Every 10 years, the U.S. Constitution requires a count of all people living in the United States. The census ensures fair distribution of resources and representation. And community leaders rely on census data to make good decisions about schools, hospitals, housing, and other community needs. Keystone Counts is a nonpartisan coalition of now 79 nonprofit organizations working together to build an education and outreach effort to ensure a fair and accurate 2020 census in Pennsylvania.

Why? Because there is so much at state for the Commonwealth.

- **RESOURCES:** More than $883 billion in federal funds are distributed each year for 55 large census-guided programs, according to the George Washington University Institute of Public Policy. Funding derived by census data include programs such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), highway planning and construction, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Head Start/Early Start, and more. Pennsylvania currently receives more than $39.2 billion annually through census-backed programs, meaning an undercount of even 1% could cost our state hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

- **REPRESENTATION:** Pennsylvania could easily lose one or more representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives based on the 2020 census count, much like how we lost one representative based on the 2010 census count. The risk of this is even higher given all of the states around the country that have invested public funding to ensure an accurate count: states similar to ours in size, such as Georgia and North Carolina, but even much smaller states like North Dakota and Alaska have invested in counting their communities.

- **COMMUNITY SUPPORT:** Local government, philanthropy, and business leaders rely on census data to make decisions about where to invest, what to build, what to fund. Without accurate data, leaders will miss important community needs.
Conducting an accurate census has always been difficult. Many communities are more likely to be missed because they live in difficult-to-count circumstances, such as renting rather than owning homes, working multiple jobs and not being home to answer the door, or not wanting to answer the door to people they don’t recognize.

The 2020 census moving online raises additional risk for those living without broadband access, are lacking in digital literacy, or are simply wary of entering any personal information online. A Penn State study for the Center for Rural Pennsylvania shows that broadband access is even lower than previously thought, with more 800,000 Pennsylvanians lacking access to broadband, and no county having over 50% access to high-speed internet.

This raises significant concerns for rural households, which already stand to lose out on the federal program dollars designated specifically for rural areas. Those programs provide low-to-moderate income housing loans, rural electrification loans, water and waste disposal systems, rental assistance payments, business and industry loans, and the cooperative extension service. In the 2016 fiscal year, Pennsylvania received $760 million from the federal government just for these six rurally-targeted programs.

Given that census data-driven resources and representation is allocated on a statewide basis, it’s not enough just to get the 2020 census count right in any one area of the state --- we need to get it right for the entire state. I am heartened by all the counties that have started local Complete Count Committees in order to outreach their communities --- not just Allegheny County and Philadelphia County, which are here today, but also Armstrong, Berks, Butler, Cambria, Clarion, Delaware, Elk, Erie, Fayette, Forest, Greene, Indiana, Northampton, Venango, Warren and Washington counties --- not to mention all the cities and townships that have started Complete Count Committees as well.

All of these counties, cities, and townships’ outreach efforts will be critical, especially considering the Census Bureau’s smaller field footprint relative to the 2010 census count. The number of regional census offices, area census offices, and census workforce have been drastically reduced:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 regional census offices</td>
<td>6 regional census offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>425 area census offices (in PA, there were 19)</td>
<td>248 area census offices (in PA, there will be only 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150,000 address canvassers</td>
<td>50,000 address canvassers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600,000 enumerators (census takers)</td>
<td>475,000 enumerators (census takers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, hiring has been difficult given that the unemployment rate is at an all-time low.
Given all of this, our state would stand to benefit enormously from public funding dedicated to census education and outreach. Some of the types of interventions that have proven effective in previous census counts are:

- Broad public awareness campaign involving local news outlets, social media, community events, and trusted messengers.
- Questionnaire assistance centers located in places like senior centers, churches, and libraries, especially now that there’s the digital divide to overcome.
- On the ground outreach that Census Bureau used to fund through its mini-grant program to local organizations, which ended post-2010 census.
- Efforts to increase hiring of enumerators from undercounted communities.

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The plain and simple fact is that we need a plan to make sure that the 2020 census is done right, and that Pennsylvania is counted fairly and accurately. For additional information about Keystone Counts, please visit www.KeystoneCounts.org.

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