

**Testimony Supporting H.B. 6563, An Act
Establishing a Grant Program to Assist
Municipalities in Census Outreach Programs**

**Planning and Development Committee
March 6, 2019**

Senator Cassano, Representative McCarthy Vahey, Senator Champagne, Representative Zawistowski, and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for this opportunity to submit **written testimony supporting H.B. No. 6563, An Act Establishing a Grant Program to Assist Municipalities in Census Outreach Programs.**

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. As a community foundation, we manage, grow, and distribute approximately \$1 billion in assets to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region, particularly in the areas of education, community safety, and community and economic development. As part of our work we support civic engagement in our region to ensure the fair representation of all our residents, including through Get out the Vote efforts and Census outreach.

The Hartford Foundation strongly supports House Bill 6563, which would provide state funds to municipalities conducting Census outreach. If adequately resourced, Connecticut's 2020 Census endeavor will bring significant rewards. As described by Aparna Nathan and Mark Abraham in a recent *Connecticut Mirror* op-ed, "the decennial census is a feat of manpower, logistics, and advertising. Mailings are sent to every household in the country, and Census Bureau field workers go door-to-door to collect information from non-respondents. The products of these efforts are data sets that characterize our population, create political districts, and enable virtually all other ongoing data collection efforts."¹

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¹ At Risk: Fair and Valid Census Data for Connecticut. (2017.) Nathan, Aparna and Mark Abraham. The Connecticut Mirror. Retrieved from: <https://ctmirror.org/2017/10/02/at-risk-fair-and-valid-census-data-for-connecticut/>.

The future of the entire state of Connecticut depends on a full and accurate Census count in every municipality. Census data is used for far more than research – in a number of unexpected ways, Census data affects us all. In our own work, we rely on Census data to plan where to direct our investments and to communicate externally about the makeup of the Greater Hartford region. More broadly, the Census provides data that supports both local and state concerns, such as:

- Impacting local and state-level public policy decision-making, such as providing the requisite data for the identification of housing development zones.
- Determining the allocation of federal grants to states and municipalities for programs including education, housing, and transportation. According to Tyler Kleykamp, the state's Chief Data Officer, the sixteen largest federal grants to Connecticut are worth \$7.95 billion dollars each year.² **An undercount will reduce our federal grant funding; by contrast, improving the efficacy of our Census count above Connecticut's 79 percent return rate in 2010 could increase the value of the federal grants we receive.**
- Determining representation in state and federal government. In 2002, Connecticut population data in the Census led to our state losing a seat in Congress. **Our state remains one of the slowest-growing (and at times, contracting) states; undercounting could further reduce our representation in Congress.**

Targeted, culturally-appropriate outreach so that every state resident understands the importance of completing the Census and can access help in doing so is essential to ensuring a full and accurate Census count. While every resident of the United States is legally required to complete the Census, not everyone does. There are a variety of reasons that individuals might go uncounted, including living in an apartment building or street that Census workers choose not to visit, not understanding the forms, or fearing immigration enforcement or other consequences as a result of submitting Census information. Whatever the individual reasons, past research shows that the Census is likely to systematically undercount some vulnerable populations. Young children, foreign-born populations and people with limited English proficiency are particularly at risk. Given the

² Presentation for Census 2020 Kickoff. Tyler Kleykamp. Connecticut Data Collaborative. 11 December 2018.

concerns of many immigrant and Latino communities about the 2020 Census, outreach by trusted community voices will be especially important. **This outreach goes over and above what is supplied by Census Bureau field workers, and requires state and municipal funding.**

These “hard-to-count” populations are often highly concentrated in low-income communities, where municipalities may have limited financial resources for Census outreach, making outside support critical: in Hartford alone, 36 out of 40 Census tracts are considered hard-to-count. **Foundations across the country are providing financial and logistical support to Census outreach efforts in order to reduce the undercounting of areas to ensure representation of the full population.** As part of our own efforts, the Hartford Foundation is engaging in activities including:

- A Census grant-making campaign similar to the Foundation’s Get out the Vote grant-making campaign. The Foundation plans to support nonprofit providers that have a demonstrated capacity to engage “hard-to-count” populations through effective resident engagement strategies including canvassing, door-knocking, and community events.
- Serving on the Hartford and Connecticut Complete Count Committees to plan for full representation of the city and the state in the 2020 Census. Foundation staff were appointed to these committees by Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin and Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz, respectively.
- Participating in state-wide and national philanthropic learning communities to identify and support effective outreach and communications strategies.

Philanthropy alone cannot fund Census outreach efforts - our work complements public efforts. Our entire state has a vested interest in ensuring that every resident is accurately counted. **We urge the committee to support House Bill 6563 in order to dedicate state funds to assist municipalities with Census outreach programs, especially for municipalities containing historically undercounted Census tracts.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at policy@hfpg.org or 860-548-1888.

