



Public Comment to the Census Scientific Advisory Committee Meeting June 2018

June 15, 2018

To the Census Scientific Advisory Committee,

On behalf of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), an organization committed to ensuring that all children birth through age eight have access to high-quality early childhood education, I thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments elevating our concern around the net undercount of young children and the recent addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 decennial census form.

NAEYC is driven by a mission to promote high-quality early learning for all young children, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We represent nearly 60,000 individual members and more than 50 regional affiliates, all working with children, families, and educators to achieve a collective vision where all young children thrive and learn in a society dedicated to ensuring they reach their full potential.

With our stated focus on integrated practice, policy, and research, and as a result of the rich history we have of advocating on behalf of policies that positively impact and advance the life outcomes of young children and their families, NAEYC understands the importance of the 2020 Census to our nation and its young children.

NAEYC, like many others, uses statistical information from the Census Bureau to conduct research, guide decision-making, and inform our advocacy, at all levels of government, on behalf of young children. We rely on census data for the work we do, recognizing the importance of census data in informing public policy and funding decisions that impact the lives of millions of children. Given the importance of this data, we are very concerned that young children had the highest net undercount of any age group in the 2010 decennial census. We are also concerned about widening existing disparities among young children of color, who are now the majority of young children in our nation, considering they have much higher net undercounts than other children.

Recent research from the Census Bureau indicates that more than 10 percent of young children—or one of our every ten children ages zero to four—were omitted from the 2010 Census. The undercounting of young children has many consequences, but one of the key implications is that communities with a relatively high net undercount of young children do not get their fair share of federal funding. Research shows that census data are used for distributing more than \$675,000 billion in federal funding each year, and many of these programs such as: Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid); State Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Head Start and Early Head Start; and the Child Care Development Block Grant, serve young children and their families.



NAEYC is concerned that the undercounting of young children may happen again during the 2020 decennial census. Considering the decennial census happens once every ten years in our nation, the possibility of being undercounted in 2020 means that many young children, as well as their families, and educators who are supported to thrive through federal and state investments could face significant negative impacts. Because of our commitment to decreasing disparities among young children, we are particularly concerned that the high net undercount, and its impact on federal funding, effectively penalizes children of color who face higher poverty rates than Non-Hispanic White children.

Our concern is heightened by the recent addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 decennial census form. While we applaud the steps the Census Bureau is undertaking to make sure more young children are counted in 2020, we feel those efforts are severely undercut by the addition of a citizenship question. If adults tasked with filling out the form decline to complete them out of fear of government intrusion, this could severely limit the accurate reporting of our nation's young children. NAEYC urges the Census Bureau to rethink the addition of the citizenship question in light of the harmful consequences it may have on a population already at a high-risk of being undercounted: our nation's young children.

We also strongly urge the committee to pay attention to the historical undercount of young children, and where appropriate, weigh in with the Census Bureau to ensure there is a statistically accurate count of this population in 2020.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide public comment and for your important work in carrying out the 2020 decennial census. NAEYC stands ready to work with you and the Census Bureau to ensure an accurate count of all of our nation's children in the 2020 census and provide additional information or answer questions, as necessary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Rhian Evans Allvin".

Rhian Evans Allvin
Chief Executive Officer