

Don't Foster Kids Count?

Restore Foster Children to the 2010 Census

What's the Problem?

The U.S. Census Bureau plans to eliminate the “foster child” category from the 2010 Census and thereby strip us all of the ability to assess where foster children reside, the demographics of the families caring for these youth, and how best to allocate scarce resources. Instead of requiring that Census respondents identify foster children in their home, these youth will be grouped with an all-inclusive group of “other” children residing in the household.

The proposed modification, which would also remove foster children from the American Community Survey, would eliminate the collection of data that is not available from state foster care records.

What is the Rationale?

Census officials explain that the reason that foster children will be eliminated from the Census is that the extra line for respondents to report on foster children would have extended into the page fold and tripped up scanners that read the answers! Proponents of removing the foster child category also argue that the Census foster child count isn't accurate. Yet the same could be said for each of the other fourteen categories, which include roomer or boarder, roommate or housemate, and unmarried partner.

What are the Implications?

The Census and the American Community Survey are the only data sources on the economic status of children in foster care, the race and ethnicity of foster parents, and the overall living arrangements for foster children. The Census enhances our understanding of the status of relative caregivers, who care for about one-third of foster children. And U.S. Census data is used by lawmakers to make critical funding decisions.

What Can We Do?

The United States Congress has oversight authority of the 2010 Census and will conduct hearings in the Sub-Committee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives this spring. The government has a special responsibility to foster children and youth, who are placed under the government's care after they have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. Let's ensure the federal government takes this responsibility seriously and makes foster youth count!



CALL: Tony Haywood in the office of Representative William Lacy Clay, Chair of the Sub-Committee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives at (202) 225-2406. Also, call your member of Congress and urge him or her to prevent the removal of foster children from the 2010 Census.



SEND: Send Congress Member Clay a letter calling on Congress to return foster children to the 2010 Census at:

The Honorable William Lacy Clay
Chair, Sub-Committee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives, 235 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515; Fax: (202) 226-3717

For more information or to get involved, please contact Michele Byrnes at the John Burton Foundation at 415-693-1323 or Miriam Krinsky at the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles at 323-980-1700.