

**Testimony of Planned Parenthood of Nassau County and Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic
Before the New York State Complete Count Commission**

April 12, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Our names are Karla Bradley and Lauren La Magna, and we are the Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager for Planned Parenthood of Nassau County, and Public Affairs Manager of Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic, respectively. Together, our two Planned Parenthood affiliates are proud to provide sexual and reproductive health care services to 29,243 patients across Nassau and Suffolk Counties. While it might not be obvious why Planned Parenthood is invested in the goal and mission of the Complete Count Commission, we are here to share with you why our organizations are committed to educating communities about the importance of completing the 2020 Census survey, and are asking the Complete Count Commission to provide funding and resources to ensure that our communities are accurately counted during next year's survey.

Of the 14,398 patients served in Nassau County, 48% are patients covered by Medicaid or Medicaid Managed Care. Of the 14,854 patients served in Suffolk County, 41% are covered by Medicaid or Medicaid Managed Care.

Census Data and Access to Health Care

Medicaid is the largest federal assistance program whose distributed funds are on the basis of census-derived statistics; it accounts for 58% of census-guided funding, which is used to help individuals with low-income gain access to primary and preventative health care services.¹ Other grants that help grant access to reproductive and sexual health care to low-income communities, such as the Title X Family Planning program or New York's Family Planning Grant, are also based on formulas that include census-derived population and economic statistics. Not getting a complete count of the communities that our organizations serve will jeopardize our patients' ability to access care, putting people's health and lives at risk. Communities' health care access and representation depend on the census being conducted in a way that allows for a high-quality and accurate count.

Our patients come from some of the hardest to count tracts. For example, in Nassau County, Hempstead had a mail return rate in 2010 that averaged between 60-65%. Nearly 2,000 of our patients are from Hempstead. In Suffolk County, communities such as Amityville, Bellport, Brentwood,

1

<https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/program-information/medicaid-and-chip-enrollment-data/report-highlights/index.html>

Central Islip, and Wyandanch had a 54-59% average mail return rate; Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic has seen close to 13,000 patients from these communities since the previous Census. These numbers show that our patients reside in areas that are already considered “hard to count” due the mail-in response rate.

Barriers to Census Data Collection

In this coming Census Survey 2020 collection, we will see additional barriers to getting a complete count, which will impact our patients.

Immigration Status

At Planned Parenthood, we see anyone who is looking to access care, regardless of immigration status. While the debate and discussion regarding whether or not a citizenship question is explicitly added to the census is ongoing, we know that people may be afraid to respond to the census, due to either their personal immigration status, or the status of their family members, increasing the likelihood that there will not be an accurate count.

Online/Internet Data Collection

This is the first year that census data will be collected through an online version of the survey. According to CUNY Hard to Count maps, nearly 20% of people in Hempstead and nearly 23% of people in Wyandanch from 2013-2017 had either no home internet or dial-up only. While the census can be filled out over the phone or on paper if requested, this creates additional steps for folks to complete the census survey, decreasing the likelihood that it will be completed.

Renters

Some of the hardest populations to count include people who rent. We know many of our patients are people who rent homes, who may not receive information regarding the census due to information being sent or collected by landlords, or other individuals living within the home. Many people also live within unregistered housing, adding a component of fear of losing housing if individuals or multiple families are in a home “illegally”.

Small Children

Children ages 0-5 years old are one of the most undercounted populations in Census data collection. We know many of our patients are people with children, and without an accurate count of everyone within a home - including small children - funding for child care, health care for children, and school funding (all impacting health outcomes for children and adults) has the risk of being underallocated.

Conclusion and Asks

As you can see, there are many barriers to overcome in order to get a complete and accurate count during the 2020 Census data collection period, and the risks of not obtaining a complete count puts

our patients' and our communities' ability to access health care at risk. Our patients are folks who already face barriers to care and services they need from marginalization due to race, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and gender identity. Introducing an additional barrier to care by not collecting the data needed to ensure proper allocation of funds to Medicaid is a risk Planned Parenthood is not willing to take. We're engaging in the census for the first time with coalition partners across Long Island because we know the stakes are high, and that as a trusted health care provider, we have a responsibility to reach our patients and communities we serve to tell them why they should be counted.

We need this commission and New York State to ensure there is funding and resources available for grassroots organizations to be able to raise awareness and educate our communities on the importance of completing the census. By dispelling myths about data usage that would inhibit people's desire to participate in the Census, and informing communities of the process in which data is collected - whether it be over the internet, mail-in form, phone, or door-to-door canvassing - we can work to ensure that New York, and Nassau and Suffolk Counties specifically, are accurately and completely counted.