



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Michigan Senate Committee on Oversight

FROM: Think Babies Michigan Coalition and the Michigan League for Public Policy

DATE: Wednesday, October 9, 2024

RE: Support for SB 958, Standards for Public Bodies Collecting and Reporting Data Related to Race and Ethnicity

The Think Babies Michigan Coalition and the Michigan League for Public Policy are pleased to support Senate Bill 958 which would compel public bodies across Michigan including state agencies, commissions, public universities, councils, regional bodies and others to gather more accurate and equitable demographic data about those being served in our state. By including more accurate criteria related to race and ethnicity, SB 958 moves Michigan closer to fully understanding and representing all children and their families as we strive to make this state a place where babies thrive.

Think Babies Michigan is a collaborative of more than 2,500 members - leaders, experts, families, organizations and providers - working together to improve the lives of babies prenatal to three years old. Our mission is to make Michigan a state where all babies and their families thrive, regardless of race, income, or zip code. Our coalition recognizes that a lifetime of success begins during infancy. The first three years of a child's life are critical — but our work is about much more than those three years. It's about shaping a child's future, supporting their families, and improving the health and prosperity of our state.

The Think Babies Michigan coalition, including coalition partner, the Michigan League for Public Policy, strongly supports SB 958 because without equitable data, policies can and have fallen short of fairly representing the people they are intended to serve. According to the most recent United State census, Michigan has the second largest Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) population, second only to California. This is a population that currently must “write-in” their ethnicity under the white category both at the state and federal level. Recently, however, the federal government has taken steps to include these diverse populations in their data systems, broadening these sections to better represent the changing demographics of our country. The historic underrepresentation of populations like MENA citizens and residents, can lead to inequitable funding in the communities where they live. Based on US Census Bureau data, it was found that Detroit was undercounted by a minimum of 50,000 residents, due to rehabilitated homes being missed by canvassers during door knocking. This undercount is estimated to lose the City of Detroit \$10 million per year and \$100 million by the next Census in 2030 – a loss due to inaccurate minority community population counts.

SB 958 will align Michigan law with new federal standards, setting an example for the region and other states across the country. While new rules are set at the federal level, only Illinois has passed a similar bill, taking effect on July 1. California is actively considering its own legislation, but as Michigan has the second-largest concentration of families struggling to have their identities acknowledged when accessing social services or reporting at a state and local level, this new bill can set an example.

Prioritizing the health and well-being of children and families across our state should be a top priority. Think Babies Michigan, its 2,500+ members, and coalition partner the Michigan League for Public Policy strongly support SB 958 as an effective means of acknowledging those impacted by the policies and services in Michigan. We urge the Senate Committee to support this bill and push our state forward in its progress toward making Michigan a leader in equity.

Thank you.

Submitted on behalf of Think Babies Michigan, a coalition staffed by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, and the Michigan League for Public Policy.