



# children's defense fund ohio

## Senate Finance Committee

Chairman Dolan

Vice Chair Burke

Ranking Member Sykes

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Children's Defense Fund-Ohio

Interested Party Testimony

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, 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.

I am also a member of the executive committee of the Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition.

Today, I offer interested party testimony on HB 166. Specifically, I offer testimony requesting support for an amendment to provide \$1.1 million in state funding for 2020 census communication and outreach.

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.

Unfortunately, 1.4 million or 12% of Ohio residents live in an area the U.S. Census Bureau considers hard-to-count. Hard to count groups are population and geographies where large percentages—about 25% or more—of households did not mail back their 2010 census questionnaire. Households may not have submitted their census questionnaire for various reasons, such as having language difficulties, concerns about trust in government, or otherwise. In 2010, 80.8% of Ohio's households mailed back their 2010 census questionnaire, requiring more costly and difficult in-person follow up to find and count the remaining 19.2%. Missing residents in any part of the state puts our entire state and risk of losing federal funding and federal representation for the decade.

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

the decennial census. For example, our state receives more than \$18 billion based on census data for health programs. This is funding for Medicaid, CHIP, Medicare, WIC, health centers, and programs we use to fight infant mortality like the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant. For education we get more than \$3.7 billion. For early learners, this is Head Start and child care funding, for primary and secondary learners, the census impacts National School Breakfast and School Lunch program funding and Title I and special education grants. And for nutrition, our SNAP and WIC funding is highly influenced by census data. The census also impact funding for highway planning and construction, transportation grants, as well as business and industry loans.<sup>i</sup>

When we miss counting a person in the census, our state loses out on \$1,200 to \$1,800 per person each year for a full decade.<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>

Ohio is also in danger of losing at least one seat in Congress. While our state's population has continued to grow, we are not growing at the same pace as many other states. In fact, if the census count were taken today, undercounting just 30,000 people statewide would drop out number of congressional seats from 16 to 15. When you factor in population trends, the margin for 2020 become even thinner. An analysis of state population estimates for and trends show that in 2020 as little as a .8% difference in population could be the means the loss of one of our congressional seats.<sup>iv</sup>

In addition, we need clear and accurate census data for economic and workforce development. Our state's ability to compete for and receive federal grants, compete for major sports and tourism events, or attract businesses to locate or relocate inside out state borders depends, in part, on the nature and quality of our census data.

The administration has taken an important step toward a complete census count in issuing an executive order establishing a State Complete Count Commission. 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.

For example, the 2020 census will be the first census where most people will be expected to respond online. However, large portions of our state's rural and Appalachian do not have access to high speed internet. Consider the 30% households in Scioto County have no internet access or dial up-only, 31% in Highland, 35% in Vinton, 36% in Monroe, and 39% in Adams. These communities would likely need additional support to ensure everyone is counted.

In addition, our urban areas present special challenges for counting a number of our populations including young children. More than 100,000 Ohio children live in a hard-to-count census tract including 73% of children in Cleveland, 52% of children in Columbus, 46% in Cincinnati, and 38% in Toledo. This is particularly concerning as young children were the largest undercounted group in the 2010 census. The Census Bureau missed 2.2 million young children nationwide (4.6%) in 2010 with Black and Hispanic children being missed twice as often as White children. Our communities' low income individuals and

families, college students, immigrant populations, ethnic and racial minorities, and homeless individuals are also a heightened risk of being undercounted in the 2020 census.

We cannot simply leave it up to the Census Bureau. 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.

Other states around the country are recognizing this fact and pouring funding and resources into their communities to ensure their complete count and access to their fair share of federal funding and power. 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 support an amendment for \$1.1 million to provide grants to local complete count committees and nonprofit organizations for census outreach, strategy, and communications for Ohio's hard-to-count communities. This funding will allow our communities to launch or enhance local outreach campaigns focused on hard-to-count populations and hard-to-reach areas; expand the pool of trusted messengers who can reach hard-to-count families; make internet access for census completion available to families least likely to have it at home; and address census confidentiality and privacy concerns.

Together we can take an important step to ensure every person in our state is counted and 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>