



NEWS RELEASE

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**West Virginia KIDS COUNT Releases
THE STATE of WEST VIRGINIA's CHILDREN
Issue Brief on the 2020 Census**

Counting West Virginia's Kids

Charleston, W. Va. - On Wednesday, June 24th, WV KIDS COUNT released an Issue Brief on the 2020 Census. As part of a series on The State of West Virginia's Kids, the briefs shine a light on relevant and timely issues impacting West Virginia's children and families. The 2020 Census brief focuses on making sure every kid counts in the 2020 census; urging all West Virginians to participate by completing a questionnaire online, by phone, or by mail.

KIDS COUNT wants to spread the word that taking the 2020 Census is Easy, Safe, and Important. **Easy:** This Census will consist of 10 questions and takes an average of 10 minutes to complete. **Safe:** The information gathered is protected by federal law, and information on specific individuals or households cannot be made available to other agencies or authorities. **Important:** West Virginia receives \$2,755 in federal funding per capita based on Census information. In addition to this funding, which provides healthcare, education, food, and roads for the citizens, our Congressional Districts and the number of Representatives rely on the data collected this year.

"Our priority is to ensure that every kid counts in West Virginia. An undercount would result in less funding for education, limited access to health care for children and fewer vital supports for working parents. It would shortchange child well-being over the next decade by putting at risk hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funding for programs that are critical to family stability and opportunity. Everyone needs to be involved in ensuring that our fellow West Virginians know about and participate in the census," said Tricia Kingery, WV KIDS COUNT Executive Director.

The U.S. census has a significant impact on kids due to how its results determine how \$800 billion dollars of annual federal funding is allocated. At stake are several hundred federal financial assistance programs that rely on census data to determine the amount of funds given to states, counties, and cities. These programs include the Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid), Medicare Part B, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Section 8 Project-Based Housing and Head Start/Early Head Start, among others. An undercount on the census would affect the amount of money the state and counties receive for these programs starting in 2021.

This data from the count will be used to create a basic picture of who is living in the United States. This basic picture helps to create many data products that public and private sectors use every day. Companies and public services benefit heavily from the census due to the crucial demographic information the count produces. In fact, the WV KIDS COUNT State Data Book provides information on the well-being of West Virginia's children, much of this information, including education and health, relies on the most recent numbers available from the U.S. Census Bureau.

KIDS COUNT establishes partnerships with organizations that are topic experts on key child and family issues to strengthen our voice. The partnership for the Census brief included the U.S. Census Bureau and CountMeInWV Coalition.

Ronald E. Brown, Partnership Coordinator, Beckley Lane, US Census Bureau said, "In the 2010 Census, the net undercount of children under the age of 5 was 4.6 percent. That's nearly 1 million children. Unlike other age groups, the undercount of young children grew between the 2000 Census and 2010 Census. In the 2010 Census, the net undercount of children under the age of 5 was 4.6 percent. That's nearly 1 million children. Unlike other age groups, the undercount of young children grew between the 2000 Census and 2010 Census.

During the 2020 Census, WV KIDS COUNT is partnering with the U.S. Census Bureau to help ensure that every child in WV is counted. Ms. Kingery and her team brought together hundreds of regional resources to include family resource networks, educators, nurses, child advocates, parents and legislators educating them on the importance of counting every child. WV KIDS COUNT is passionate about ensuring that every child is counted in the 2020 Census and about 'making West Virginia a Great Place to Be a Kid'!

Jennifer Wells, Executive Director of the West Virginia Healthy Kids and Families Coalition, leads the CountMeInWV Coalition with the goal of reaching rural communities that often are hardest to count. "There's so much riding on the census," Wells said. "So

much of our everyday lives are impacted. Every part of day-to-day life is governed in some way by the census."

As of mid-June 2020, West Virginia's response rate went from 47% to 53%. An improvement that ranks us the 48th lowest response rate in the nation. The census is the foundation for the future of the children and the people who will raise them for the next decade. Creating the best allocation of funding to crucial programs is the first step to a greater well-being for West Virginia's kids.

Additional information is available at www.wvkidscount.org, which also contains the most recent national, state, and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. For an interview please contact Tricia Kingery at tricia@wvkidscount.org or (304)345-2101.

WV KIDS COUNT produces the annual WV KIDS COUNT Data Book and Issue Brief series with funding support provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.

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