

Prioritize the undercounting of children for the upcoming decennial census

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To: Census National Advisory Committee (CENSUS) <census.national.advisory.committee@census.gov>;

To Whom It May Concern, I am deeply concerned about the undercount of young children in the upcoming decennial census. The counting of young children should be a top priority in the 2020 Census and should be considered at every stage of preparations. The 2010 Census missed nearly one in ten children aged 0-4, or about 2 million children; the net young child undercount 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 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. The CBAM survey is a valuable tool to overcome the challenge of uncounting young children. However, ongoing Census messaging research has not included focus groups with parents and other caregivers of young children and the survey did not ask questions related to children's participation in the Census through their parents. CBAM presentations to the National Advisory Committee have also not mentioned families with young children. The committee should recommend that the Census Bureau conduct and make publicly available a thorough analysis of the CBAMS cross tabs to identify what concerns they have about completing the Census, what messages are more effective with households with young children, and what media they use. Further analysis will help the Bureau and census advocates know how to reach out to families with young children and what messages to use. I commend the Undercount of Young Children subteam for their updates and continued discussion of this important issue. Thank you for considering these ideas and recommendations as well as for the opportunity to comment. Sincerely, Caitlin Johnson