



children's defense fund ohio

Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development, and Natural Resources

Chairman Hoops
Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson

April 11, 2019
Ashon McKenzie, Esq.
Policy Director

Children's Defense Fund-Ohio

Chairman Hoops, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development, and Natural Resources, thank you for hearing my testimony today. My name is Ashon McKenzie and I am the Policy Director for the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio and an Executive Committee Member of the Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition.

The Children's Defense Fund is a private, nonprofit organization. We have been standing for children in Ohio since 1981. The Children's Defense Fund-Ohio's Leave No Child Behind[®] mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. We provide a strong, effective and independent voice for all of Ohio's children, who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves.

The Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition is a nonpartisan network of statewide nonprofit organizations, advocacy organizations, and trusted faith, business, education, and community leaders working for full participation in the 2020 census, with a focus on historically undercounted or 'hard-to-count' (HTC) populations.

Thank you for opportunity to testify today on House Bill 166.

I'm here to speak to you today about state funding to support 2020 census efforts. An accurate 2020 census will be important for the state of Ohio. As the committee is well aware, the census is critical for our state's federal funding, congressional representation, and a host of important decisions for our state and communities.

Why the Census Matters for Ohio

1. Federal Funding

More than \$33.5 billion in federal funding is distributed in Ohio based on the population data gathered

in the decennial census. This funding includes Medicaid, Medicare, federal direct student loans, SNAP, Highway Planning and Construction, low-income housing assistance, foster care, school lunch, workforce development programming, and business and industry loans to name a few.ⁱ

Our state loses out on approximately \$1,206 each year for a full decade for each person uncoun­ted in the census.ⁱⁱ And the projected loss for an undercount of just 1% in Ohio would result in losses of \$139 million each year for the next 10 years.ⁱⁱⁱ

As a state we live with the results of the census for a full decade. There are no “do-overs.”

2. Federal Representation

Our state is in grave danger of losing one or more seats in Congress. While our state’s population has continued to grow, we are not growing at the same rate as many other states. As a result, Ohio risks losing one seat in Congress and some experts fear more than one could be at stake.

An analysis of state population estimates for 2018 show that if the reapportionment of congressional seats were to happen today, Ohio would hold on to all 16 of our seats.^{iv} That would mark the first time our state would have held on to all of our seats since the 1950s. The challenge: if the count were to happen today, we would hold on to our 16 seats by only an estimated 30,000 residents.^v And if Ohio is unable to keep up with population trends into 2020, we will lose a seat falling short by just 70,000 people.^{vi}

3. Decision-making

Finally, in addition to federal funding and representation, our businesses, service providers, and communities rely on census data for a host of daily decisions. For example, census data has critical as a number of large corporations have considered relocating their headquarters or hubs to our state.

Why State Funding and Support Will be Important for an Accurate Count of Ohio

1. Historically Vulnerable Populations

Ohio is home to a number of communities and geographic areas that the U.S. Census Bureau considers “hard-to-count.” We are especially concerned about young children. Children under the age of five were the largest undercounted group in the 2010 census. The Census Bureau missed 2.2 million children nationwide (4.6%) with Black and Hispanic children being missed twice as often as White children.

More than 100,000 Ohio children live in a hard-to-count census tract. 73% of children in Cleveland, 52% of children in Columbus, 46% in Cincinnati, 38% in Toledo.

The Bureau considers a number of other groups hard-to-count as well including ethnic and racial minorities, immigrants, people living in low-income homes and neighborhoods, renters, young and mobile individuals (college students), the homeless, and people living in many of our rural and Appalachian areas.

2. Federal Funding Challenges and New Methods for Counting

The mandate of the 2020 census was to contain costs. And over the last 2 years, the Census Bureau did not receive the funding it needed to ramp up its operations and conduct important field tests. Importantly, they had to cancel their test for rural locations.

As an aspect of this cost containment, 2020 will be the first internet census, where the Census Bureau will be looking for most people to respond to the census online. This could present challenges for many of our rural and Appalachian areas, which struggle with broadband access, and could present issues in urban areas where subscriptions tend to be lower.

Finally, research from the Census Bureau suggest a heightened environment of fear and distrust which could lead to lower participation.

Funding Recommendation

We applaud Governor DeWine and Ohio Development Service Agency Director Mihalik for making the 2020 census a priority. We appreciate the plans for communication efforts and a state complete count committee.

However, we are concerned that that the unknown amount of communication funding reserved for the 2020 Census in the DSA budget will not be enough to ensure fair and complete count of all people in the state, especially those in hard-to-count communities. We recommend an increase of funding through DSA to support the following census outreach and support activities:

- Additional staff support for a state complete count commission (SCCC)
- SCCC events
- Additional funding for regional planning and mapping in hard-to-count areas
- Targeted supplemental outreach for at risk census tracts
- Development, design and printing of the marketing materials
- Communications & Outreach Campaign
- Mini-grants for “hard-to-count” communities
- Direct funding for a coalition of nonprofit organizations that will work with hard-to-count communities and grassroots organizations to mobilize the state’s get out the count efforts

We believe these activities will require \$1-3 million. Our specific estimation is roughly \$2.65 million.

We believe this to be a modest request in light of the federal funding distributed on the basis of census data. Inadequate state census funding could put Ohio at a disadvantage as other states add funding for

their census outreach. For example, a number of Midwestern states – Michigan, Minnesota, and Illinois – have already dedicated funding for the census. The Washington state legislature currently is considering census funding of over \$12 million and a number of coastal states have already dedicated even larger pots of money to protect their federal funding and representation.

This is a critical time for our state to take action to ensure every person is counted.

Conclusion

Thank you very much for your attention to these important issues. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

ⁱ Counting for Dollars 2020 The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds, https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/IPP-1819-3%20CountingforDollars_OH.pdf

ⁱⁱ Estimating Fiscal Costs of a Census Undercount to States, <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/GWIPP%20Reamer%20Fiscal%20Impacts%20of%20Census%20Undercount%20on%20FMAP-based%20Programs%2003-19-18.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Id.*

^{iv} State Population Totals and Components of Change: 2010-2018, <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-state-total.html>

^v Apportionment Calculator for US Census, <https://www.psc.isr.umich.edu/dis/census/tools/apportionment/>; There's still a chance Ohio could keep 16 U.S. House seats after the 2020 census, new estimates show, <https://www.cleveland.com/datacentral/2019/01/theres-still-a-chance-ohio-could-keep-16-us-house-seats-after-the-2020-census-new-estimates-show.html>

^{vi} There's still a chance Ohio could keep 16 U.S. House seats after the 2020 census, new estimates show, <https://www.cleveland.com/datacentral/2019/01/theres-still-a-chance-ohio-could-keep-16-us-house-seats-after-the-2020-census-new-estimates-show.html>