



**PARTNERSHIP
FOR AMERICA'S
CHILDREN**
State and local child advocates working
together for a better future

**Public Comment of Deborah Stein, J.D., Network Director of the Partnership for America's Children to
the Census National Advisory Committee Meeting, June, 2018**

My name is Deborah Stein, and I am the Network Director of the Partnership for America's Children. The Partnership's mission is to support its network of state and community multi-issue child advocacy organizations in effective advocacy. The Partnership has 52 member organizations in 41 states that advocate to improve policies for children at the state, local and federal level. Collectively they represent over 90% of the nation's children. The Partnership connects its members to peer expertise and national resources and facilitates interstate collaborations to deepen the level of impact of child advocacy within and across states. It fosters policy expertise, advocacy skills, and strong organizations.

Partnership members use Census data in their advocacy, and thirty Partnership members are also KIDS COUNT grantees in their state, serving as that state's data hub on children for policy makers, administrators, and nonprofits.

The Partnership for America's Children is serving as the national hub on the undercount of young children in the 2020 Decennial Census. In this role the Partnership is co-leading a national working group of child-serving organizations that is developing strategies to help ensure that all young children are counted, and providing tools and resources to its members to help them ensure that all young children in their states or localities are counted.

The Partnership and its members are deeply concerned about the undercount of young children. The 2010 Census missed nearly one in ten children aged 0-4, or about 2 million children; the net young child undercount (after eliminating duplications) was nearly 5% or almost one million children. This age group had by far the worst undercount of any age group. This trend has been growing over the last several Decennial Censuses even as our ability to count other age groups has improved.

Even worse, the children that are missed most often are children of color. Thus, children who are already disproportionately poor, vulnerable and most in need of strong communities and services are likely to get less than their fair share of federal and state dollars and adequate services in their communities.

The risk of a significant young child undercount in the 2020 Decennial Census is even greater now that millions of immigrant families are likely to be afraid to respond to the Census because it will include a question on citizenship. Some six million children live in mixed status families with at least one undocumented member. However, nearly all young children are citizens.

The undercount of young children has a number of serious consequences for children over the next decade (for most of their childhood), including:

- less representation in Congress, state legislation, and school boards for communities with high numbers of young children;
- less federal funding for critical children's programs in states and particularly in the hard-to-count communities;
- inadequate data and planning information for policymakers and advocates for services such as adequate school capacity and community health services; and
- distorted data in all Census surveys for the next decade, since the Census Bureau uses population data from the Census (the only product which is not a survey but rather an all-population count) and annual population estimates based on the Decennial Census to set the sampling design for all its surveys.

We are pleased that the Census Bureau has redesigned its form to make it clearer that all young children should be counted, and we particularly like the phrasing in the guidance for how to fill out the survey. However, we know that just changing the survey design is not enough to ensure that all young children are counted.

We are deeply concerned that the Census messaging research, which included over forty focus groups with a variety of different groups, included not one focus group with parents and other caregivers of young children even though they are the group at highest risk of being undercounted. Moreover, the CBAM survey, while it did identify whether participants had young children in their household, apparently asked not one question targeted to parents about what would persuade them to include children in their census form, what parenting media they access readily, or what messengers they trust the most when considering issues around their children.

Accordingly, we ask the National Advisory Committee to recommend a series of measures designed to ensure that the Census messaging and outreach is designed to reach families with young children and to persuade them to fill out the form and include young children. These steps should include:

- A thorough analysis of the CBAMS cross tabs to identify what messages are more effective with caregivers of young children, what messengers they trust, and what media they use;
- Focus groups specifically with caregivers of young children when messages are tested;
- A media placement campaign that specifically targets the media most used by caregivers of young children (we understand that this is contemplated);
- Materials targeted at caregivers of young children and at the service providers that interact with them regularly including government agency personnel, child care and pre-k providers, and medical personnel;
- Resources developed for state and local complete count committees to educate them about the undercount of young children and enlist their help in reaching out to their caregivers, including detailed information to the extent we have it about the reasons why young children are missed.

In our role running the national hub on the undercount of young children, we would be delighted to work with you on these efforts, and to work with national and state child advocates to identify and share other strategies for improving the count of young children. We look forward to partnering with

you to help reverse the steady decline in the count of young children and ensure that all our kids are counted, and get the representation, funding, and services they need to thrive.

Thank you for considering our recommendations, and for giving us this opportunity to comment.

Deborah Stein

Network Director.