



THE OHIO CENSUS ADVOCACY COALITION

MAKING SURE ALL OHIOANS COUNT

The Honorable U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown
713 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable U.S. Senator Rob Portman
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senators Brown and Portman:

We are writing to **urge the U.S. Senate to include language in the next COVID relief package that would extend the statutory reporting deadlines for the 2020 Census by four months and provide the necessary funding to ensure a complete and accurate count.**

As you know, the process for an accurate and complete 2020 Census has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) suspended field activities and postponed key operations putting it significantly behind schedule. These very serious challenges prompted career professionals at the USCB and the U.S. Secretary of Commerce to request that Congress extend the reporting deadlines. This extension is critical for USCB to deliver reliable, accurate, and complete apportionment and redistricting data to the Congress and states.

In 2017, Ohio receives an estimated \$56 billion in federal funds tied to census data.¹ The financial impact of a significant undercount could be catastrophic to things such as transportation funding, community development block grant funding, and critical human service programs that protect children – such as SCHIP, Medicaid, and Head Start. Additionally, a significant undercount in the 2020 Census combined with Ohio's slow population growth relative to other states, will further reduce Ohio's influence in Congress. Without a complete count, we cannot ensure that Ohioans are afforded their constitutionally guaranteed promise of adequate political representation through the subsequent redistricting cycle following the census.

Our business community will also be negatively impacted by an undercount. As you are probably aware, businesses – large and small - rely on Census data to inform decision-making in where to build, where to hire, and how to grow. The population and demographic data from USCB's American Community Survey and the Economic Census are vital to businesses across America to promote economic development, identify potential customers, and create jobs right here in our state.

¹ Reamer, Andrew. (February 2020). Counting for Dollars: Issue Brief 7, Comprehensive Accounting of Census Guided Federal Spending (2017). Access from:
https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/Counting%20for%20Dollars%202020%20-%20Comprehensive%20Accounting_Report%207B%20Feb%202020%20rev.pdf



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To put it plainly, for every person living in Ohio who is missed means that we are leaving between \$1,200 - \$1,700 in federal funding on the table. A recent analysis conservatively estimated that pre-pandemic Ohio was at risk of losing out on \$85 million per year, every year, for the next decade based on historic undercounting. At a time when Ohio is already at risk of having a \$2.4 billion shortfall in state funding, we should do everything we can to make secure our fair share of federal resources.

Taxpayers have already spent almost \$16 billion on the 2020 Census. We must protect this investment and the next ten years of Ohio's future by avoiding rushing key census operations and forcing the Census Bureau to produce an unfinished census of unacceptable quality. States, localities, and the American people will live with the results for the next ten years, so we must get the 2020 Census right.

It is imperative that the 2020 Census process be protected and extended to ensure Ohio's data is an accurate reflection of the populations of our state and local governments – especially in the many rural areas and urban communities that are at risk of being missed. As such, we are urging Congress to extend the statutory reporting deadlines for the 2020 Census by four months and to provide the necessary funding to ensure we get a complete and accurate count, a request that is consistent with that made by the U.S. Census Bureau. Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Respectfully,

Tracy Nájera, PhD, Executive Director
Children's Defense Fund-Ohio

Mustafa Abed, Chief Executive Officer
Smart Development, Inc.

Erika Anthony, Co-Founder
Cleveland VOTES

Kelsey Bergfeld, Coalition Manager
Advocates for Ohio's Future

John Corlett, President and Executive Director
The Center for Community Solutions

Amanda Cramer, Planning Project Manager
Union Miles Development Corporation

Daphne Kackloudis
Chief Public Policy & Administrative Officer
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Diana King, Chair
NOBLE

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Ohio Mayors Alliance

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Ohio Voter Fund



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