

**Testimony of Camille Cates Barnett,
Managing Director, City of Philadelphia
before the
Senate Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management,
Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security

Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
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Good afternoon, my name is Camille Cates Barnett, and I am Managing Director for the City of Philadelphia. I am testifying today on behalf of Mayor Michael A. Nutter, who is unable to be here this afternoon due to pressing City budget matters. Both Mayor Nutter and I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak about the difficult challenges faced by the City of Philadelphia in trying to ensure an accurate population count in the 2010 Decennial Census.

Obtaining an accurate population count in the Decennial Census is important for many reasons. As a Constitutional requirement, the census enumeration establishes political representation, and influences how public policy is made at the national, state, and local levels:

- It determines the number of seats apportioned to each State in the House of Representatives;
- States use the population count to redraw congressional and state legislative districts, and;
- The City of Philadelphia uses the population count to determine our own City Council Districts, as well as other administrative boundaries. Other municipalities use census numbers for a variety of similar purposes.

A 2007 study by the Brookings Institution determined that census data provided the basis for the allocation of \$377 billion dollars of federal funding across the country. More than 170 federal and state programs use population data in their funding formulas, which determine funding levels for local governments. In Philadelphia, this includes both direct federal funding and state allocations for Community Development Block Grants and housing assistance programs; public transit, airport, highway improvement, and other transportation infrastructure-related programs; education, work force training, and economic development programs, emergency and hazardous materials management; Social Service Block Grants; medical and mental health programs, and a host of other programs.

A 1999 survey by the U.S Conference of Mayors estimated that Philadelphia stands to forego \$2,263 in federal and state funding for every person not counted in the census. Given Philadelphia's current fiscal crisis, with a \$1.4 billion budget deficit over five years, it imperative that we get the 2010 Census count "right."

In addition to its legislative and funding uses, census data have also been very important in Philadelphia's planning and program implementation efforts. The data collected by the Census Bureau are important inputs to developing neighborhood improvement plans,

determining housing needs and providing housing assistance, and targeting economic development and other community revitalization strategies. We need to know where we've been, and where we are "data-wise," in order to determine where we want to go and how to get there.

The private sector also relies heavily on Census data in making decisions about whether investments should, or should not be made in cities. "Census upgrade" companies sell annual market data, modeled off of Decennial Census information, to retailers, financial institutions, and other investors to inform their investment decisions, develop marketing strategies, and provide business goods and services. Alyssa Stewart Lee, in her article *The Brookings Urban Markets Initiative: Using Information to Drive Change*, cites the U.S. Census Bureau as being "the foundation of the private-sector demographic data used for retail decisions."

Getting an accurate population count means the Census Bureau must count every single person living in the City of Philadelphia on April 1, 2010. With a population of well over 1.4 million (2008) based on the most recent Census Bureau estimates, that is a daunting, enormous task.

The two biggest challenges the Census Bureau faces in Philadelphia are:

1. Locating and contacting every household residing in the City, regardless of their living situation; and
2. Once they are contacted, encouraging them to accurately respond to and return their Census forms.

Accurate address listings are critical to the success of this process. As you know, the Census Bureau uses a Master Address File based on a list of addresses from the U.S. Postal Service. Under the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) Program, local governments are afforded an opportunity to review the Master Address File for errors and omissions, and to submit address corrections. The Philadelphia City Planning Commission began working with the Census Bureau on this process back in November 2007.

Most Philadelphians live in traditional housing units which will be easy to count. However, as a result of the policies incentivizing the conversion of vacant and deteriorated commercial and industrial buildings to multi-family residential properties, a substantial number Philadelphia residents now live in non-traditional structures. Since the institution of this program in 1997, more than 6,000 converted housing units have been created. In 2000, the program was broadened to include new residential construction. This program has resulted in the construction of more than 16,000 new housing units. Since the 2000 Census, more than 22,000 new or converted units have been created in Philadelphia. We need to ensure that the addresses for all of these additional, and sometimes hard-to-find units, are recorded in the Census Bureau's Master Address File.

The City Planning Commission matched the Census Bureau's Master Address File against a combined file of other City address records. In April 2008, the City submitted to the Census Bureau almost 56,000 additional addresses not listed in the Master Address File. This represents roughly 10% of all City addresses. The Census Bureau is now

canvassing Philadelphia neighborhoods to verify these additions. Once the process is completed this summer, the City will have 120 days to review and finalize the 2010 Master Address File. In the interim, we will be working to review and update all City records of new housing developments to ensure the Master Address File is the most accurate and complete postal mail address list possible.

Census population is based not only on people living in households, but also people living in group quarters, such as school or college dormitories, nursing homes, boarding homes, correctional facilities, and shelters for the homeless.

Philadelphia is fortunate to be the home of many colleges and universities. In the past decade, several of these institutions have increased their enrollments and added beds in new dormitories. We need to ensure that this population is captured in the 2010 Census.

So, too, must we accurately count an increased population in public and private nursing homes, correctional institutions, boarding homes, and homeless shelters. It is especially important to capture this latter population, since the characteristics of this group factor into federal and state assistance programs to provide essential services to these individuals.

The downturn in the economy is also likely to present challenges to obtaining a complete population count. The displacement of people through job loss, mortgage foreclosures, and housing abandonment will complicate the enumeration process. While Philadelphia has not seen the great increase in foreclosures experienced by other parts of the country, in some parts of the City it may be difficult for address canvassers to accurately identify occupied housing units amidst foreclosed properties. In neighborhoods that are plagued with vacant and abandoned structures, it will be difficult to get Census enumerators to follow up on census forms that are not returned.

As I mentioned earlier, getting an accurate population count is dependent not only on contacting all residents, but on making sure they return their census form. Research by the Census Bureau notes that traditionally hard-to-count populations include:

- Economically Disadvantaged Populations: Groups with high poverty rates, high unemployment, and low educational attainment levels, and;
- Linguistically Isolated Populations: Foreign born populations with limited English speaking skills, living in ethnic enclaves.

Based on this research, Blacks are disproportionately represented in the economically disadvantaged category. Based on the most recent estimates (2007 American Community Survey):

- 44% of all Philadelphians are Black (630,260), and 29% live in poverty (182,775);
- Reported unemployment is 9% among the Black population, but we know the true number is significantly higher;

- Overall, Philadelphia's Black population has a lower level of educational attainment than the citywide average (23% have less than a High School Diploma, only 13% have college degrees).

Census Bureau research has also shown that Latinos are disproportionately represented in the linguistically isolated category. Latinos account for 11% of Philadelphia's estimated population (154,515), and almost three-quarters of this population (110,239 or 71%) is from Puerto Rico. For Philadelphia Latinos:

- 43% live in poverty (66,441) – for Puerto Ricans, the number is 50%;
- Reported unemployment is 7% – again, the true number is most certainly higher;
- Educational attainment levels for the Latino population is also trails the citywide average (39% have less than a High School Diploma, only 10% have college degrees);
- And significantly – over a third (34%) of the Latino population speaks English “less than well.”

Reaching these disadvantaged populations to get a complete count will be difficult, not only because of language barriers, but also because of suspicion over how these data will be used. Therefore, significant and continuous outreach efforts are needed to educate Philadelphia's African-American, Latino, and other disadvantaged communities about the 2010 Census.

Because of the diversity of Philadelphia's foreign-born population, outreach efforts must also be multi-lingual. Eleven percent of Philadelphia's population is foreign born, with 22% from Europe; 36% from Asia; 9% from Africa; 32% from Latin America. The largest source counties for Philadelphia's foreign born are Vietnam, China, India, and the Ukraine. The Census Bureau must ensure that adequate multi-lingual census materials and enumerators are available to assist the various foreign speaking communities. They must also work with local partners to allay the concerns of foreign-born residents, who may fear reporting to the INS or deportation, or others who are just suspicious of government.

To respond to these challenges and achieve an accurate count, we are developing a comprehensive approach to improve on the City's 2000 Census response rate of 56%. The basic elements of this plan include:

- Issuing a Mayoral Executive Order which will engage City departments and agencies in the planning and execution of outreach plans;
- Developing a citywide campaign (i.e. a Complete Count Committee) which will target education, marketing, and outreach to hard-to-count populations;
- Establish a “Multi-Cultural Network on Census 2010” which will guide our efforts to reach immigrant and “newcomer” communities. This initiative will

also target the LGBT community and populations in the City with high concentrations of undocumented residents;

- Work closely with our local School District to promote the Census "Teaching Guide" throughout our neighborhood schools.

We will, of course, continue our diligent efforts to:

- Ensure that the Master Address File is complete, accurate, and includes all newly constructed and converted housing units, so that Census forms are properly delivered;
- Cooperate with institutions of higher education, City correctional officials, and housing providers for elderly, ill, or other disadvantaged populations, to accurately record all group quarters population, since many people living in the latter situation may also be eligible for programmatic assistance, and;
- Support comprehensive follow-up by Census enumerators to count the residents of neighborhoods most seriously impacted by the economic recession and property foreclosures.

Finally, it is critical that the Census Bureau begin to make partnership funds and other resources available to local communities for increasing public awareness about the upcoming census. It is only through communication and public consciousness-raising that we can hope to have a successful count.

In closing, the City of Philadelphia pledges to work closely with our local Census Bureau office to overcome the challenges I have described today, and obtain a "complete count" in the 2010 Census.

Thank you for your attention.