FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Governor Names Keystone Counts to Census Commission

Complete Count Commission will help to ensure fair, accurate count in Pa.

HARRISBURG (February 21, 2019) – Gov. Tom Wolf today named Keystone Counts Executive Director Erin Casey to the bipartisan Census 2020 Complete Count Commission to coordinate the state’s involvement with the U.S. Census Bureau to ensure a fair and accurate count.

Having a strong presence on the commission is essential given the enormous difficulties states face in the upcoming census --- from litigation over the late addition of an unnecessarily intrusive and untested citizenship question to the inherent challenges of working with key communities and historically undercounted populations to collect useful, objective data that determines representation and funding.

“The stakes couldn’t be higher for Pennsylvania,” Casey said. “I’m honored by this appointment and appreciative that the Wolf administration understands and values the hard work Keystone Counts has been doing over the last several years to lay the groundwork to ensure the count we do in Pennsylvania captures every single resident.

“That’s what this is about --- making sure every person who lives here is counted,” Casey said. “What happens in this next census will have serious implications for every community in our Commonwealth for the next 10 years. The governor has made clear it’s a priority for his administration by forming this commission. But it’s an issue every elected leader should have at the top of their agendas.”

The census not only ensures fair political representation but also determines the appropriation of more than $589.7 billion in federal funds to states each year. Pennsylvania receives over $26 billion in annual funding from the 16 largest federal programs that rely on census data to calculate funding.

An undercount also could affect Pennsylvania’s congressional standing. Pennsylvania easily could lose one or more of its 18 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives, which could mean the loss of one or more of the state’s 20 electoral votes. The census also has a direct impact on how new Pennsylvania state house and senate districts are redrawn in 2021.
The census is intended to be a complete count of everyone in the country, but there are historically undercounted populations --- children, immigrants, people of color, and low-income households --- that are more likely to be missed. Rural populations are more difficult to count than urban areas because fewer rural residents return census forms sent by mail, and they are less likely to have Internet access in 2020 when the Census Bureau is expecting the majority of households to fill out their census questionnaire online.

Keystone Counts and its partners have been working to implement strategies to ensure these populations get counted --- and that work started long before the census was imminent.

The governor signed an executive order creating the Census 2020 Complete Count Commission in September. The commission will help the U.S. Census Bureau recruit Pennsylvanians to be census workers, educate the public about the importance of the census, develop partnerships with public and private sectors to achieve an accurate count, and advance strategies to reach hard-to-count populations.

* * * * *

Keystone Counts 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.