

- Good afternoon Mr. Chair and members of the Joint Budget Committee, and thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on the state budget today.
- My name is Sarah Hughes and I am the Vice President for Research Initiatives at the Colorado Children’s Campaign. I am here today to encourage the state to increase the amount of funding currently proposed for 2020 census outreach in Colorado.
- Conducted only once every 10 years, the decennial census to determine Colorado’s population is vitally important, and the state must invest in outreach to ensure that Coloradans are accurately counted in 2020. The census is a critical source of data for everyone from state policymakers and school district planners to hospitals and business leaders, but perhaps most important is its role in determining how much federal funding will flow into Colorado over the subsequent decade.
- The population counts gathered through the decennial census help allocate more than \$600 billion in federal funding to states and local communities each year. Colorado receives more than **\$8 billion per year** from federal programs that allocate their funding based on census population counts. These programs include several that are critical to Colorado’s kids, including the Children’s Health Insurance Program, Head Start, the National School Lunch Program and special education grants, among several others.
- With billions of dollars on the line, undercounting Coloradans in the 2020 Census by even a small fraction could cost our state hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding—funding that could have flowed to our state but instead will be directed to other states and localities across the country. And because the census is conducted only once every 10 years, an inaccurate count of Coloradans would have far-reaching impacts on this funding for the next decade.

- The Children’s Campaign is particularly concerned about undercounting our state’s youngest children, as research shows that children under age 5 are the age group *most* likely to be missed by the census. In 2010, young children in Colorado were undercounted by about 5 percent, underestimating the number of young children in our state by about 18,000 kids.
- The 2020 Census is facing many barriers likely to decrease participation in Colorado and across the country. The Census Bureau’s own research found that fewer than seven in 10 householders say they plan to fill out their 2020 Census form.
- A robust outreach campaign that communicates the importance of participating in the census is **essential**. While we were pleased to see that former Governor Hickenlooper’s proposed budget included state funding for census outreach, the \$300,000 proposed is insufficient to ensure a full and accurate count of Coloradans.
- The amount of funding currently proposed for 2020 Census outreach equates to only about 5 cents per person. In comparison, other states have allocated as much as *two dollars* per person for census outreach, recognizing the significant return on investment from a full and accurate census count.
- With so much on the line, Colorado must invest adequate funding in census outreach, and the investment must be made this year to give communities time to plan and execute their outreach strategies.
- On behalf of the Colorado Children’s Campaign, I respectfully encourage the committee to increase the amount of funding proposed for 2020 Census outreach. Thank you for your time.