**Talking Points on 2020 Census Public Fund for Pennsylvania\***

**Topline Messages:**

• With Census responses being collected online for the first time amidst lower levels of

federal funding, Pennsylvania is at particular risk of an undercount in the 2020 Census

due to its disproportionately large population of seniors and hard-to-count communities

and its large rural areas with limited broadband access.

• An undercount of just one percent would cost Pennsylvania over $221.8 million --or

$1,746 per person (in 2015 dollars) – in FMAP-guided\* funds alone each year for the

next ten years.

• Lawmakers in Harrisburg will have to make up the loss of funding through potential cuts,

to healthcare, infrastructure and education.

• An undercount would mean a substantial reduction in the $39.1 billion in federal

census-directed funds flowing into Pennsylvania; 51.7 percent are healthcare-related

funds that serve Pennsylvania seniors, people with disabilities, and children.

• Federal funding allocated using Census data supports a number of economic

development programs in rural communities across PA, including support for housing,

infrastructure projects like sewers and electricity, and business loans. In FY 2016, these

programs totaled more than $760 million.

• The Commonwealth should begin preparing for the Census by allocating a small amount

of money in the state budget to establish a public fund to support public education, in person

outreach, and direct assistance in order to ensure a complete count.

*\*See “Census-Directed Funds & the FMAP” below for an explanation of the FMAP.*

**Pennsylvania at Risk of an Undercount:**

• The overall level of funding for the Census, including the funding for workers who help

people complete the questionnaire, has been limited by Congress

• As a result of the decreased funds and increased operational challenges, the US

Government Accountability Office has labeled the 2020 Census at high risk of failure.

• The change to online collection of Census data will pose challenges for people in

communities throughout Pennsylvania who lack broadband internet access, a category

that includes some 800,000 Pennsylvanians according to new research by Penn State

University, or lack the technology skills or English proficiency to fill out the

questionnaire online

• A new question added by the Census Bureau that will ask about respondents’ citizenship

status is likely to discourage already-hard-to-count immigrant communities and

communities of color from participating by stoking fears that the information collected

will be used against them.

**Census-Directed Funds & the FMAP:**

• The state’s population, as counted by the Census, plays a role in determining the

amount of federal funds contributed to Pennsylvania for programs such as healthcare,

nutrition assistance, transportation, housing, education, childcare, programs for

children and parents, and energy assistance.

• Currently, Pennsylvania receives $39.1 billion in these Census-derived federal funds;

51.7% percent are related to healthcare, primarily to support Medicaid and CHIP.

• These federal funds are determined based on a calculation called the Federal Medical

Assistance Percentage (FMAP). If fewer people complete the Census, Pennsylvania’s

per-person income appears higher than it actually is, and it loses federal dollars as a

result.

• These FMAP funds support healthcare programs for seniors, children, and people with

disabilities, and since these programs are not discretionary, the loss of these funds

would drain resources to support other programs and infrastructure priorities important

to Pennsylvanians, like nutrition assistance, highways, education, housing, and many

more.

**The Public Fund:**

• Pennsylvania should pursue two evidence-based strategies to ensure a complete count:

a broad public awareness campaign on participation in the 2020 Census and direct in person

outreach and assistance that encourages members of hard-to-count

communities to participate in the Census.

• Pennsylvania should appropriate a minimum of one dollar per person, or $12.8 million,

in state funds during the 2019-20 budget to directly support local governments and

community-based organizations to execute these strategies.

• Pennsylvania would be wise to examine the lessons from California on this matter. In

the 2000 Census, California experienced a significant undercount that cost it billions in

federal dollars. Subsequently, it added additional resources to Census operations in the

2010 Census that increased its count by 10 percent.

\**Information Source – Pennsylvania Health Access Network (PHAN)*