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Contact: Erin Casey
P: 267-981-1855
E: ecasey@pavoice.org

State Authorizes \$4 Million for Census

Funding to support outreach to ensure fair, accurate count in Pa.

HARRISBURG (October 31, 2019) --- Gov. Tom Wolf today signed into law a bipartisan measure (S.B. 421) that includes a provision authorizing the Pennsylvania Department of State to use up to \$4 million to coordinate the state's efforts to ensure a fair and accurate count in the 2020 census.

The U.S. Constitution requires a count every 10 years of all people living in the United States, regardless of citizenship or legal status, to determine legislative representation and the annual distribution of federal funds for 55 census-guided programs.

Pennsylvania currently receives more than \$39.2 billion annually through these programs, [according to the George Washington University Institute of Public Policy](#), meaning an undercount could cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars annually for health care, nutrition assistance, transportation, housing, education, child welfare programs and other community needs.

"This funding is absolutely essential to support outreach efforts that help to ensure every resident is counted, no one is left behind, and Pennsylvania gets its fair share of funding over the next decade," said Erin Casey, executive director Keystone Counts.

In May, the nonpartisan [Census 2020 Complete Count Commission](#), which includes Keystone Counts, urged the state to appropriate an amount equal to \$1 per resident to support outreach and engagement efforts, especially among hard-to-count populations such as children, immigrants, people of color, low-income households and rural residents.

But when the state adopted its 2019-20 General Fund budget in June, the final spending plan did not include any money for census-related efforts. Similarly large states, including Illinois, New York, Maryland and California, all allocated funds to prevent an undercount.

Although the \$4 million does not match what the commission pushed for, it will help.

The state funding can finance efforts to reach historically undercounted residents so they know to fill out census forms, communicate the importance of ensuring a fair and accurate count to encourage greater participation, support field efforts, and much more.

Concerned about how an undercount could affect fair political representation and federal appropriations, and alarmed by the state's decision not to fund census efforts, Keystone Counts has worked to secure \$2 million in funding from foundations to execute a coordinated field operation with its coalition partners following a plan jointly developed by the coalition.

That plan relies on solid research and uses a variety of recognized best practices for civic engagement --- including door-knocking, text banking, and phone banking --- with the goal of contacting up to 1.2 million households across 24 hard-to-count counties in the commonwealth by May 2020.

"We are so grateful to the governor and lawmakers for stepping up and working in a bipartisan manner to advance this funding," Casey said. "This isn't a Republican or Democratic issue. This is all about Pennsylvania, and this funding will go a long way to supporting efforts under way to ensure a fair and accurate count in our commonwealth."

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Keystone Counts, a project of Pennsylvania Voice, is a nonpartisan coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, and community organizations joined together to build an education and outreach effort for a fair and accurate 2020 census. For more information, visit www.KeystoneCounts.org and www.PennsylvaniaVoice.org.