

## Community Business

# Accuracy of 2020 Census crucial for Kern County federal funding allocation

By Louis Medina

Numbers don't lie — unless they are left out of an equation to begin with. When numbers are missing from a calculation, a deceptive void appears like a black hole that swallows otherwise important realities.

As far as the U.S. Census Bureau is concerned, an undercount of the population happens too often during the decennial census in what are called hard-to-count communities. There are many such communities in Kern County: seasonal farmworkers, limited-English speakers, people living off the grid in far-flung rural areas, homeless individuals, children and youth, impoverished and at-risk communities. Ironically, these are some of our most vulnerable populations that stand to lose the most in federal funding if they are not counted accurately.



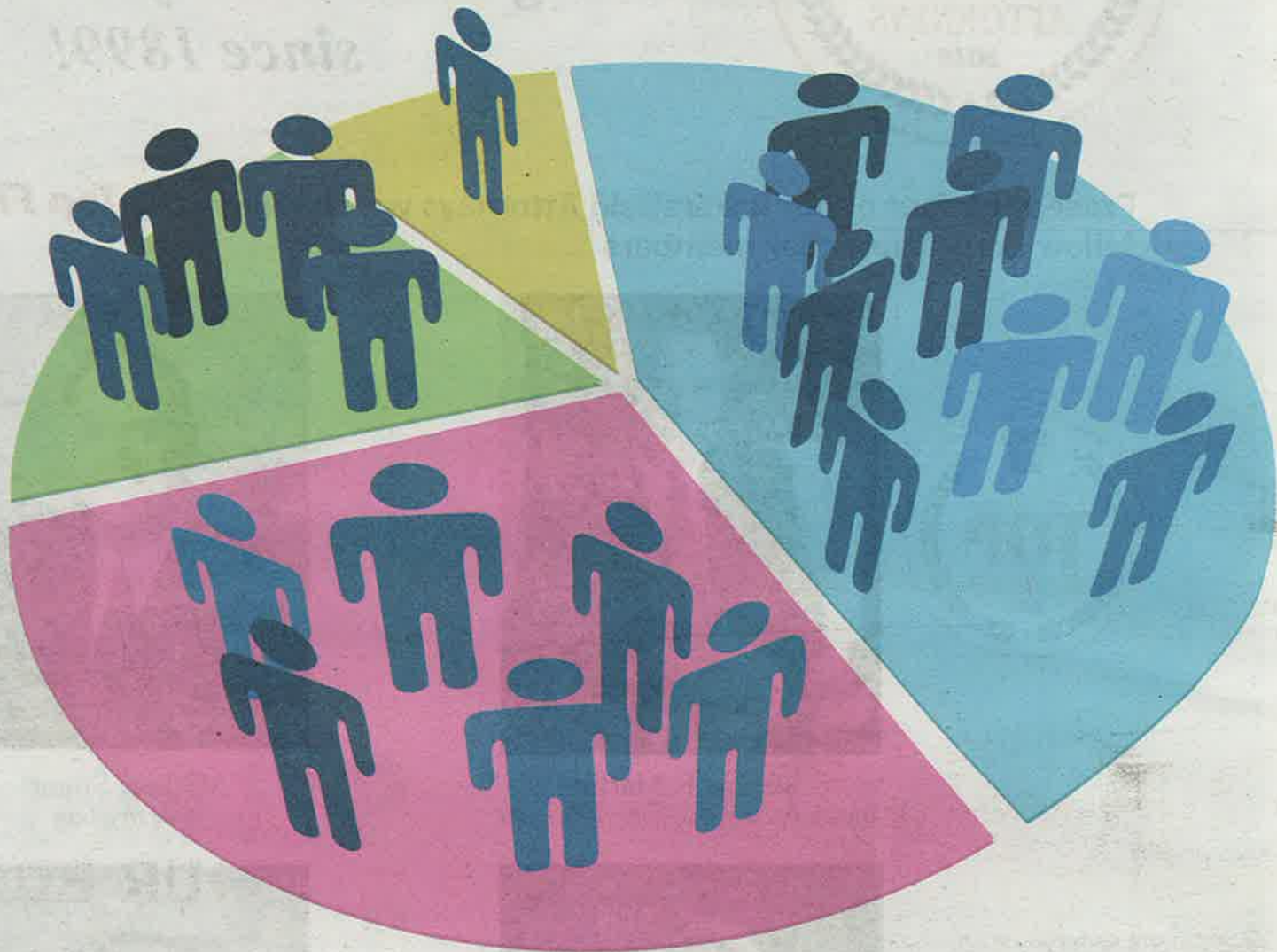
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According to an official request for information released by the California Census Office on Aug. 30 to gather community-based organizations' innovative ideas for reaching HTC populations, "For every Californian missed during the Census 2020 count, the state is expected to lose approximately \$1,950 per person, per year, for 10 years (until the next decennial census in 2030) in federal program funding. An undercount could also reduce California's representation in the House of Representatives."

The potential negative repercussions of an undercount are, indeed, enormous.

For that very reason, Kern Community Foundation, at the urging of the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, the League of California Community Foundations, Southern California Grantmakers, local policymakers and others, has, since this spring, been involved in a series of convenings and advocacy efforts to help pave the way toward an accurate count of Kern County's HTC communities in the 2020 Census.

"Facilitating a complete count in 2020 directly ties to Kern Community Foundation's mission of growing community, growing philanthropy," said KCF President and CEO Kristen Beall. "At its most basic level, a complete and accurate count ensures that Kern County receives its fair share of federal resources for years to come."



## Some of our efforts so far have included:

- Hosting the first regional convening in Kern County at the Beale Memorial Library in May to begin giving shape to what hopefully will become Kern's Complete Count Committee, made up of leaders and stakeholders from diverse communities throughout Kern County that are best equipped to reach those at risk of being undercounted;
- Putting out a call to action for community partners to urge the U.S. Census Bureau to withdraw the citizenship question from the 2020 Census, as we, together with hundreds of philanthropic institutions nationwide, believe it will depress the census response rate among immigrant communities, decrease the quality of census data and dam up funding that could otherwise flow into our county;
- Attending a number of convenings hosted by community partners from the nonprofit and public sectors to plan a CCC strategy for Kern vis-a-vis the information and resources that have

begun to be made available by the L.A. Regional Office of the U.S. Census Bureau and the California Census 2020 Office in Sacramento; and

- Responding to the previously mentioned RFI from Census 2020 CA Complete Count Director Ditas Katague.

Kern Community Foundation will continue to stay abreast of developments related to the upcoming 2020 Census and to engage with local community partners and stakeholders who also are working to ensure an accurate count throughout Kern.

As the third-largest county in California geographically, and one that is plagued with poverty, low educational attainment, poor air quality, a bad report card on the overall health of local residents and many other challenges, Kern cannot — as a result of an undercount of our population — afford to lose federal dollars that could help alleviate some of these problems.

We encourage everyone in Kern to plan on being counted in what will be the first time a U.S. Census is conducted in a variety of platforms — on paper, online and by phone — in true information age fashion.

Know this and share it with those who might be shy about being counted. Personal data collected through the U.S. Census is protected by law, cannot be shared by the U.S. Census Bureau with other government agencies, remains confidential for 72 years and wrongful disclosure carries with it five years imprisonment and/or a fine of \$250,000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

April 1, 2020, will be upon us before we know it.

You count. Kern Counts. Plan to make yourself, your children and our county count so that we do not lose precious federal dollars for an entire decade.

For more information about upcoming developments related to the 2020 Census, visit [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) and [www.census.ca.gov](http://www.census.ca.gov). For local jobs created by the upcoming census, visit [www.census.gov/fieldjobs](http://www.census.gov/fieldjobs) for manager-level employment and [www.2020census.gov/jobs](http://www.2020census.gov/jobs) for office support and field positions.

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