



# children's defense fund ohio

## Senate Finance Committee

Chairman Dolan

Vice Chair Burke

Ranking Member Sykes

June 13, 2019

Ashon McKenzie

Policy Director

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 working 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 representing the Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition as a member of the coalition's executive team.

Our request is that the state provide \$1.1 million in state funding for 2020 census communication and outreach.

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, and our state has less than nine months to prepare.

An inaccurate 2020 Census could jeopardize the more than \$33.5 billion in federal funding is distributed to Ohio based on the population data gathered in the decennial census: more than \$18 billion for health programs and more than \$3.7 billion for education. When we miss counting a person in the census, our state loses out on at least \$1,206 per person each year for a full decade.<sup>i</sup>

In addition, Ohio is in danger of losing at least one seat in Congress. An analysis of state population estimates show that coming up short by just 70,000 people in 2020 would likely mean the loss of one of our congressional seats.<sup>ii</sup> Worse, this is about the number of people Ohio is projected to miss in the 2020 count without intervention. Last week, a report was released detailing the dire risk of an undercount each state and the nation faces in the 2020 Census. The analysis indicated that as many as 73,600 Ohioans will

not be counted in the 2020 Census if we don't act resulting in the loss of a congressional seat as an estimated \$88.7 million per year for a full decade (over \$887 million!). Worse, more than half of those who may be missed are children under the age of 5, leading to losses in critical resources for our youngest children.

The census is mentioned in the current sub bill at least 19 times. The data from the most recent decennial census is used to determine funding and authority within our state for a range of items including licensure eligibility, local authority for imposing excise taxes, and the distribution of local government funds. The basic functions for our state rely on the data from the census. We need to make a reasonable investment to ensure that census data is accurate.

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.

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> 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>ii</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>