



June 26, 2019

Our Census Needs to Count Prisoners Using Their Home Address

The 2020 US census plans to continue to count prisoners where they are incarcerated. This decision is very concerning for Illinois citizens because this will determine how future legislative districts are drawn. I introduced legislation, House Bill 203, which would create the No Representation Without Population Act. This legislation provides that the Department of Corrections shall collect and maintain an electronic record of the legal residence, outside of any correctional facility, and other demographic data for each person entering its custody after January 1, 2019.

We need to make sure we have an accurate count for the 2020 census. We must count people at their last known address and not the prison address. It is crucial that we are drawing legislative and representative districts with integrity for Illinois citizens to be adequately represented.

The census considers someone a resident of a place if they are a “usual resident,” meaning they live and sleep there most of the time. House Bill 203 would require the Secretary of State to prepare redistricting data to reflect the incarcerated persons at their residential address, rather than the address of the facility in which the person is incarcerated.

Counting prisoners at their last known address will also help the transition to a productive life for the prisoner. Keeping the integrity of the census count will keep their home communities accurately represented in the state legislatures. House Bill 203 will require the data collected only to be used as a basis for determining legislative and representative districts. It will also prohibit the use of the data for the distribution of state or federal aid.

House Bill 203 has gained 34 co-sponsors in the House, but it needs to move forward to become law. Let’s sign our petition at <https://petitions.moveon.org/sign/support-hb0203-ending> to deliver a message to the Illinois House, the Illinois Senate and Governor Pritzker that we want justice and fairness for our communities, so everyone is represented as they deserve.

Sincerely,

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District