

HB19-1239: CENSUS OUTREACH GRANT PROGRAM

Concerning the promotion of an accurate count in the decennial census by creating a census outreach program.

Details

Bill Sponsors:	House – <i>Tipper (D) and Caraveo (D)</i> Senate – <i>Priola (R) and Winter (D)</i>
Committee:	House State, Veterans, & Military Affairs House Appropriations
Bill History:	3/12/2019- Introduced in House 3/26/2019- House State, Veterans, & Military Affairs Refer Amended to Appropriations
Next Action:	Hearing in Appropriations
Fiscal Note:	<u>3/20/2019 Version</u>

Bill Summary

The bill creates a census outreach grant program administered by the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). The purpose of the grant program is to provide financial assistance to local governments, intergovernmental agencies, councils of government, housing authorities, school districts, nonprofit organizations, and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe in order to support accurate counting of the residents of Colorado in the 2020 Census.

In partnership with a special committee, the Department will review applications with a set of minimum guidelines and expectations created by the Department and the Committee. Those committee must review applications and make recommendations considering if the applicant conducts outreach in hard-to-count communities; and, the geographic and demographic diversity of those communities. The bill defines “hard-to-count” communities explicitly as “communities and populations that have been historically undercounted by previous decennial censuses, including, but not necessarily limited to, children under 5 years, racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, immigrants, people who speak and understand limited amounts of English, people living in rural areas of the state, people in the state without sufficient internet access, adults age 60 and over, and people who are transient or homeless.”

The bill appropriates \$12 million to the Department to distribute in grants. There is no specified minimum/maximum award that grantees can receive. No closing date is set for applications, but the bill requires that the committee must award grants no later than November 1, 2019 and awarded funds must be distributed within 30 days. Finally, the bill does not have a sunset date but requires a strategic plan to be completed on or before May 1, 2026, and every ten years thereafter.

Issue Summary

Changes to the 2020 Census at the Federal Level

The Federal Government has made large changes to the 2020 Census. While there is enough funding to administer the decennial survey, the U.S. Census Bureau is operating almost half a billion dollars below

estimated needs, leading to reduced staffing and limited funds for outreach.¹ There have been operational and methodology changes to the census. This will be the first census to utilize the internet as the primary response method, and to provide a call-in option.² There still will be a paper option available. Reports indicate that the Census Bureau is opening only half of the local offices that it did in 2010.³ This could pose a challenge to ensure that census workers can visit households that have not responded to the census through the primary method, the internet. The most publicized change to the 2020 Census is the Commerce Department's decision to include a "citizenship question" that some argue may dissuade minority and immigrant populations from responding to the survey.⁴ Budget reductions at the federal level could impact the quality of the data and increase the potential for cybersecurity breaches.

Hard-to-Count Communities

Hard-to-count communities are critical to the accurate reporting of demographic information in the census. These communities are typically defined by any population that are hard to locate, contact, persuade, and/or interview. These populations may be deterred by language barriers, low-mobility, home insecurity, lower literacy and education levels, or live in multi-family housing units that are unidentified by the Census Bureau.⁵ In Colorado, this may include those in rural/frontier areas that have limited or no access to internet and in those areas the households that only receive mail through Post Office boxes and do not get mail delivered directly to the home.

Impact to Funding

There are a number of ways that the decennial census is utilized to determine funding decisions at all levels of government. The census is used to determine which populations may be eligible for programs, which organizations are eligible to receive grants, and how different communities are classified to determine priorities for certain project funds (i.e. rural community grants and community development block grants).

In particular, the census has an impact on funding distribution for health care. Medicaid, Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are all census-guided⁶ programs and depend on accurate counts to provide accurate funding. In sum, the federal government used census data to guide the distribution of an estimated \$620 billion in funding to states during fiscal year 2016.⁷

A few years into the decade, when Census numbers are released, the population has already changed. The release of county level data for the 2010 Census happened in 2011. From 2010 to 2011, the population of Larimer County had increased by about 5,000 people, or 1.5 percent.⁸ Similarly, from 2010 to 2012, there was a 3 percent change in population. Overall, for Larimer County, the population has grown by an estimated 10.7 percent from 2010 to 2015. However, federal reimbursements rarely keep up with pace of population change. Because of this problem, it is critical to have the most accurate (and the highest)

¹ Farmer, A. (2019). "Funding the Census." *Brennan Center for Justice*. Retrieved from <https://www.brennancenter.org/funding-census>.

² Potyondy, P.R. (July 2018) 2020 Census: Everyone Should Be Counted, But How?. *National Conference of State Legislatures*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/2020-census-everyone-should-be-counted-but-how.aspx>

³ Wnag, H.L. (March 12, 2019). Census Bureau to Have Far Fewer Local Offices in 2020 than Last National Count. *National Public Radio*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/12/702735052/census-bureau-to-have-far-fewer-local-offices-in-2020-than-last-national-count>.

⁴ Vann, N.R. (July 31, 2018). The 2020 Census is Already in Big Trouble. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/07/census-2020-russia-citizenship/566384/>.

⁵ Tourangeau, Roger. (2014). "1 – Defining hard-to-survey populations." In *Hard-to-Survey Populations*. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139381635.003>.

⁶ Programs that rely on Census-derived statistics to determine program eligibility and/or allocate funds to states and localities

⁷ Hart, N and Meron, Y. (Nov. 21, 2018). "Why an Accurate Census Count in 2020 Matters." *Bipartisan Policy Center*. Retrieved from <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/why-an-accurate-census-count-in-2020-matters/>.

⁸ Note: this is an adjusted and retrospective estimate by Colorado Demography Office.CO Department of Local Affairs (2019). *Population Totals for Colorado Counties*. Retrieved from <https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/population/population-totals-counties/#population-totals-for-colorado-counties>

response rate in the community possible. If the initial survey is undercounted, it makes it progressively more difficult to keep up with population changes.⁵ The estimate of per capita worth⁹, in regards to federal funding, of every life counted in Larimer County (not missed) is \$1,481; that value times the 360,000 estimated population¹⁰ equals a total valued population of Larimer County of over \$533 million. Put simply, for every life we undercount, the County loses almost \$1,500 in federal funding value in the first year of the Census.

Impact to Research

The Census not only determines distribution rates for government programs, but also the results of the survey are critical to the accuracy of research. Academic institutions, medical facilities, and governments rely on the census to guide internal and external research that affects and may direct organizational resources.¹¹

The Health District's Community Health Survey is critical to tailoring our resources and programs to our community; accurately counting hard-to-reach members of our community will make our survey more accurate and our services more useful. The Health District currently has two hard-to-count census tracts in our boundaries, both directly west and southwest of Colorado State's main campus.¹²

Other States

Other states have established funding to encourage accurate Census counting. California, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, and Virginia have funded different types of activities for the 2020 census.¹³ For example, California has dedicated more than \$100 million to perform outreach, update addresses, as well as conduct other activities under the state's census program.

Supporters

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- Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials (CALPHO)
 - Colorado Center on Law and Policy
 - Colorado Children's Campaign
 - Colorado Counties, Inc.
 - Colorado Fiscal Institute
 - Colorado Hospital Association
 - Colorado Municipal League
 - Colorado Nonprofit Association
 - Colorado Rural Health Center
 - Colorado Senior Lobby
 - Common Cause
 - League of Women Voters of Colorado

Opponents

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- Any opposition has not been made publicly available at this time.

About this Brief

This brief was prepared by Health District of Northern Larimer County staff to assist the Health District Board of Directors in determining whether to take an official stand on various health-related issues. The Health District is a special district of the northern two-thirds of Larimer County, Colorado, supported by local property tax dollars and

⁹ The per capita calculation is derived from the total fiscal year 2015 obligations for 16 large federal assistance programs divided by the population as of July 1, 2015 (as calculated by the Census Bureau). More information at: <https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/Colorado%2008-18-17.pdf>

¹⁰ Note: this is an adjusted and retrospective estimate by Colorado Demography Office.CO Department of Local Affairs (2019). *Population Totals for Colorado Counties*. Retrieved from <https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/population/population-totals-counties/#population-totals-for-colorado-counties>

¹¹ National League of Cities. (7 November 2018). "Cities Count: Preparing for the 2020 Census." *NLC*. Retrieved from <https://www.nlc.org/resource/cities-count-preparing-for-the-2020-census>.

¹² CUNY Mapping Service at the Center for Urban Research. (2019). "Hard-to-Count 2020 Map." *CUNY Graduate Center*. Retrieved from <https://www.censushardtcountmaps2020.us/>.

¹³ Underhill, Wendy and Christi Zamarripa. (March 26, 2019). "2020 Census Resources and Legislation." *National Conference of State Legislatures*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org/research/redistricting/2020-census-resources-and-legislation.aspx>.

governed by a publicly elected five-member board. The Health District provides medical, mental health, dental, preventive and health planning services to the communities it serves. This brief is not a complete analysis of this policy issue. This brief is accurate to staff knowledge as of date printed. For more information about this summary or the Health District, please contact Alyson Williams, Policy Coordinator, at (970) 224-5209, or e-mail at awilliams@healthdistrict.org.