



TESTIMONY OF:
Erin Ryan
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The Ohio Women's Public Policy Network

INTERESTED PARTY:
State Operating Budget (House Bill 166)
House Finance Committee
Agriculture, Development & Natural Resources Subcommittee

Chair Hoops, Ranking Minority Member Hicks-Hudson, and distinguished members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development & Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 166, Ohio's budget bill for the FY 2020 - 2021 biennium.

My name is Erin Ryan and I serve as the Managing Director of the Ohio Women's Public Policy Network. We are a coalition of more than 30 organizations working collaboratively to promote policies that build economic opportunity for women and strengthen families.

In order to make a meaningful impact, we believe that policymakers must advance public policies centered in equity, fairness, and justice that address the following issue areas:

1. Promoting an economic security agenda for women;
2. Ensuring fairness and opportunity in the workplace; and
3. Improving women's health and well-being

These shared goals guide our work as a coalition and have shaped our interest in testifying today on Ohio's budget bill, the most important legislation to the operation of our state government and a true reflection of the state's priorities and values.

I am here today to testify on one specific provision within the budget that would support our underlying mission of providing women with the opportunity to lead economically secure, safe, and healthy lives: **investing state funding and resources to ensure a complete and accurate count for the U.S. Census.**

An accurate and complete Census count is fundamentally important to Ohio women. An undercount would affect the equitable distribution of all public funds and, most directly, the more than \$21 billion of federal funds that are allocated in Ohio. Many of the largest programs in the state with funding allocation tied to Census data have an immense impact on the economic security, health, and livelihood of women and their families.

Most of our member organizations serve women who have a direct stake in a complete census count. The mother who relies on her YWCA for the quality childcare that allows her to work and provide for her family. The young woman who is served by Equitas Health for STI testing and prevention. The woman who has turned to Ohio's network of domestic violence shelters for protection and the help she needs to get her family on their feet.

For these women, the funding that could be forfeited due to an incomplete Census count would jeopardize their family's health, safety, and financial stability.

There is probably no greater example of the weight of the Census on women than Medicaid dollars. Women comprise the majority of the adult Medicaid population – before the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and today. Whether it's pregnancy care, postpartum care, Pap tests, timely blood pressure checks, or other preventative services, women have a lot on the line when it comes to Medicaid funding.

Because women often serve as family caregivers, the stakes are even higher. Two in five female-headed families with children are living in poverty – that's nearly 90 percent higher than that of male-headed families with children. These mothers and their children rely on full funding for programs like SNAP, the Children's Health Insurance Program, Head Start, and even housing vouchers.

There must be a concerted effort from Governor DeWine and the state legislature to invest in engaging historically undercounted communities ahead of the 2020 Census to ensure that the most accurate and complete count is conducted - and women will play a consequential role in achieving this objective. We urge the Ohio House to invest in making sure every person, every family in Ohio counts. And further, in doing so, we urge our public officials to turn a keen eye on how our Census efforts communicate to women, because not only do women have an outsized stake in the census, but women also have an outsized role in getting everyone counted.

Regardless of marital status or employment status, women shoulder a disproportionate share of family caretaking responsibilities in households across our state and country. In more cases than not, women will be the adult ensuring that her whole family is counted. So our to count everyone

must start with women, and must be fully funded with sizeable investments from the State of Ohio.

The Ohio budget will wield vast influence on the lives of women and their families, and it is critically important that these policies reflect the realities facing Ohio women. We hope that the members of this legislature will take the steps to ensure our state makes appropriate investments in HB 166, the state operating budget bill, for Census outreach and engagement. Women and families across Ohio depend on it.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am available to answer any questions today or by email at ryan@innovationohio.org.

Sincerely,

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