



**Testimony before the Complete Count Commission
Complete Count Commission Hearing**

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The Schuyler Center would like to thank the members of the Complete Count Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony. Since 1872, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy has advanced policies that strengthen New York families and improve child well-being so all New York children have a fair opportunity to thrive.

Our focus has long been on advancing policies that strengthen families before they experience crises or trauma and prevent families from enduring hardships like ill-health, economic insecurity, child welfare involvement, or encounters with juvenile justice. Another overarching priority: ensuring comprehensive and strategic investment in our youngest New Yorkers, ages 0 to 3, when their brains and bodies are most rapidly developing, with impacts that can last a lifetime.

Schuyler Center leads and participates in several coalitions focused on children and families, including the Child Welfare Coalition; CHAMPS (Children Need Amazing Parents); the Empire State Campaign for Child Care; *Winning Beginning New York*; Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for College; Medicaid Matters New York; and a statewide workgroup on maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting, which brings together State agencies, providers and advocates to strengthen coordination between and access to important dual-generation interventions.

Our testimony today focuses on the historic undercount of young children, what we understand are the reasons for this undercount, and steps New York can take to ensure that all young children are counted in the 2020 Census.

The stakes of an undercount in the 2020 Census for New York children and families cannot be overstated. An undercount would lead to a cut to federal programs essential to child and family well-being, would distort data critical to sound policy-making, and could diminish New York's voice in federal decision-making by reducing New York's Congressional delegation.

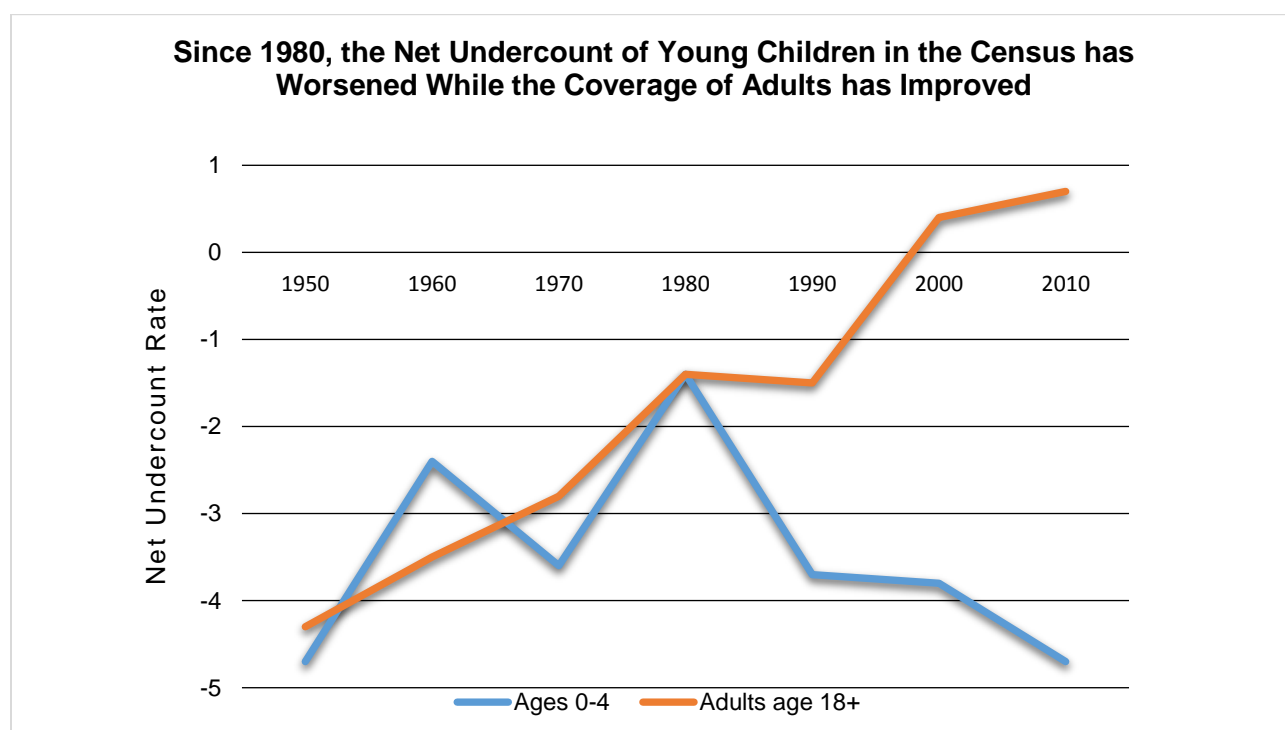
**YOUNG CHILDREN ARE AMONG THE GROUPS AT HIGH RISK OF BEING
UNDERCOUNTED IN THE 2020 CENSUS**

One of the groups historically undercounted – and at risk of being undercounted again in 2020 – are young children. In the 2010 Census, young children had by far the worst undercount of any age group, with nearly 5% of children aged 0-4, or almost 1 million children, missing.¹ Unlike other age groups, the percentage of uncounted children ages 0-4 has increased, from 1.8% in 1980 to 4.6% in 2010.² Within that group, children of color were among those most likely to be undercounted. Other factors that increase the undercount risk of young children are high percentages of young children living in households that are (a) linguistically isolated, (b) grandparent-headed households, or (c) group living situations with non-relatives (such as

doubled up families) or in “group quarters.”³ Many New York communities are home to a significant number of households possessing these factors that increase the likelihood of a young child undercount.

What is more, the factors leading to an undercount of young children are, to a significant extent, different than for other hard-to-count groups. Accordingly, the strategies undertaken to avert an undercount of this group must be different. Of most significance, four out of five times, young children are missed in families that have filled out Census forms, but have omitted mention of one or more young children in the family. This means if New York focuses all of its GOTC efforts on hard-to-count communities who are missed because they do not fill out forms, young children in households that complete the forms, but omit mention of young children, will still go uncounted. Further, young children are much more likely to be missed when the person filling out the form is not a parent, meaning it is essential to educate householders of the need to count all children in the household, not just their own.

If the Census contains the controversial question on citizenship status, it could make it even harder to count young children. New York is one of four states where over 20% of the population live in a household with at least one noncitizen.⁴ In fact, 27% of children under five (nearly all of whom are citizens) live in a household with at least one noncitizen.⁵ It is very likely that the addition of the citizenship question will discourage survey participation. In addition, there is evidence that even those who might respond might leave their young child off. Indeed, 15% of participants in a recent National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) study claim they would not or, at least, did not know if they would include their young children in their survey response.⁶ This issue could lead to an even higher undercount than in 2010 among young children – and among the general population – if New York does not mount a concerted and well-resourced education, outreach, and mobilization effort.



Source: O’Hare 2015, Chapter 4 ⁷

A FULL AND FAIR COUNT IS CRITICAL TO THE WELL-BEING OF NEW YORK CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Every year, more than \$53 billion in federal funds are allocated to New York and localities based on Census data either directly or through Census population estimates or surveys that rely on the Decennial Census.⁸ This includes \$6.7 billion for programs that benefit children, such as Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (Child Health Plus), Title 1 (provides financial assistance to schools with high percentages of children from low-income families), WIC, special education grants, foster care, adoption assistance, and child care assistance.⁹ Also at stake is the integrity and accuracy of data, upon which critical public policy decisions are made. And, an undercount could lead to a loss of representation for New Yorkers in Congress and at all levels of government.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO AVERT A YOUNG CHILD UNDERCOUNT

As noted above, because the reasons for the young child undercount are unique and distinct from the reasons that adults are missed, New York must develop strategies targeted to avoiding an undercount of this group. If New York simply focuses its GOTC efforts on hard-to-count neighborhoods, for example, many young children will still go uncounted. While we appreciate that New York State, under the leadership of the Council on Children and Families, is aware of, and taking steps to avoid a young child undercount, efforts should be accelerated, and more targeted.

Among the steps we suggest New York take to avoid a young child undercount:

- 1. Recognize that the ways to avoid a young child undercount are in some cases different from avoiding an undercount among other hard to count populations, and adjust our GOTC strategies accordingly.**

A report released by the Population Reference Bureau in April 2019 on the young child undercount confirms, with current data, that the reasons for the young child undercount are often different than those that lead to an undercount of other populations.¹⁰ It also confirms that focusing GOTC efforts on hard-to-count communities with high percentages of young children and communities with Low Response Scores (based on mail return rates), will not be enough to avert a significant undercount of young children in large counties. We understand that they plan a second stage of their work available this summer, which will help identify areas with large numbers of children at risk of being missed, and we urge the committee to use that data to identify additional areas to conduct get out the count activities.

- 2. Work with national experts on the young child undercount, including William O'Hare of Data and Demographic Services, LLC, and Deborah Stein of the Partnership for America's Children, who are leading efforts to understand the roots of the young child undercount, and developing best ways to message to avoid an undercount in 2020.**

There is presently message research underway, through the Partnership for America's Children, relating to ensuring a full count of young children. This research includes focus groups and online surveys. The focus groups will include complex families – those with young children under five years old, with parents and other relatives (grandparents, aunts,

uncles, etc.) also living in the home. Tested materials, based on the results of the focus groups and surveys, should be available by the end of September. These materials will give evidence-based guidance about which messages are most effective encouraging families to enumerate their young children. New York should adapt these national materials to have a New York focus and push them out to child and family-serving CBOs and others to ensure the right messages are reaching New York families with young children.

3. Child and family-serving organizations and providers should be deliberately recruited and supported to engage in census efforts, including as part of the statewide and local complete count commissions.

We know that one of the most important strategies for ensuring a fair and complete count is to convene well-supported complete count commissions at the state, county and local level. Yet, according to informal data we have received from the NY Region Office of the U.S. Census Bureau, along with data from partners, many of New York’s most populous counties still have not formed a census committee. According to this data, some of our state’s largest counties, including Richmond, Onondaga, Dutchess, and Oneida Counties, are among those that have yet to launch a Census count committee. This is particularly troubling since the 2010 Decennial Census missed children at a higher rate in larger counties.

Of further concern, we do not have ready information about the make-up of those committees that have been formed. Specifically, we do not know if early childhood experts, or representatives from early childhood networks, have been appointed to these committees.

Most Populous New York Counties without a Census Committee

County	Population	% Under 5	Response Rate in 2010
Richmond	479,458	5.7	74.1
Onondaga	465,398	5.7	81.5
Dutchess	295,568	4.6	76.5
Oneida	231,332	5.7	80.3
Saratoga	229,869	5.2	84.7
Niagara	211,328	5.2	81.5
Broome	193,369	5.2	81.8
Ulster	179,417	4.4	77.5
Rensselaer	159,722	5.2	80.4

Sources: US Census QuickFacts,¹¹ Rockefeller Institute of Government 2010 Census Response Rates by County,¹² and data from U.S. Census Bureau – N.Y. Region.¹³

We strongly recommend that New York make an urgent push to ensure that all counties and cities – particularly those that are populous – convene complete count committees immediately. We further recommend that measures be taken to ensure the inclusion of appointees connected with providers that serve families with young children and that the complete count committees are informed about the need to prioritize counting young children.

CONCLUSION

Thank you. We appreciate the opportunity to present testimony and look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure a full and fair count of all New Yorkers in the 2020 Census, including New York’s youngest residents.

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¹ This is the net undercount – the number by which the Census was wrong. The Census missed 2.2 million young children, and double-counted or otherwise erroneously counted more than a million, so the total or net number was just under a million fewer than it should have been. The Undercount of Young Children, US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economics, US Census. February 2014. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2014/demo/2014-undercount-children.pdf>

² Doug Jackson Strane. Perspective: Census Undercount a Threat to Vulnerable Children’s Health, Center for Health Journalism. August 30, 2018. https://www.centerforhealthjournalism.org/2018/08/29/perspective-census-undercount-would-imperil-vulnerable-childrens-health?utm_source=Copy+of+090518+Newsletter+Created+2018%2F08%2F28%2C+3%3A41+PM&utm_campaign=Newsletter150708&utm_medium=email

³ William P. O’Hare, Linda A. Jacobsen, Mark Mather, Alicia VanOrman, and Kelvin Pollard. “What Factors Are Most Closely Associated With the Net Undercount of Young Children in the U.S. Census?” (Working paper), Population Reference Bureau. April 10, 2019. <https://www.prb.org/what-factors-are-most-closely-associated-with-the-net-undercount-of-young-children-in-the-u-s-census/>

⁴ Beth Jarosz. Citizenship Question Risks a 2020 Census Undercount in Every State, Especially Among Children, Population Reference Bureau. October 5, 2018. <https://www.prb.org/citizenship-question-risks-a-2020-census-undercount-in-every-state-especially-among-children/>

⁵ Pew Research Center tabulations of augmented 2015 American Community Survey (IPUMS). See Passel and Cohn (2017) for details on methodology.

⁶ Census 2020: Research and Messaging, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials. September 12, 2018. <https://funderscommittee.org/resource/recording-slides-fci-briefing-series-census-2020-messaging-testing-results/>

⁷ William P. O’Hare, The Undercount of Young Children in the U.S. Decennial Census, Springer. 2015. <https://www.springer.com/us/book/9783319189161>

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- ⁸ Andrew Reamer. Counting for Dollars 2020 The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds, Report #2: Estimating Fiscal Costs of a Census Undercount to States, George Washington Institute of Public Policy. March 19, 2018.
<https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/GWIPP%20Reamer%20Fiscal%20Impacts%20of%20Census%20Undercount%20on%20FMAP-based%20Programs%2003-19-18.pdf> .
- ⁹ Community Leaders Can Help New York Count! New York State Council on Children and Families.
<https://www.ccf.ny.gov/index.php?cID=373>
- ¹⁰ William P. O'Hare, Linda A. Jacobsen, Mark Mather, Alicia VanOrman, and Kelvin Pollard. "What Factors Are Most Closely Associated With the Net Undercount of Young Children in the U.S. Census?" (Working paper), Population Reference Bureau. April 10, 2019.
<https://www.prb.org/what-factors-are-most-closely-associated-with-the-net-undercount-of-young-children-in-the-u-s-census/>
- ¹¹ US Census QuickFacts, United States Census Bureau. 2018.
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045218>
- ¹² 2010 Census Response Rates by County, Rockefeller Institute of Government. 2017.
<https://rockinst.org/nycounts/data/census-response-rates/>
- ¹³ Data from U.S. Census Bureau – N.Y. Region, received April 2019, on file with Schuyler Center