United States Census Bureau Continues Houghton County Operations

By Artemis Allison

HOUGHTON, Mich. – Through the week of Sept. 9, the United States Census Bureau is continuing their operations throughout the greater Houghton County area in advance of the deadline at the end of September; however, there remains a key concern as to the viability of successfully enumerating the entire before the deadline due to a lack of enumerators. This struggle is not limited to Houghton County, and is even worse downstate, such as in the Grand Rapids area where enumerators up in the Houghton area are being asked to volunteer to work. The shortage in workers in Michigan mirrors similar troubles nationwide, as the U.S. Census struggles after delays and concerns about COVID-19.

To try to keep both enumerators and area residents safe, enumerators have been provided with face masks and hand sanitizer by the U.S. Census Bureau; however, this equipment does not necessarily keep the enumerators safe from residents in the area who choose to not wear a mask. Due to an error with enumeration software this year as well, several enumerators have also been assigned cases to work on that are part of the residences owned and operated by Michigan Technological University, such as the Daniell Heights apartments; in addition, a lack of signage on quarantine areas has allowed for enumerators to unknowingly walk into and be in direct contact with individuals that the university has been quarantining from living in the residence halls on campus as a result of a positive COVID-19 test.

These dangers are only an additional danger, however, to the normal dangers that enumerators may face during census operations, and in rural areas especially, there can be an added danger from it being potentially seen as unwanted government interference. Despite these dangers and the work ahead of them, however, the U.S. Census is still on track to be completed by the end of the month.