



# children's defense fund ohio

## Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid

Chairman Hackett  
Vice Chair Huffman  
Ranking Member Thomas

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Ashon McKenzie  
Policy Director  
Children's Defense Fund-Ohio  
Interested Party Testimony

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Ashon McKenzie, and I am the Policy Director for the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio.

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<sup>®</sup> 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.

I offer interested party testimony on HB 166. Specifically, I offer testimony requesting state funding for 2020 census efforts.

Our state has less than a year to prepare for the 2020 census. 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.

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 a number of critical health and human services programs including, Medicaid, Medicare, , SNAP, low-income housing assistance, foster care, and workforce development programming.<sup>i</sup>

Our state loses out on at least \$1,200 per person each year for a full decade for each person uncounted in the census.<sup>ii</sup> 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.<sup>iii</sup>

In addition, Ohio is in 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. An analysis of state population estimates for 2018 show that as little as a .8% shift in population could be the difference between Ohio keeping its 16 seats or losing a seat. <sup>iv</sup>

The administration has taken an important step in issuing an executive order establishing a State Complete Count Commission. And the inclusion of the census in the Development Service Agency's priorities is also an important starting point for our state. However, our communities will still need significant assistance to ensure that each person is counted.

Ohio is home to a number of populations and geographic locations that the U.S. Census Bureau considers "hard-to-count." Ohio's "hard to count" areas include our college and university areas, low income rental properties, and our rural and Appalachian regions. For example, many of our rural and Appalachian areas are hard-to-count based on their responses to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010 and data from the American Community Survey. This data raises red flags signaling that that these communities may not respond by mail, phone, or internet to the 2020 census.

In addition, 2020 will be the first time that most people will be expected to respond to the census online. However, large portions of our state's population do not have access to high speed internet. Almost 19% in Stark County, 21% in Cuyahoga County, 24% in Ashtabula. The challenges are very stark in our Appalachian region with 30% households in Scioto County with no internet access or dial up-only, 31% in Highland, 35% in Vinton, 36% in Monroe, and 39% in Adams.

In addition, many populations in our state are at a high risk of going uncouncted in the 2020 census. Young children, low income individuals and families, college students, immigrant populations, ethnic and racial minorities, and homeless individuals, among others, are at a heightened risk of being undercounted in the 2020 census. For example, 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. Our urban areas present special challenges in counting children with 73% of children in Cleveland living in a hard-to-count census tract, 52% of children in Columbus, 46% in Cincinnati, and 38% in Toledo.

Our local communities need strong financial and strategic support from the state to support existing efforts and encourage more communities to participate in the work. So far, just 18 communities have launched local complete count committees to develop and implement the strategies best suited to reach their constituents – that is 12 of 88 counties and 6 of more than 900 cities and villages.

It is very critical that we reach each person. In fact, if the census count were taken today, undercounting just 30,000 people state wide would cost us a seat in Congress. When you factor in population trends, the margin for 2020 become even thinner.

Our communities need state funding and strong state support for strategy, communication, partnerships, and outreach to ensure that every person in every corner of the state can be counted.

We cannot simply leave it up to the Census Bureau. Other states around the country are recognizing this fact and pouring funding and resources into their communities to ensure their complete count and fair share of federal funding and power. Michigan has already allocated \$500,000 in a matching grant with their philanthropic community, which has already raised more than \$5 million. Georgia allocated \$2.25 million for planning and is looking to add another \$1.5 million for complete count efforts. Illinois appropriated \$1.5 million, and has pending legislation for much more funding. And this year, North Dakota appropriated \$1 million, Colorado \$6 million, and the state of Washington more than \$15 million.

We ask that you would allocate state-level funding to support local census efforts throughout our state that would flow to local communities and organizations for local outreach, strategy, and communications. Together we can take an important step to ensure every person in our state is counted, that our state receives its fair share of federal funding and federal representation.

## Conclusion

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

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<sup>i</sup> 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](https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/IPP-1819-3%20CountingforDollars_OH.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> 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>

<sup>iii</sup> *Id.*

<sup>iv</sup> 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>