Good afternoon. I am Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of New York State (League). The League is a non-partisan political organization working to promote civic responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government. We have 48 local leagues throughout the state registering and educating voters on local and state issues. As an outgrowth of the women's suffrage movement 100 years ago, the League has provided communities with a venue for educational programs on current issues. Advocacy has also been an important facet of League activity since our founding. On behalf of the League, I want to thank this commission for this opportunity to speak about the 2020 Census and how the League can assist in ensuring a complete count in New York State.

In less than one year, on April 1, 2020, the Census will be in full swing. Communities across the country will begin reporting to the U.S. Census and be counted. This process of counting will ensure that the political power, health, and safety of every community is maintained or enhanced in the upcoming decade.

In the next year though, there is much preparation that needs to be done by community groups who represent minorities, immigrants, children, and others to ensure that everyone is counted. Why does the census data matter?
• Census data is used to influence the distribution of billions of dollars that go to educational agencies that pay for special education, school lunches, improving teacher quality, and Head Start programs.
• The information collected determines where community health centers are placed to better serve low-income patients and aid current health disparities, such as those impacted by the opioid crisis.
• Companies use the data from the census to determine where to build factories or expand store real estate.
• Finally, census data is used to draw the state and federal legislative district lines that ultimately determine the elected officials who represent us.

It is reported that the 2010 Census undercounted as many as one million children ages five and under. USA Today noted that, “No count of more than 325 million people can be perfect or exact. But, by comparing the 2010 census with separately gathered statistics on births, deaths, and immigration, researchers determined the enormous scope of the problem:” One Million Children Short.

Enumerators miss some residences altogether, and some places are simply harder to count, often for reasons of poverty or geography. About 4.5 million children under age five live in poverty in areas that are difficult to capture:

➢ remote corners of Alaska and the Appalachians
➢ dense blocks of apartment buildings in large cities.
➢ Regions with a culture of distrust of the government

While the undercount rate in 2010 for white children was 2.7 percent, it was 6.3 percent for black children and 7.5 percent for Latino kids.

The 2020 Census raises additional challenges to get the count of children correct: immigrant families may hesitate to respond out of fear in the current political climate, and this will be the first census conducted mostly online. Concerns about privacy and cybersecurity cut across ages,
races, education and incomes, while disparities in internet access hit low-income and rural communities the hardest.

The 2020 Census will be the first time the Census Bureau will ask people to fill out their census forms online. Historically forms have been mailed to households with enumerators, or canvassers who are hired to visit residences that have not responded to the mailed form to ask for their data. From the 18th century through the middle of the 20th century, enumerators traveled from house to house to take the census. The enumerators filled in information on a census schedule for members of the household. In the 1990s, the Census Bureau developed electronic data collection methods. New interviewing techniques, including computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) and computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), complemented mail-out/mail-back procedures and helped cut costs. The 2010 census required one million enumerators to assist the Census Bureau in counting more than 300 million of the nation's inhabitants.

Some of the challenges for ensuring a complete count in 2020 include:

- Constrained fiscal environment as state funding is limited
- Declining response rates for surveys and censuses in general
- Increased distrust in government with concerns for privacy and security of the information
- Rapidly changing use of technology creating impediments to ensure timely testing and responses
- Information explosion with more demand for the census data
- Increasingly diverse population with multiple languages and cultures
- Informal, complex living arrangements with blended or divided families in one location
- A mobile population that is hard to identify

The League would like to collaborate with the Complete Count Commission to help ensure a full counting of all inhabitants in this country. It is so important for so many reasons. The League has a statewide presence and is a great resource for the Commission to reach all of the communities in New York State. We encourage the Commission to provide materials and information that can be shared by the Leagues in the communities to educate the public on the importance of this
Census. We also hope that we can work together to develop ways to assist in reaching the often under-represented neighborhoods and populations. A good census is the first step to making sure that everyone has good roads, schools, and representation now and in the future.