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U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Community Planning and Development

Andrew Cuomo, Secretary

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EZ/EC News Flash

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Stand Up and Be Counted!

How do we get more money and services for our Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities? How can we increase attention to the needs in our distressed cities? How can we improve the quality of life for the residents and workers, children and families of our Zones and Communities?

Be included in Census 2000! Every ten years, the U.S. Census Bureau surveys the U.S. population to determine the number of people living in our country. Results from the Census 2000 survey will help determine where federal dollars supporting schools, employment services, housing assistance, highway construction, hospital services, programs for the elderly and more are spent. As such, Census 2000 unites members of our community and can serve as a rallying point for all of us to do something that helps ourselves, our families, our community and our nation. Census 2000 also offers each of us the opportunity to demonstrate pride in our culture, our community and our contributions to the greater society.

Typically, the group most easily neglected in the census count consists of people without conventional housing. Organizations serving this population play a vital role in Census 2000. These organizations are being asked to promote Census 2000 to target populations and perhaps even assist with the enumeration. In helping with the enumeration, Census 2000 volunteers need to reassure people without conventional housing that their census responses will be kept strictly confidential. Census 2000 does not ask people if they are homeless, and by law, the Census Bureau cannot share individual records with any other government agency, including welfare agencies, the INS, IRS, police, courts or the military. It is vital to include people without conventional housing in the count since accurate census information helps these people to receive the services they need.

Despite the importance of the census and the protections afforded, during the past few decades the number of residents who have completed and mailed back their census forms has been declining steadily. Mail response rates dropped from 78 percent in 1970 to 75 percent in 1980 to 65 percent in 1990. To reverse this trend of declining participation, elected leaders from around the country have joined the U.S. Census Bureau and its more than 50,000 community, corporate and congressional partners to issue the '90 Plus Five challenge. '90 Plus Five challenges elected officials to increase their community's mail response rate by at least five percentage points above their 1990 rate.

Click on www.census.gov for more information regarding Census 2000.