

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 30, 2019

Connecticut Voices for Children Report: The State Faces Risk of Losing Federal Funds for Essential Benefits and Programs If We Fail To Adequately Invest In Census Outreach

New Haven, CT (October 30, 2019) – Connecticut Voices for Children today released a report that reveals the likelihood and heightened risks of an inaccurate count during the 2020 Census. In response to these findings, CT Voices is urging state leaders to prioritize statewide planning and investment in Census outreach and education to ensure our state isn't impacted by the far-reaching consequences of an undercount to residents, state and local governments, dozens of federal and state programs and benefits, as well as Connecticut's democracy and economy.

"What's at stake is Connecticut's quality of life, securing the full amount of \$10.7 billion of federal funding, fair and accurate apportionment of state and federal legislative seats, as well as well-informed planning and economic development," **Connecticut Voices for Children Executive Director Emily Byrne said.** "It is imperative Connecticut create a comprehensive statewide plan for Census 2020 outreach and allocate appropriate funding for implementation. If we fail on either fronts, Connecticut residents ultimately lose and so does the state."

"Thirty-one states have already funded outreach plans and Connecticut has fallen behind," **Connecticut Voices for Children Research and Policy Fellow Michael Sullivan said.** "The state can't afford to shirk its responsibility to ensure that everyone is counted and that all residents have the resources they need and deserve."

As of October 2019, Connecticut was among at least 41 states that, along with the District of Columbia, formed Complete Count Census Committees – volunteer committees that aim to increase awareness and motivate residents to participate in the 2020 Census. However, Connecticut has failed to join the 31 states that have taken the initiative to fund statewide Census outreach. Additionally, the state has not yet issued any coordinated plan or set of recommendations for outreach. For comparison, surrounding states New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island have appropriated funding for Census outreach ranging from \$700 thousand to \$20 million.

The Fiscal Policy Institute and Census Counts, a national network, developed a tool to assist states with estimating the cost of outreach. Using this tool, Connecticut's estimated cost of reaching the 746,687 who are considered hard-to-count through community-based organizations is \$6.16 million.

Connecticut Voices for Children offers the following recommendations:

- Develop a comprehensive statewide plan for Census outreach.
 - Focus on Congressional districts and/or cities and towns that have hard-to-count population groups and hard-to-count Census tracts.
 - Develop a request for proposals and/or identify community-based grantees in 2019 or early 2020, so that funding can be disseminated, and work can commence as early in the year as possible.
 - Draft a plan that includes statewide communications and advertising methods that leverage state agency resources and communications vehicles to educate residents and promote participation in the Census. (Agencies and contractors that provide direct services to residents can build on their relationships with residents and local communities to spread the word by engaging clients and sharing educational materials.)

- Allocate an appropriate level of funding for the implementation of a complete count.
 - Transfer or repurpose existing state funds, where legally applicable.
 - Approve funds in a special legislative session prior to February or approve funds as early in the 2020 legislative session as possible.
 - Explore the possibility of leveraging Federal Highway Administration matching funds to support Census outreach, as Rhode Island has done. (In Connecticut, Regional Councils of Government coordinate this transportation planning application process because the state does not have county governments.)
 - Partner with private, philanthropic entities to supplement state funds.

The 2020 Census will also face new challenges to a successful count. These challenges include: a lack of federal funding that has resulted in the cancellation of two test rehearsals planned to improve the accuracy of the survey; publicity surrounding the Trump Administration's initial but reversed plan to add a question about citizenship, which was estimated to lead to an 8% decline of self-response rates in households that have noncitizens; and the challenges of successfully implementing the Census Bureau's "internet first" initiative, where for the first time, households will be able to complete the survey online.

Connecticut's state constitution requires that Congressional and state legislative districts be redrawn every ten years. The State bases its plan to redraw legislative districts on population data from the decennial Census, but communities of color, low-income residents, and young children are among the many groups who are at a higher risk of being undercounted. If the Census falls short of counting these and other residents, inequalities in political representation will result, diminishing the strength of their voices in our democracy.

In addition to this, the issue of where certain residents are counted has implications for redistricting and racial equity. The U.S. Census Bureau counts incarcerated people as residents of the towns where their prisons are located, rather than the homes where they lived prior to their incarceration. As a result, state legislative districts are drawn to weight votes more heavily in districts that house prisons while diluting votes in other districts—a phenomenon known as prison gerrymandering

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About Connecticut Voices for Children: Connecticut Voices for Children is a "think and do" tank working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. In furtherance of its mission, Connecticut Voices for Children produces high-quality research and analysis, promotes citizen education, advocates for policy change at the state and local level, and works to develop the next generation of leaders.