

**U.S. House Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Tax and Capital Access**  
**“Why Small Business Needs an Accurate Census Map”**  
**Thursday, June 20, 2019**

**Testimony of James Parker**  
**Owner, Riverview Studios**  
**Bordentown, New Jersey**

Chairman Kim, Ranking Member Hern, and members of the committee:

My name is James Parker, and I am the founder and owner of Riverview Studios, an award-winning digital video production company based in Bordentown, New Jersey. I’m also a Steering Committee Member of the New Jersey Main Street Alliance, a coalition of more than 1,600 independently owned businesses throughout the state who work to ensure small business owners have a voice on important policy matters. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the importance of an accurate, well-funded Census for New Jersey.

Bordentown New Jersey is a community of about four thousand people. We have a thriving main street made up primarily of small businesses. We have family-owned restaurants, specialty stores, antique shops and my own business, one of only two independent video production companies in the state. We thrive because, at least in my part of the state, we have good access to healthcare, a well-educated workforce, public and private transportation options and many other services and programs that benefit small businesses and main street communities. All of these services and programs are [impacted on some level](#) by an accurate census count.

This includes access to credit and capital. Many small business owners have problems securing loans or lines of credit, and so miss opportunities to expand or grow their business. We often have to find alternative means of funding to commercial banks. This includes Small Business Administration loans and the Business and Industry Guarantee Loan program. My small business just recently qualified for its first SBA loan, and it will allow me to continue to grow and thrive. Census data helps determine billions of dollars of federal funding for these programs.

These programs include many in public health. For many New Jerseyans the affordability of healthcare is a prime concern. Under the Affordable Care Act we’ve expanded Medicaid, and our governor has pushed through legislation that helped lower health care costs for many residents. Census data determines funding for programs such as Medicaid and Medicare part B, which are critical to the health and well-being of [millions of state residents](#). Their access to affordable health care in turn affects how much they’re spending on local restaurants, shops and services, directly impacting the main street economy

An accurate census impacts federal funding for transportation and infrastructure, determining [tens of billions of dollars in allocations](#) for projects such as highway construction and highway safety. In Bordentown we are fortunate to be accessible by county roads, a major highway and a rail line. It means we can serve customers from far away communities, which greatly helps our main street thrive. Federal funding based on accurate census data pays for the upkeep of the transportation infrastructure that makes our market accessible.

I could go on and on. Census data determines funding for housing and for education. It helps many businesses, industry associations and chambers of commerce [plan strategically](#). According to one report immigrant business owners represent [47 percent, of main street business owners in our state](#); it's data like this that needs to be collected accurately for both the private and public sectors to make sound decisions.

I must insist that the key takeaway should be that the census is not a political football to be tampered with. Congress has a responsibility to ensure that an accurate census is conducted; nothing less. An accurate census translates to proper representation, which equals proper & necessary funding for each state to invest within their communities. Small business owners can only succeed if the community is flourishing with success.

New Jersey is a state where extreme wealth & punishing poverty exist side by side. An under count will exacerbate existing racial & socioeconomic inequalities. Our government's main objective should be to strive for efficiency. We should invest in our struggling communities to ensure they have an opportunity to break out of the cycle of poverty. Doing so increases the middle class & possibly creating another small business owner that will go on to be a job creator to stimulate the local economy.

In the end an accurate census count impacts businesses of all sizes, but it's especially crucial for small business owners. We can't afford to operate at a loss for long periods of time, we rely on word of mouth and we need healthy, safe communities with customers with money in their pockets for our businesses to prosper. This means an accurate census count to properly fund the services and programs to make these communities possible. Thank you.