



**OHIO
CHILDREN'S
BUDGET**
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ISSUE BRIEF

ISSUE: 2020 Census & the Child Undercount

Clear and accurate census data is the life blood of a strong Ohio. The census count impacts allocations of much needed federal dollars for infrastructure such as bridges and roads and for services that reach every neighborhood, such as community development grants, nutrition programs, and health funding. Beyond services, an accurate census will serve as the basis for apportionment of congressional seats.

Inadequate funding and other policy decisions could place Ohio's communities at risk of an inaccurate census count, limiting their political power, and federal funding for the next decade. The Census Bureau has suffered delays, cancellations, and cutbacks in planning activities and field tests due to funding shortfalls. Worse, fear and confusion surrounding the Census are at an all-time high as the inclusion of a question about citizenship is under consideration.

There is cause for concern about the 2020 census. The 2020 census has less funding than the 2010 census, in which the Census Bureau estimates that it missed nearly 2.2 million children under age five – 4.6 percent of the nation's young children. Other hard-to-count (HTC) populations, including low income communities, immigrants, and adults and children of color, were also disproportionately missed.

An undercount would mean significant problems for Ohio. Ohio is at risk of losing political influence as Ohio could lose a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. Furthermore, over \$21 billion in federal funding is distributed in Ohio based on the Census and nearly \$600 billion throughout the country for critical programs like Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP), and Head Start. Funding levels could be critically impacted as a result of an inaccurate census.

Policy

Ohio's census efforts are run through the Ohio Development Services Agency. In 2010, the Ohio Complete Count Commission (CCC) was co-chaired by the Ohio Treasurer and the Director of the Ohio Development Services Agency. Membership to the CCC is typically made up of all sectors of our community - business, union leadership, education, higher education, early childhood education, immigrant community representatives, etc. In the past there has been no allocated budget for Ohio's CCC or other census efforts; the state relied entirely on allocations from the federal government.



Challenges

Late Start on State Efforts. Every decade the timing of Ohio’s gubernatorial election delays the state’s preparation for the decennial census. However, the 2020 Census is critical for Ohio. Depending on the census count, Ohio could lose one or even two Congressional seats, making a complete count even more critical. Appropriations are needed at the state level to staff the CCC and to flow dollars to local complete count committees. These coordinated efforts are critical to ensuring that individuals throughout the state are ready to participate.

Online Census. The U.S. Census Bureau identified less expensive approaches to conducting the 2020 Census via online methods. However, an online census represents challenges, like the lack of high-speed internet and broadband in rural areas. Approximately one-third of Ohio’s population in rural areas lack access to high-speed internet service compared to 2 percent of the populations in Ohio’s urban areas.

Hard to Count Populations – Children. Unfortunately, more than 100,000 of Ohio’s children are already at risk of being undercounted because they live in an area that the Census Bureau considers “hard-to-count”— and that’s just children ages 0-4. The 2010 Census undercounted more than one million children, with Black and Latino children being missed twice as often as White children. Many of these children live in Ohio’s urban centers, in high density rental properties, and in our rural areas. *We need to make sure all children count.*

Citizenship Question: Stoking Fear in Immigrant Families and Neighborhoods. The citizenship question may compromise the U.S. Census Bureau’s ability to complete an accurate count of every person living in the United States, placing all communities at risk of being underrepresented and under-resourced. Studies have shown that inclusion of this question threatens to undercount our immigrant residents regardless of their legal status. The citizen question is problematic to Ohio specifically because our state’s population growth and stability, in large part, is fueled by our immigrant population who contribute significantly to our economy and the vitality of our neighborhoods and communities.

Opportunities

Ohio has an opportunity to ensure that all its residents are counted, not only to ensure appropriate political representation, but to direct much needed resources to our neighborhoods and communities. By learning from Ohio’s past efforts, both successes and missteps, and from other states, we can get ready for the 2020 Census by allocating resources now, so all procedures and efforts are in place when the count begins in April 2020.

Support Child Well-Being: Recommendations

Ohio should:

- Establish the statewide Complete Count Commission and appoint members that represent state government, Ohio’s hard-to-count populations, business, union leadership, education, higher education, early childhood education, immigrant community representatives, and members that provide direct services to our communities.



- Appropriate money in the state budget to support preparation, communication, and outreach for the 2020 Census and support Ohio's own local governments' efforts to reach hard-to-count populations. There are a number of methodologies used to plan allocations for census preparedness. Based on states of similar size and needs, we estimate funding should be set around the \$2.5 - \$6 million level between now and 2020 in total. These funds will be used to pay for the planning, organization, and execution of a complete count at the state and local levels, with particular attention to outreach to Ohio's HTC populations.
- Identify and mobilize community partners and assets to ensure that vulnerable populations have the ability to participate in the 2020 Census via paper, mobile, or online forms and in their native language.
- Establish a permanent census infrastructure in the Ohio Revised Code so Ohio is prepared for the census in the decades that follow.

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