

Written Testimony as prepared for delivery in support of HB19-1239 – Everyone Counts in Colorado Act (Tipper & Caraveo/Winter) to the House State, Veteran and Military Affairs Committee by Sarah Hughes, Vice President, Research Initiatives at the Colorado Children’s Campaign

- Mr. Chair and members of the Committee, my name is Sarah Hughes and I’m the Vice President for Research Initiatives at the Colorado Children’s Campaign. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 1239, and thank you to Representatives Tipper and Caraveo for your leadership and foresight on this issue.
- The Children’s Campaign supports this bill because a full and accurate count of Coloradans in the 2020 Census is vital to our state, including to Colorado children. Of all age groups, children under 5 are the group *most likely* to be missed by the census. In the 2010 Census, young kids in Colorado were undercounted by 5 percent, or about 18,000 children.
- This undercount means that 18,000 kids didn’t show up in data that school districts, hospitals, policymakers and others rely on to inform a decade’s worth of planning efforts. And most critically, 18,000 children who were not included in data the federal government uses to allocate billions of dollars in federal funding to Colorado each year.
- The 2020 Census is facing *far* more barriers to success than the 2010 count, and fewer than seven in 10 people say they plan to complete their census form in 2020. Without outreach efforts to overcome these challenges, we risk undercounting our state’s children and other hard-to-count groups by an even larger margin in next year’s census.
- If kids in our state are undercounted in 2020, Colorado will feel the effects for the *next decade*. Because census counts are used to allocate federal funding to states, the effects of an undercount will be felt most acutely when it comes to federal funds for programs like child care assistance, foster care, special education services and the Children’s Health Insurance Program.
- With billions of dollars in federal funding on the line, undercounting kids or other hard-to-count populations in Colorado by even a *tiny fraction* could cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars over the next 10 years. If that funding doesn’t come to Colorado, it won’t result in any savings for the federal government. This is a **zero-sum game**, meaning the funding that *should have come to Colorado* will be redirected to other states instead.
- In addition to young kids, other groups the Census Bureau considers hard-to-count include people in rural areas, renters, people without internet access and people with low incomes, among many others. Census Bureau research shows that for these and other hard-to-count-groups, outreach from a trusted messenger—with *credibility in their local community*—is one of the **most effective ways** to promote participation in the census.
- That’s why the Children’s Campaign is pleased to see that the grant program this bill creates would direct funding for outreach to the folks who know their communities best—local governments and nonprofits, who would be able to decide how best to reach their neighbors in hard-to-count groups.
- The 2020 Census is right around the corner, and this is Colorado’s **last chance** to invest in outreach efforts to make sure every Coloradan is counted. What we do (or don’t do) now to ensure an accurate count in 2020 will affect our state for the next 10 years.
- Thank you and we urge your support for this important policy.