census data plays an important role in the allocation of federal and state funding to state and local communities, including funds for school lunch programs, education grants and other child welfare programs, housing funds such as Section 8 vouchers, SNAP benefits, transportation funding for highways; health benefits like Medicare Part B, and others;

WHEREAS census data helps determine how many seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives and is necessary for an accurate and fair redistricting of state legislative seats, county and city councils and voting districts;

WHEREAS information from the 2020 Census and American Community Survey are vital tools for economic development and increased employment;

WHEREAS a united voice from business, government, community-based and faith-based organizations, educators, media and others will enable the 2020 Census message to reach more of our residents;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Northampton is committed to partnering with the U.S. Census Bureau and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to achieve a complete and accurate count of all persons within our borders;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Northampton supports the goals and ideals for the 2020 Census and has and will disseminate 2020 Census information and encourages all residents to fill out the 2020 census before September 30, 2020;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Northampton supports Partnership Specialists, Census Takers and other U.S. Census Bureau staff as they help our community complete an accurate count;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Northampton City Council encourages all residents to safely participate in events and initiatives that will raise the overall awareness of the 2020 Census and increase participation;

