

**Statement
Of
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**Information Policy, Census, and National Archives Subcommittee
Oversight and Government Reform Committee**

**Wednesday, February 24, 2010
2154 Rayburn House Office Building
2:00 p.m.**

**“The 2010 Census Communications Contract: The Media Plan in Hard To
Count Areas”**

Mr. Chairman:

I want to thank you and the other members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify today. My name is Linda Smith and I am the Executive Director of the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies – also referred to as NACCRRRA.

We work with more than 700 state and local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies throughout the country. These agencies help ensure that families in 99 percent of all populated zip codes in the United States have access to high quality, affordable child care. To achieve our mission, we lead projects that increase the quality and availability of child care professionals, undertake research, and advocate child care policies that positively impact the lives of children and families.

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies are the hub in many communities that help parents find child care. They work with parents to figure out what type of child care parents are looking for, what might be available in their community, whether parents need care for particular hours like early in the morning or full-time care, or care during nontraditional hours so that they can work a second shift job. They provide information to parents like what to look for in high quality care and why quality care is important to safety, child development and school readiness.

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies also train about 500,000 child care providers a year, provide workshops for parents throughout the country on topics such as parenting, dealing with children with special needs, balancing work and family, and other topics that families are looking for more information and knowledge about.

About 40 percent of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies administer subsidy contracts for the state. That means they help states administer child care subsidy programs to low income working families who may qualify for state or federal assistance.

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies play a critical role in collecting supply and demand data about child care, about price information, and many conduct market rate surveys used by states to set subsidy rates for child care fee assistance.

NACCRRRA holds contracts with the Department of Defense (DoD) to help families in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and National Guard military members to find quality child care off-base and administers subsidies for DoD to military families who need help affording the cost of care.

NACCRRRA holds contracts with the Corporation for National Community Service to administer child care subsidies to Americorps and Vista volunteers and with the Department of Health and Human Services to operate a nationwide toll-free hotline and website called Child Care Aware to help parents throughout the country find child care in their community. Our materials are available in English and Spanish. Some of our agencies have staff who speak other languages dominant in their communities – all in an effort to reach as many families as possible.

Between the Child Care Aware website and hotline, the military fee assistance programs, and our Child Care Resource and Referral agencies located throughout the United States, we interact with millions of families with young children and the child care providers who serve them – both child care centers and family child care homes.

We know first-hand the importance of getting an accurate count of families with young children, particularly those who have not yet reached the age of mandatory school attendance. Each year, we conduct studies examining state policies and the need for child care in different settings for children of different ages. All of our work depends on accurate data so that we know where the children are, whether they are infants and toddlers or preschool age children, the primary language spoken in the home, as well as the income bracket of the families. Without accurate data, it is more difficult for us to work within communities to expand the supply of care if needed, improve the quality of care based on what they have compared to demand or potential demand, and to advocate for public policy that matches the need based on the demographics and current supply or condition of child care.

From supply/demand information to the federal or state funds that are allocated to communities based on population data, an accurate count is critical. And, yet, we know that past census efforts have struggled to capture a reliable count on the young child population and typically this group of children has been viewed as undercounted.

If we are to ensure that children are safe and that they are in settings that promote their healthy development so that they start school ready to learn, we need to have an accurate count.

Given our reach and leadership within the child care and early learning community, we have taken the lead working with the Census Bureau to disseminate information about the importance of the 2010 Census.

We have an aggressive action plan to increase the likelihood that we'll get the most accurate census data possible. Frankly, we have a self-interest because we rely on this data for the work that we do and because the families we serve rely on an accurate count as well – whether they realize that or not.

First, we are convening the major national advocacy groups involved with child care and early learning. From Head Start, to child care organizations, to La Raza, and others who have a unique reach to specific

groups of families with young children. Together, we can make sure that millions of families know about the census and how important it is that every young child possible be counted.

Within NACCRRRA, we are posting the census outreach material on our website, the Child Care Aware web site, and other sub sites such as our military program assistance sub site and our Child Care Aware Parent Network. We are sharing that information with our member agencies and asking them to post the material on their sites. In all of our email alerts to child care providers, parents, business partners and others, we are heightening awareness about the census count and reminding everyone of the importance of filling out the survey to ensure every child is counted.

We are joining with the Census Bureau during the agency's national kick off week and working with the Census Bureau's regional road tour to again in every way possible try to heighten awareness about the importance of the census to families with young children. Once the initial period for returning the census surveys is over, we will regroup with the Census Bureau in an effort to try to reach the non-responders.

We have a broad network. We can reach millions of families and child care providers. We are working with other child care advocacy groups and organizations working with young children. Together we hope to make a difference so that this time around, on the 2010 census, every young child is counted. For the record, I ask that a copy of NACCRRRA's Policy Agenda be included. While it is not directly related to our effort to ensure an accurate census count, having an accurate census count of young children, will better inform our policy agenda. And, better position families with young children to both access quality child care and start school ready to succeed. But, it starts with an accurate picture of how many young children are in each community and that is why we are excited to join with the Census Bureau on this initiative.

Thank you.