

March 2, 2020

Testimony on HJ 6
Participation by Maryland Residents in the 2020 Census
Rules and Executive Nominations

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HJ6, which encourages all practical efforts to be made to ensure that every Maryland resident is counted in the 2020 Census because in order to have the voices of Marylanders heard; we must be counted in the Census.

As members of the committee know, every 10 years our government must comply with one of the few mandates of the founding fathers, to count every living resident of the United States, regardless of background. Although this is a federal government exercise, it is all of our responsibilities to make sure that every person gets counted in census. HJ6 demonstrates this sentiment.

Marylanders literally cannot afford to lose representation in the census. Not only is the census central to apportioning political power, here in Maryland, \$38 billion annually is dependent upon census data.

For example - Maryland receives from the federal government:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) -- \$1,079,151,904 billion
- Head Start -- \$95,843,650 million
- Highway Planning and Construction -- \$599,159,884 million
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) -- \$251,597,483 million

In all, there are over 300 programs in Maryland that would be impacted if we failed to count everyone.

We do face a challenge heading into the 2020 Census. Census invitations will start hitting mailboxes in less than 2 weeks. Maryland has more than 2 million households to enumerate. Based on the latest census estimates, approx. 11% of Maryland's current population (or 686,493 people) lives in hard-to-count neighborhoods. The Urban Institute estimates that as many as 90,000 Maryland residents may be undercounted in 2020. Among the hardest to count, include, Black, Latino, and Asian American communities, communities with low English proficiency, children under 5 years old, and low-income communities.

2020 faces additional challenges with this being the first high tech census, with 87% of Marylanders being asked to complete their census form online. While 12.5% of Maryland's households are either living without a home internet subscription or are using dial up, according to the latest American Community Survey estimates. This legislature has worked to address the difficulties enumerating hard to count populations, with its recommendation to form a Complete Count Committee, and the \$5 million matching grant that it passed in 2018.

However, I also encourage this committee to pass HJ6 because in 2020, this resolution stating "that all practical efforts should be made to ensure that...every Maryland resident... is counted" takes on new meaning in the midst of potential new challenges that may come with conducting 2020 Census operations during ongoing pandemic scares should we be unfortunate enough to be dealing with a coronavirus pandemic over the course of the next 6 months.

I encourage the committee members to think about how to talk about these issues with constituents and work with state and local health departments to ensure that potential issues with door knocking during the non-response follow-up portion of the census are being addressed.

We urge a favorable report.

