



**ZERO TO THREE**  
Early connections last a lifetime

## Public Comment of Matthew Melmed, Executive Director of ZERO TO THREE to the Census Scientific Advisory Committee Meeting March 2018

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### Executive Director

Matthew E. Melmed

Submitted March 30, 2018

My name is Matthew Melmed, Executive Director of ZERO TO THREE

ZERO TO THREE is a national, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to ensure that all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life. To achieve our mission, ZERO TO THREE plays a key role in ensuring that babies and toddlers get a strong start in life by supporting:

- parents with practical resources that help them connect more positively, deeply and continuously with their babies;
- professionals with knowledge and tools that help them support healthy early development; and
- policymakers in advancing comprehensive and coherent policies which support and strengthen families, caregivers and infant toddler professionals

Since 1977, ZERO TO THREE has brought together leaders in the fields of medicine, mental health, social science research, child development and community leadership to improve the lives of babies and toddlers, transforming the science of early childhood into helpful resources, practical tools and responsive policies for millions of parents, professionals and policymakers.

I thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony on this important and timely issue.

ZERO TO THREE uses statistical information from the Census Bureau to conduct research, guide decision-making, and advocacy and communications work on behalf of babies and toddlers. Because of our use of census data for the work we do, and because we know the importance of census data to informing federal funding decisions that impact their lives, ZERO TO THREE is very concerned that young children between the ages of zero and three, our nation's babies and toddlers, had the highest net undercount of any age group in the 2010 decennial census. We are also concerned that young children of color, children who are now the majority of young children in our nation, have much higher net undercounts than other children.

The decennial census happens *once every ten years* in our nation. Yet, 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: Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC Program); Head Start and Early Head Start; the Child Care Development Block Grant, and Special Education Grants for Infants and Families with Disabilities, serve young children and their families. (See table 2) For babies and toddlers this means that if they are undercounted in 2020, it will have implications for statistical research on them, as well as for the availability of federal funding to address their needs *for the next decade*, including in areas critical to their growth and development such as health, nutrition, and early education.

ZERO TO THREE is concerned that the undercounting of babies and toddlers may happen again during the 2020 decennial census. And our concerns are only heightened by the recent addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 decennial census form, which may severely curtail the accurate reporting of our nation's babies and toddlers, especially if adults who are tasked with filling out the forms decline to complete them out of fear of government intrusion.

ZERO TO THREE looks forward to working with the Census Bureau to ensure an accurate count of babies and toddlers in the 2020 decennial census. We strongly urge the committee to pay attention to the historical undercount of babies and toddlers, and where appropriate, weigh in with the Census Bureau to ensure a statistically accurate count of our nation's youngest and most vulnerable residents in 2020.

Matthew E. Melmed

Executive Director, ZERO TO THREE

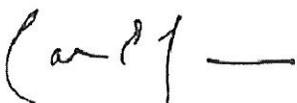


Table 1. Key Facts on the undercount of young children in the U.S. Decennial Census

- 1) In the 2010 Census, children age 0 to 4 had a net undercount rate of 4.6% which is much higher than any other age group.
- 2) In the 2010 Census, children age 0 to 4, had a net undercount of almost one million people (970,000).
- 3) The net undercount rate is the difference between erroneous inclusions (mostly people counted twice) and omissions (those left out of the Census. In the 2010 Census, there were 2.2. million children age 0 to 4 left out of the Census. This amounts to 10.2 percent of all young children.
- 4) The net undercount of young children has increased from 1.4 percent in the 1980 Census to 4.6 percent in the 2010 Census.
- 5) The net undercount for Black children age 0-4 was 6.5 percent and the net undercount of Hispanic children was 7.5 percent in the 2010 Census.
- 6) Large counties (those of 500,000 or more people) account for more than 80 percent of the net undercount of young children in the 2010 Census.
- 7) The ten largest counties had an aggregate net undercount rate of 11 percent in the 2010 Census.

Table 2. Six Federal Assistance Programs Using Population Age 0 to 5 in the Distribution Formula

	FY2008 (in billions)
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC Program)	\$6.10
Head Start	\$5.70
Child Care and Development Block Grant	\$2.00
Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant to the States	\$0.50
Special Education - Grants for Infants and Families with Disabilities	\$0.40
Special Education - Preschool Grants	\$0.40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15.10</b>

Source: Surveying For Dollars, Andrew Reamer, The Brookings Institution

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2010/07/26-ac-s-reamer>