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USING EVIDENCE TO HELP LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES GET AHEAD

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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USING EVIDENCE TO HELP LOW–INCOME INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES GET AHEAD

TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2015

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:01 a.m. in Room B–318 Rayburn House Office Building, the Honorable Charles W. Boustany, Jr. [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

[The advisory announcing the hearing follows:]

Today, Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee Chairman Charles Boustany (R-LA) announced that the subcommittee will hold a hearing titled, "Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works: Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead." This hearing is the second in a series focused on ways to help move America's families forward. **The hearing will take place at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 17, in room B-318 of the Rayburn House Office Building.**

In view of the limited time available, oral testimony at this hearing will be from invited witnesses only. Witnesses will include experts on the evaluation of programs designed to help low-income families and individuals. However, any individual or organization not scheduled for an oral appearance may submit a written statement for consideration by the committee for inclusion in the printed record of the hearing.

BACKGROUND:

Each year, the federal government spends hundreds of billions of dollars on more than 80 programs designed to assist children and families with limited resources. While each program was created with a goal of making a real difference in the lives of those in need, few programs have been proven to produce better outcomes for the low-income families and individuals they serve. In many cases, these programs have never been evaluated to determine if they are working as intended. Leaders from both political parties have highlighted this problem, with two former White House officials recently noting that, "based on our rough calculations, less than $1 out of every $100 of government spending is backed by even the most basic evidence that the money is being spent wisely."

Policymakers, program administrators, and researchers across the political spectrum share an interest in understanding the impact of government programs, as well as making sure taxpayer dollars are spent on programs that help people get ahead. Leaders from both parties have put forward proposals to increase the use of evidence in determining whether federal social programs are working, including recent legislation introduced by Ways and Means Chairman Paul Ryan and Senator Patty Murray (the Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2014) and Representatives Todd Young and John Delaney (the Social Impact Partnership Act), as well as ideas put forward by the Obama administration in the President's budget.

In announcing the hearing, Chairman Boustany stated:

"Americans deserve a government that works. For too many years, Congress has created program upon program, spending hundreds of billions of dollars annually on efforts designed to alleviate poverty without ever knowing whether it's working or not. It's time to change that. This hearing will spotlight what we know about the use of evidence today, how that is changing, and how we can and should do even more to hold government programs accountable for achieving real results. It's time we expand existing efforts to fund what works, and this hearing will show us how we can do just that.

FOCUS OF THE HEARING:

This hearing will focus on the effectiveness of federal social programs, efforts to rigorously evaluate government programs to determine their impact, and proposals to increase the use of evidence across government so federal spending is directed toward programs that work.

DETAILS FOR SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS:

Please Note: Any person(s) and/or organization(s) wishing to submit for the hearing record must follow the appropriate link on the hearing page of the Committee website and complete the informational forms. From the Committee homepage, http://waysandmeans.house.gov, select "Hearings." Select the hearing for which you would like to submit, and click on the link entitled, "Please click here to submit a statement or letter for the record." Once you have followed the online instructions, submit all requested information. Attach your submission as a Word document, in compliance with the formatting requirements listed below, **by March 31, 2015.** Finally, please note that due to the change in House mail policy, the U.S. Capitol Police will refuse sealed-package deliveries to all House Office Buildings. For questions, or if you encounter technical problems, please call (202) 225-1721 or (202) 225-3625.

FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS:

The Committee relies on electronic submissions for printing the official hearing record. As always, submissions will be included in the record according to the discretion of the Committee. The Committee will not alter the content of your submission, but we reserve the right to format it according to our guidelines. Any submission provided to the Committee by a witness, any supplementary materials submitted for the printed record, and any written comments in response to a request for written comments must conform to the guidelines listed below. Any submission or supplementary item not in compliance with these guidelines will not be printed, but will be maintained in the Committee files for review and use by the Committee.

1. All submissions and supplementary materials must be provided in Word format and MUST NOT exceed a total of 10 pages, including attachments. Witnesses and submitters are advised that the Committee relies on electronic submissions for printing the official hearing record.
2. Copies of whole documents submitted as exhibit material will not be accepted for printing. Instead, exhibit material should be referenced and quoted or paraphrased. All exhibit material not meeting these specifications will be maintained in the Committee files for review and use by the Committee.
3. All submissions must include a list of all clients, persons, and/or organizations on whose behalf the witness appears. A supplemental sheet must accompany each submission listing the name, company, address, telephone, and fax numbers of each witness.

The Committee seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-1721 or 202-226-3411 TTD/TTY in advance of the event (four business days notice is requested). Questions with regard to special accommodation needs in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats) may be directed to the Committee as noted above.

Note: All Committee advisories and news releases are available online at http://www.waysandmeans.house.gov/.

Chairman BOUSTANY. The subcommittee will come to order. And I want to welcome everybody to today's hearing. Happy St. Patrick's Day to everyone.

This is the second in our hearing series on welfare reform. And today we will explore what we know about the effectiveness of programs designed to help low-income families get ahead. We have a very talented set of witnesses with us to review what we know about current programs and how they perform, how we can improve that performance to help more families and individuals move up the economic ladder.

But, unfortunately, as we will hear in today's testimony, while we all want to know about whether programs are working or not, and to what extent they are working, what we actually know is quite limited. We just don't have the data. According to two former White House officials—one Republican and one Democrat—I quote—"Based on our rough calculations, less than $1 out of every $100 of government spending is backed by even the most basic evidence that the money is being spent wisely."

And among the few programs that have been rigorously evaluated, the evidence suggests most don't work, and don't meet the intended goals. According to nonpartisan experts, since 1990 there have been 10 instances in which an entire federal social program has been evaluated using the scientific "gold standard method" of random assignment. And of those 10 programs that were evaluated, 9 were found to have weak or no positive effects.

Some programs do worse than just waste money; they may actually harm those they are meant to help. For example, the former Mentoring Children of Prisoners program was intended to support children with an incarcerated parent. However, one in five mentorships lasted less than six months, and research showed such short-term mentoring relationships reinforce feelings of insecurity and abandonment, likely leaving children worse off than they would have been without this so-called benefit. Another program designed to prevent juvenile crime actually increased the chances that participants were later incarcerated. And these are disturbing instances.

Having and using data, data that would not only let us direct taxpayer funds to better uses, but prevent us from causing unintended harm to the very people we want to help, is critically important. Think about the information that many use every day to make the best decisions with their own money.

For instance, if you're my age and your family's washing machine breaks, or you have a car that you want to buy, you might turn to Consumer Reports to find out a reliable replacement. You will be—at least have information to base your decision-making on. Many people might check online rating services to find the right phone or car for them in today's Internet age. In both cases, consumers have a wealth of data to compare one brand to another, and to make an informed judgement about where their money is best spent. Yet policymakers don't have the same sort of data about the effectiveness of government programs, which millions of families depend upon for both basic financial needs and for the hope of a better life for themselves and their children. And that is just not good enough. We have got to do better.

We are left with more questions than answers. Is the money we are spending today on the best mix of policies and programs to help people get ahead? What are we spending money on now that could be better reinvested elsewhere to get better results? If we had more money to invest, where should we put it? More often than not, we just don't know the answers to these very basic questions.

The bottom line is this: We need to evaluate every program, determine what works, and focus resources on effective programs so more people will benefit from these programs. Low-income individuals and taxpayers alike deserve programs that are effective in

promoting opportunity and helping people improve their lives. This effort to fund what works is not about ideology or about cutting spending. It is about doing what is right, it is about a moral imperative, especially for those who need help the most, the help that we are equipped to give, but we need to make sure that that help is effective.

So, I look forward to the testimony from our very accomplished witnesses today.

And, with that, I will turn to my friend and colleague, Mr. Doggett, the ranking member, to make an opening statement.

Mr. DOGGETT. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and to our witnesses. I welcome the opportunity to explore evidence-based policies. Indeed, when I first arrived here on Capitol Hill, an old Capitol Hill staffer told me to remember that here, in Congress, every Member is entitled to their own facts. And, through the years, I found that to be increasingly true, that we operate in a largely fact-free environment, where ideology and perhaps political mythology really tends to predominate.

If the question is whether comprehensive immigration reform will grow our economy, we have significant evidence. If the question is whether tax cuts pay for themselves or only add to our public debt, we have significant experience and evidence. If the question is whether human-induced climate change is a serious threat to America, we have significant scientific evidence. And yet, some feel the best policy is to deny it, to prohibit its study, and, in some places, even to prohibit uttering the words "climate change," or "global warming." Or, in the social service area, we have significant evidence on a program such as Abstinence-Only Education, that it is one of the best ways to increase teen pregnancy, rather than to reduce it.

We have the facts. What is not—we are not lacking evidence. What we are lacking is political will to overcome ideology and rely and act on the evidence.

We also have ample evidence regarding the most effective ways to deliver federal funds to accomplish purposes that we agree upon. If, for example, you want to increase the quality of public education, we have experience in Texas that if you send federal funds to the State of Texas and you have no federal guidelines, and no meaningful requirements that Texas use those dollars to accomplish the intended purpose, that the state will simply use the funds to fill its budget gaps and provide corporate tax breaks.

And the same thing is true if the goal is to increase reimbursements to health care providers under the Medicaid program, that Texas will use all—or at least much—of the federal dollars provided not to accomplish the objective, but to fulfill its immediate budget needs. And, while Texas may be an extreme example, the experience that we have had with TANF and the way federal TANF monies have been used by the states to accomplish purposes other than lifting people out of poverty, Texas is not unique.

The approach taken in the bill that is on the floor before us now—not today, but it has been there and it is set to come back—on education, if we repeal effectively the civil rights provision of the education—the secondary—Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I, and simply give that money to the states to do

with as they wish, and not maintain effort, we see a decline in public education quality, not an increase.

As for successful interventions that could come under the jurisdiction of this Subcommittee, I think there are several additional considerations that are important, as we hear from the witnesses.

The first is that we look to the preponderance of the evidence. There will always be outlier studies. But the studies themselves need to be reviewed. And we need—just as we do with global warming information—to look at where is the preponderance of the evidence.

The second consideration is that, by its very nature, evidence-based is longitudinal. It is historic. It will tell us how things have worked in the past. It will not necessarily incorporate innovative ideas. For example, we heard from Ron Haskins at our last hearing very compelling testimony about evidence-based support for the Nurse-Family Partnership Program, which I think we certainly need. But that is old evidence, and that doesn't mean that that partnership doesn't need to continue to innovate with technology, like use of Skype, use of other devices that might be available, short of actually having to send a nurse to each family.

And then, that naturally leads to a third consideration, and that is the need for innovation, generally. While we want evidence-based policies, we need to allow, in our funding choices, for some new programs that innovate, that give us new ways to deal with these problems.

And, finally, I think we have to keep into consideration that consulting is a multi-billion dollar industry in this town, and that there is an evidence-based consulting industry. They can bring much value, but we don't want to see dollars devoted only to studying what needs to be done; we want to actually do it. Because evidence is clear on one point: We have a widening gap of inequality in this country, and we need policies to address it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BOUSTANY. I thank the gentleman. Without objection, each Member will have the opportunity to submit a written statement and have it included in the record.

And I also want to welcome our witnesses, remind them that limit—please limit your oral statements to five minutes. We have your written testimony. And, without objection, all written testimony will be made part of the permanent record.

So, this morning we have some very distinguished witnesses here, who will give us the state of play with regard to evidence and how it is being used or not used in these various programs.

Today we are joined by John Bridgeland, CEO of Civic Enterprises; David Muhlhausen, Research Fellow in Empirical Policy Analysis at The Heritage Foundation; Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst, Director of Brown Center on Education Policy, The Brookings Institution; and Joan Entmacher, Vice President for Family Economic Security, National Women's Law Center.

We welcome you all, and we look forward to a robust dialogue today. And, with that, Mr. Bridgeland, you may begin.

STATEMENT OF JOHN BRIDGELAND, CEO, CIVIC ENTERPRISES

Mr. Bridgeland. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Chairman Boustany, Ranking Member Doggett, and other distinguished members of this Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the important subject of using evidence to inform budget and policy decisions that can expand opportunity for low-income individuals and their families.

I am a senior advisor to Results for America, a non-profit, bipartisan organization committed to improving the lives of young people and their families through better data and evidence at all levels of government. I also draw my experience as former director of the White House Domestic Policy Council for President Bush, and a former member of the White House Community Solutions Council for President Obama.

At Results for America, we believe all levels of government should follow three principles: first, build evidence about the practices, policies, and programs that achieve the most effective results; second, invest limited taxpayer dollars in what works; and, third, direct funds away from those efforts that consistently fail to achieve measurable outcomes. More than 100 local and national leaders, including U.S. Senators, support these principles.

According to a 2013 GAO report, only 37 percent of program managers said an evaluation of their programs had been completed in the last five years. And another 40 percent did not know whether such an evaluation had even been conducted. The former OMB directors in our coalition estimate that only one percent of federal non-defense discretionary spending is backed by evidence. These and other statistics in my written testimony highlight the bipartisan opportunity to do more to ensure limited resources support solutions that improve outcomes for young people and their families.

When I co-chaired the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth in 2003, we discovered 339 federal programs administered by 12 departments and agencies at a cost of $224 billion, annually. Although government was collecting data on how much programs cost, and how many people they served, we wanted to know more about how programs were helping to increase opportunity and improve lives. Where evidence was stronger, the President proposed state of the union initiatives that this Congress supported to help disadvantaged youth.

We make the following specific recommendations to build on the bipartisan history of improving government performance.

First, Congress should authorize agencies to invest one percent of their total discretionary funds for program evaluations, subject to congressional oversight, to improve how the other 99 percent of dollars in an agency are spent. The Administration's recent budget request seeks this authority for the U.S. Department of Labor, and also for a particular program within the Department of Health and Human Services. And other agencies should have it, too. If chief evaluation officers were appointed at each agency and held accountable, they would help create a stronger culture of using evidence to inform decision-making.

Second, government should create what-works clearinghouses at agencies to inform better decision-making, and signal the importance of evaluations. I know, from my own experience in working to address the high school dropout challenge, that the what-works clearinghouse and increasingly sophisticated data at the U.S. Department of Education and National Center for Education statistics have helped foster reforms that follow evidence and generate better results. High school graduation rates have reached an all-time high, nationally. And those who have disproportionately have had the lowest graduation rates are now driving the most significant gains.

Third, Congress can encourage the use of rapid low-cost tools, including low-cost, randomized control trials to increase the effectiveness of social spending by using data already collected by the Federal Government to measure key outcomes of a particular program, rather than engaging in costly original data collection.

Fourth, Congress should consider a tiered-evidence approach that gives higher levels of funding to grantees with better evidence of impact, and lower levels of funding to promising programs that need to be tested further. Because low-income youth and their families deserve supports that are truly helping them.

Fifth, Congress should encourage programs to first improve, and eventually direct funds away from those that consistently fail to achieve outcomes. Bipartisan Head Start reauthorization required low-performing grantees to recompete for funding. There are other examples of other programs that consistently failed to boost opportunity for youth, and were finally eliminated. But too often, government is flying blind, or failing to use evaluations to expand, alter, or terminate programs.

Finally, Congress should foster a spirit of innovation and learning, not simply pull the on or off funding switch when the evidence isn't clear. When I served on the White House Council for Community Solutions in 2011, we discovered that youth opportunity grants had been eliminated before an evaluation was completed. Evidence later showed the program had increased youth in school, employment rates, and hourly wages. Our council had lost a key tool, both to improve the lives of disconnected youth, and save taxpayers money.

Our bipartisan Moneyball for Government book, and Ron Haskins's "Show Me the Evidence" book contain many recommendations to build evidence.

Finally, our Results for America coalition is pleased to announce today our strong support for the Evidence-Based Policy Commission we understand Chairman Ryan and Senator Murray will be proposing, and for the bipartisan Social Impact Partnership Act sponsored by Congressman Young and Congressman Delaney. Given the opportunity gaps in our society, the millions of vulnerable children and families in our country, the time could not be better to put evidence at the center of policymaking. Thank you.

Chairman BOUSTANY. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of John Bridgeland follows:]

Testimony of John Bridgeland

Senior Advisor, Results for America
Former Director, White House Domestic Policy Council
Member, White House Council for Community Solutions

Before the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Human Resources
March 17, 2015

Chairman Boustany, Ranking Member Doggett and other distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the important subject of using evidence to inform budget and policy decisions that can expand opportunity for low-income individuals and families.

I am a Senior Advisor of Results for America, a nonprofit organization committed to improving the lives of young people, their families, and communities through the increased use of data and evidence at all levels of government. I also am testifying from my perspective as a former Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council under President George W. Bush and former Member of the White House Council for Community Solutions under President Barack Obama.

At Results for America, our efforts are guided by three principles that we believe government at all levels should follow: 1) build evidence about the practices, policies, and programs that will achieve the most effective and efficient results; 2) invest limited taxpayer dollars in what works; and 3) direct funds away from those practices, polices and programs that consistently fail to achieve measurable outcomes. More than 100 local

and national leaders have publicly supported these principles.[1] Our goal is to leave to others the debate about whether we should be spending more or less money on particular social programs and instead build a debate about how to get better results with the resources that we have, while learning from both successes and failures.

According to a 2013 GAO report, only 37 percent of program managers said that an evaluation of their programs had been completed in the last five years and another 40 percent did not know whether such an evaluation had been conducted.[2] The former OMB Directors in our coalition estimate that only about one percent of federal non-defense discretionary spending is backed by evidence. A 2011 GAO report highlighted that while the federal government spent $18 billion on 47 different job programs, "little is known about the effectiveness of most programs."[3] I cite these statistics from the perspective of wanting to see that limited resources support solutions that improve outcomes for young people, their families, and communities.

When I co-chaired the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth in 2002-03, we discovered 339 federal programs for disadvantaged youth, administered by 12 departments and agencies, at a cost of $224 billion annually.[4] Although government was collecting and reporting significant data on various inputs and outputs – how much a program costs and how many people they served – we wanted to know more than the

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[1] Moneyball for Government. *Moneyball All-Stars.* Available at http://www.moneyballforgov.com/moneyball-all-stars.
[2] United States Government Accountability Office, "Program Evaluation: Strategies to Facilitate Agencies' Use of Evaluation in Program Management and Policy Making," June 2013, http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/655518.pdf.
[3] United States Government Accountability Office, "Multiple Employment and Training Programs: Providing Information on Colocating Services and Consolidating Administrative Structures Could Promote Efficiency," January 2011, http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d1192.pdf.
[4] The White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth, "Final Report," October 2003, http://www.mpmn.org/Resources/white_house_task_force.pdf.

evidence could tell us about how programs were helping to boost opportunity and to change lives. We made decisions with the evidence we had, and where the evidence was stronger based on rigorous evaluations, the President proposed State of the Union initiatives that the Congress supported to help disadvantaged youth.

Efforts to improve the performance of government have a long and bipartisan history. The last century featured blue-ribbon commissions to strengthen government performance and get better results. The 1912 Taft Commission recommended an executive budget; the 1937 Bronlow Commission highlighted ways to improve efficiency through reorganization and better management practices; two Hoover Commissions in the 1940s and 1950s worked to reduce the number of government departments and increase their efficiency; the Grace Commission in the 1980s worked to reduce government waste and increase efficiencies; and there were other reform efforts along the way. The Congressional Research Service noted that the Government Performance and Results Act was considered a "watershed" – "for the first time, Congress established statutory requirements for most agencies to set goals, measure performance, and submit related plans and reports to Congress."[5]

The pursuit of better evidence related to individual programs has a bipartisan history and has been advanced most recently by both President George W. Bush and President Obama. In 2002, the Office of Management and Budget created a Program Assessment Rating Tool ("PART") that established a system to measure everything from

[5] Clinton T. Brass, "Changes to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA): Overview of the New Framework of Products and Processes," *Congressional Research Services Report for Congress,* February 2012, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42379.pdf.

program design and implementation to evidence and results. The PART informed recommendations the President made in his budget submissions to the Congress and the daily operations of department and agency officials. President Obama has expanded efforts to evaluate programs in several agencies and developed innovative policies, such as the Social Innovation Fund and Investing in Innovation Fund (i3), to focus on programs with evidence of impact and to build knowledge about what works in the field. Efforts across administrations have built upon one another. For example, President Bush signed legislation that required Head Start programs to be evaluated and President Obama ensured that those with lower performance outcomes must improve their results and re-compete for funding.

We make the following specific recommendations to build a stronger evidence base for what works, use evidence to invest in what works, and redirect funding away from what does not work:

1. Set Aside 1 Percent of Program Funds For Evaluation at Each Federal Department and Agency. Congress should authorize agencies to invest one percent of their total discretionary funds for program evaluation. Agencies could spend funding on the highest-priority evaluations, subject to Congressional oversight. The Administration's FY16 budget request seeks this authority for the U.S. Department of Labor. The information gathered by this one percent investment would inform how the other 99 percent of dollars in a department or agency are spent. If chief evaluation officers were appointed at each agency, they would help create a stronger culture of using evidence to inform decision-making, and help coordinate data, evaluation and performance

management so that agencies and Congress could learn more about the effectiveness of programs over time.

2. Create Comprehensive, Easy-to-Use "What Works" Clearinghouses at Each Department and Agency. As evidence builds for programs that are effective – and those that are not – government can play an important role in sharing those results by putting evaluations online in a format that is true to the research and accessible to policymakers, their staffs, and the public. In addition to informing better decision-making, these clearinghouses can signal to organizations seeking federal support and to researchers the importance of using rigorous research and evaluation designs. I know from my own experience in working to highlight and address the nation's high school dropout challenge that the What Works Clearinghouse at the U.S. Department of Education and the increasingly sophisticated data collected and reported by the Department on high school graduation rates have helped create an environment of following the evidence and being accountable for results. High school graduation rates have reached an all-time high, and in many states and school districts, the improvement is driven by increases in the very populations that have had the lowest graduation rates.[6]

3. Encourage the Use of Rapid, Low-Cost Tools to Determine Impact. Government can also highlight and encourage the use of rapid, low-cost tools, including low-cost randomized controlled trials, to increase the effectiveness of social spending. Government already collects and reports high quality data to measure outcomes such as

[6] Robert Balfanz et al., "Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenges in Ending the High School Dropout Crisis," Civic Enterprises, 2014. http://civicenterprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/17548_BGN_Report_finalfull.pdf

student achievement, employment and earnings, criminal arrests, receipt of government assistance, and more. Using such data already collected for other purposes to measure key outcomes of a particular program, rather than engaging in costly original data collection, is an approach gaining traction in the Executive Branch and in jurisdictions across the country as highlighted in the report, *Rigorous Program Evaluations on a Budget: How Low-Cost Randomized Controlled Trials Are Possible in Many Areas of Social Policy*.[7]

4. Use evidence to invest limited tax dollars in what works. The previous recommendations focus on building the evidence base, but policymakers also need to make decisions based on evidence to improve the effectiveness of government. There are a variety of ways to do this. The tiered-evidence approach has gained momentum in recent years, where competitive grant programs reward grantees with greater levels of evidence with greater funds, while new, promising programs that need to be tested get fewer funds, and all programs participate in evaluations to increase learning and improve over time. The Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) and Social Innovation Funds, discussed earlier, are examples of this approach. Pay for Success is also a promising idea, where the government promises to pay only after a program delivers specified results, and government could certainly strengthen performance-based contracting.

[7] Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, "Rigorous Program Evaluations on a Budget: How Low-Cost Randomized Controlled Trials Are Possible in Many Areas of Social Policy," March 2012, http://coalition4evidence.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Rigorous-Program-Evaluations-on-a-Budget-March-2012.pdf.

5. Direct funds away from what consistently fails to achieve outcomes. I know it is never politically popular to discuss ending programs, but if we continue to fund what does not work, we fail to serve the American people. There are sensible ways to do this. One is to ask low-performing grantees to improve and re-compete for funding. Head Start does this now, and the policy was part of a bipartisan reauthorization of that program in 2007. When consistent and reliable evaluations show that program outcomes are weak, those programs should be given a reasonable time to improve or have their funds shifted to other proven programs.

6. Create an Environment of Continuous Learning. Congress should create an environment of continuous learning, not simply an "on-off switch" when the evidence is unclear. When I served on the White House Council for Community Solutions in 2011-12, we discovered that there were 6.7 million young people disconnected from school and work and that in addition to the moral and societal imperative to help them, the cost of their disconnection to U.S. taxpayers was $93 billion annually in lost revenues and increased spending on social services.[8] When we examined the historic and current federal response to this highly vulnerable population, we saw the dangers of simply eliminating programs that had no evidence of effectiveness.

Youth Opportunity Grants were created to help disconnected youth in the 36 cities, rural areas and tribal lands where they were disproportionately found. Because there was no rigorous evidence of the program's effectiveness, the grants were completely

[8] Belfield, C.R, Levin, H.M., & Rosen, R. (2012 January). "Economic Value of Opportunity Youth," January 2012, www.civicenterprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/econ_value_opportunity_youth.pdf

eliminated. Years later, an independent, high-quality evaluation showed that Youth Opportunity Grants had reduced the number of out-of-school youth and, in key groups that had been struggling, boosted their employment rates and increased hourly wages.[9] Our White House Council had lost a key tool to improve life outcomes for disconnected youth and save taxpayers money.

We also saw the opportunity costs of continuing programs like the Even Start Family Literacy Program, where evaluations showed that the program did not boost literacy rates for children or parents who received the intervention[10], yet Congress went on to spend more than $1 billion on the program over the subsequent eight years. Too often, government is either flying blind or failing to use the insights from evaluation studies in deciding whether programs should be expanded, altered, or terminated.

Our *Moneyball for Government*[11] book, co-authored by former White House OMB Directors Jim Nussle (President George W. Bush) and Peter Orszag (President Obama); U.S. Senators Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) and Mark Warner (D-VA); former White House economic advisors Glenn Hubbard (President George W. Bush) and Gene Sperling (President Clinton and President Obama); former White House Domestic Policy Council Directors Melody Barnes (President Obama) and me (President George W. Bush); Results for America CEO and Co-Founder Michele Jolin and others, contains many

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[9] Decision Information Resources, Inc., "Youth Opportunity Grant Initiative: Impact and Synthesis Report," December 2007, http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/YO%20Impact%20and%20Synthesis%20Report.pdf.

[10] U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, Elementary and Secondary Education Division, *Third National Even Start Evaluation: Program Impacts and Implications,* Washington, D.C., 20202, http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/disadv/evenstartthird/toc.pdf.

[11] Kelly Ayotte et al, *Moneyball for Government*, Disruption Books: Washington, DC, 2014.

recommendations to create an environment of evidence and learning.

Another valuable resource, *Show Me the Evidence*[12], co-authored by a former Staff Director of this Subcommittee, highlights the progress that is currently being made to use evidence to inform policymaking. We recognize there are many considerations that will drive the decisions of policymakers, but we believe government can do better to inform those decisions with a stronger evidence base.

Finally, our Results for America coalition is pleased to announce today our support for the Evidence-Based Policy Commission that we understand Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) are proposing. We also applaud the bipartisan Social Impact Partnership Act that was introduced by Congressmen Todd Young (R-IN) and John DeLaney (D-MD) to improve social and public health outcomes by encouraging states, towns, and investors to coordinate and expand proven public policies that create more opportunity for people in need.

Given the opportunity gaps in our society, the millions of vulnerable children and families in our country, and the progress that we are seeing in areas where clear goals are set, plans of action are developed, and evidence-based reforms are marshaled, the time could not be better to put evidence at the center of policymaking. Thank you.

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[12] Ron Haskins and Greg Margolis, *Show Me the Evidence: Obama's Fight for Rigor and Results in Social Policy*, Brookings Institute: Washington, DC, 2014.

Mr. Whitehurst, you have five minutes.

GROVER J. "RUSS" WHITEHURST, DIRECTOR, BROWN CENTER ON EDUCATION POLICY, THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

Mr. Whitehurst. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, Members of the Committee. Let me tell you a story.

In a career I had a couple of careers ago, I was a developmental psychologist working in Head Start centers. And one evening I went to a Head Start center at the beginning of the year to make a pitch for parents to sign up their kids to be in one of my studies. I saw a mom in the audience. And, as I was leaving the center in my car, I saw her walking down the road. She had her four-year-old, who she had brought to the center, in hand. She had a two-year-old in a stroller. She had a big bag of materials she had picked up at the meeting. And it was 85 degrees, and she was struggling.

So, I offered her a ride home. She accepted. I thought it would be a few blocks. It was a couple of miles. I asked her had she walked all the way to the Head Start center with her kids. She said she had. I said, "That's a long way to walk; why did you do it?" And she said, "I just want what is best for my babies."

I knew that particular Head Start center pretty well, and it was not providing what was best for her babies. I think there is a moral proposition. You stated it, Mr. Chairman, that we need to provide people who need help programs that work. And we are frequently not doing so. We need to use evidence to move in that direction. I have got some recommendations. I think they are very much in line with what Mr. Bridgeland has just said, and they speak to supply utilization and what the federal role is in using evidence.

On the supply side, in keeping with comments already made, I think we need to fund the evaluation effort better. I think there needs to be a healthy set-aside in every significant funding program to allow that program to be evaluated. If we are spending only as we did in the U.S. Department of Education, less than one percent of the appropriation to find out what works, we are destined to be involved in a faith-based enterprise that is never self-correcting. So an evaluation set-aside is important.

I think we need independence for those who are doing the evaluations. Most federal evaluations are carried out by people who are responsible to and reporting to the political apparatus, and are in the same programs that are implementing the programs that need to be evaluated. That is a conflict of interest. I think we should give each federal agency an evaluation officer, and they have the—should have the independence we give to the inspector general in those offices.

I think we need greater access to the—linking access to existing data sets, so we can speed up the rate of progress here. You know, Google conducts about 20,000 experiments a year. During the eight years I was in the U.S. Department of Education, we mounted about 20 experiments around education. So we need more. We need more quantity. One way to do that is to use existing data. It is there, we just don't have a way of putting it together.

The Ryan-Murray Evidence-Based Policy Commission intends, if it is passed into law, to tackle that problem. I think that is perfect,

that is the way we need to go. With regard to that Commission, I think its role could be expanded to serve some other functions, if it were a standing commission, and those functions lie in the realm of utilization.

So we need to know what works. And we have some entities embedded in some agencies that are supposed to do that. But the issues with poverty and people in disadvantage are not easily siloed at agencies. They span agencies. And so I think it would be a great idea of the Commission were responsible for collecting and disseminating information on what works with regard to economic opportunity in ways that would inform policymakers, inform Congress, and inform the nation.

And, in that regard, they might make an annual report to Congress indicating what works, what doesn't, what needs correcting. I think this would be useful, politically. Some of you may have been involved in trying to close the military base. You know how hard that is. Try to close a popular social program, and you will find a really tough problem. So some outside advice might be useful.

On the federal role, just because something works, I don't think it is the federal role to push it down and to say that states or people have to use that particular service. I think the ideal role is to find out what works, provide information, and to provide incentives that it is utilized, that it would be utilized at the local level. And one way to do that is to empower consumers to shop for what they want.

I am in favor of, rather than giving most of the money to states or localities, figure out a way to give it to individuals. The Earned Income Tax Credit is one way to do that. Vouchers are another way to do that. Food stamp is a voucher. And then provide the kind of information that, Mr. Chairman, you said you could get in Consumer Reports if you are buying a washing machine, provide that information to consumers, so they can spend those vouchers and those transfer funds correctly.

I think, if you do that, you will generate a marketplace, and people will get not what has been decided at the state level that they should have, but they will get, for example, in child care services, what they need to serve their needs, and that will produce the kind of innovation and progress that we very badly need. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst follows:]

Testimony of Grover J. (Russ) Whitehurst

Subcommittee on Human Resources

Committee on Ways and Means

Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works: Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead

March 17, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Russ Whitehurst. I am a senior fellow and hold the Brown Chair in Education Studies at the Brookings Institution. I was the founding director of the federal government's Institute of Education Sciences, which is the Department of Education's research, evaluation, and statistics division. Before my eight years of government service in that role, I had a long career as a researcher. A focal theme of my entire professional career has been developing and evaluating programs intended to help children in low-income families and children with learning and developmental disabilities get ahead.

In that context, I am very appreciative of the opportunity to testify today on the critically important topic of using evidence of what works as a guide to federal funding of programs intended to help low-income families and individuals.

Let me tell you a story that frames, for me, the importance of today's topic and this hearing. Back when I was a university-based researcher I spent a lot of time in childcare facilities that were under the sway of federal legislation, including Head Start, Even Start, and subsidized daycare centers.

I remember vividly a young mother I met at a Head Start Center. She was attending an orientation meeting for parents of newly enrolled children, where I was making a pitch for parents to permit their children to participate in a research study I was conducting at the center. When I was later leaving in my car I saw her walking down the road at twilight with her 4-year-old in hand, pushing her 2-year-old in a stroller, and carrying a large bag of materials that had been passed out at the meeting. She was struggling. I asked her if she wanted a ride home. She accepted. I thought I would be taking her a few blocks but it was a couple of miles before we pulled up in front of the dilapidated house where she lived. I asked if she had walked all the way to the meeting with her two kids in tow. She said she had. I asked if she had known how far it was. She said she had. I said, "That's a long way to walk with two young children. Why did you do it?" Her answer – "I just want to do what's best for my babies".

I knew well the Head Start center in which she had just enrolled her four-year-old. Trust me, it fell far short of the quality she needed to do what was best for her babies.

Many low-income families and individuals very much need government assistance to get a leg up on a brighter future. When the U.S. taxpayer funds programs that don't work or don't work nearly as well as they should we fail those families. We also short change society as a whole. And the waste isn't limited to the specific appropriation that funded the program. It also includes the opportunity costs, which are often much larger than the expenditure on the program itself.

For example, we know that just one year of an excellent classroom experience for a young child compared to an average classroom experience produces about $1,000 more per year in earned income for that child when he or she grows up and enters the workforce. That return is cumulative. So if the four-year-old child of the mother in my vignette received an average classroom experience (or worse) in Head Start, he or she will earn $10,000 less over a decade of work than would have been the case had the classroom experience been really good. This effects taxes paid, eligibility for other government benefits, the ability to purchase a home and accumulate savings, and a number of other markers of economic mobility. When you add those impacts to the $8,000 or so the taxpayer spent to send that child to Head Start for a year, you're talking real money, and that's just for one person.

My point is that when the federal government spends money on programs that don't work or don't work well the cost is both the waste of the direct expenditure as well as the loss of the gains that could have come from an effective program. It is a dual whammy, and summed over large numbers of participants in any government program it amounts to very large amounts of money as well as the less tangible but still vitally important impacts on quality of life.

The nation needs programs that work to help low-income families and individuals get ahead. The consequences of funding programs that don't work are monumental. I doubt there is much controversy about this assertion among those of us here today. The question is not the need for programs that work but how to get them. My thoughts about this are very much formed by my experience as director of the Institute of Education Sciences. The focus of IES was, naturally, on education, which is a narrower scope than that of today's hearing. But the challenge was exactly the same. How do we use evidence to grow federally funded programs that work at the expense of programs that don't work or don't work well enough?

Here are some lessons I learned. I'll divide them into three categories relating to the supply of good evidence, the demand for it, and the appropriate federal role in delivering evidence-based programs.

The supply of evaluation and research

1. You get no more than you pay for. Although federal budgetary support for gathering evidence on what works in programs to aid the disadvantaged has increased in the last decade, it remains a pittance when compared with levels of investment in research, evaluation, and statistics in other areas of the economy. For example, more than 40% of the discretionary budget of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is invested in knowledge production and dissemination through the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, the Food and Drug Administration, and many other operational components. In the U.S. Department of Education, the corresponding investment is less than 1%. In research and

evaluation on social programs, no less than in R&D in health or transportation or communication or energy or agriculture or technology, money matters.

My specific recommendation on this point is that every federal program that has a primary goal of improving outcomes of families and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds and that has an annual appropriation above a lower bound, say $50 million, should have a 5% annual set aside from its appropriation for an evaluation of its impact.

2. Quantity is essential. We have a lot more high quality research on what works than was the case 20 years ago, but fields that are able to profit from rigorous evaluations conduct them in much higher volumes than is the case for government programs. So-called A-B comparisons in which one way of doing something is compared rigorously with an alternative approach are the stock-in-trade of the technology industry. Google, for example, is said to conduct over 20,000 experiments a year. The vast majority of the things they try don't work, but when they try a large number of things, a small proportion of wins can still generate a lot of progress. Most interventions fail in health care, as well, where 80% of stage II clinical trials on new pharmaceuticals find no clinical useful impact on health when the treatment is compared to a control. During my time at the U.S. Department of Education we launched about 20 large scale evaluations of federal education programs and funded a couple of hundred other randomized trials initiated by university-based researchers. 20,000 trials a year for Google vs. a couple of hundred trials in eight years by the U.S. Department of Education. That's a difference that makes a difference. We're not likely to show a lot of progress in understanding what works to help the disadvantaged until we dramatically step up the pace of experimentation.

   The first of my recommendations on this point is consistent with the intent of the legislation introduced by Chairman Ryan and Senator Murray in the Evidence-based Policymaking Commission Act. A goal of the commission created by the Act would be to identify, link where feasible, and make easily available to researchers administrative data that captures information on the provision of federally funded services and their outcomes. The largest barrier by far to ramping up knowledge production on what works in government-funded programs is the cost of obtaining data. Were the data already available the cost of studies would fall dramatically. This is how Google is able to conduct 20,000 experiments a year – the data are produced by the users of Google at no extra expense. All Google has to do is decide on an A-B comparison, e.g., should featured sites be listed on the side of the page or at the top when a user does a search, and do the analytics based on user clicks. There is almost no cost. We need to make the data the government already has accessible to researchers and policymakers so that low-cost studies can also be done on government programs intended to help the poor.

   A second recommendation is that Congress take advantage of the existing federal statewide longitudinal data systems grant program, which, since 2005, has funded all but three states through competitive grants to create administrative databases that allow researchers and policymakers to follow students through their education careers and examine the relationships

between the programs students received and their outcomes. These grants encourage states to include data from early learning environments through workforce participation, and some states have included linkages to other data on health and utilization of social services. The terms of the grants also require the availability of the databases for evaluation and research.

States have done a much better job of building the databases than in using them for policymaking or for independent evaluations and research. In fact, if you're a researcher working on a topic to which the databases are relevant, you've got a chance of getting access in Florida, Texas, and North Carolina. Otherwise, it will be tough sledding. Congress can fix this. Require the U.S. Department of Education to require recipients of these grants to live up to the terms of their awards for data access for policymaking and research.

3. Independence Is fundamental for federal entities responsible for evaluating federal programs. One of the most important advances in the Education Sciences Reform Act was to create a greater degree of independence between the Department's research arm and the political leadership of the Department. The language of the statute is that "The Secretary shall delegate to the Director all functions for carrying out this title." I led the Department's research office for eight years under two secretaries and multiple lesser political appointees. I had good relationships with the political leadership of the Department, but I needed every bit of independence granted to me by the statute along with a fair amount of personal grit to keep my office and its functions from being politicized.

   I recommend to Congress that the program evaluation arm of every executive branch agency be granted the same degree of independence as is granted and understood to be critical to the functioning of that agency's inspector general. In that regard, the Office of Management and Budget should be given specific legislative mandates to oversee the quality and independence of federal program evaluations, in line with the responsibility it has assumed of insuring the independence of federal statistical agencies.

Utilization of the findings of evaluation

1. The Tower of Babel is the enemy. I remember a Senate hearing years ago in which I was testifying. A point of evidence was introduced by another witness. Hillary Clinton, then a senator, responded to the witness by saying, "Well, you've got your research and I've got mine." And she was right. The standards of evidence for drawing conclusions about program effectiveness are not agreed on by the body of people who conduct research on program effectiveness. Thus, if you look hard enough you'll find a researcher who has published something that supports your point of view even though the research in question may not pass muster in terms of rigor. The only way out of the problem created by uncertain research standards and a cacophony of conflicting conclusions said to be based on research is for the federal government to create trusted sources of information on what research says about what works. The FDA has historically had that role in evaluating evidence from evaluations of drugs.

The U.S. Department of Education has such an entity in the What Works Clearinghouse. The WWC operates through very clear protocols for evaluating particular research studies. It separates the wheat from the chaff and serves a vitally important role in improving education programs and products. One of its limitations, of course, is that it covers only education.

My recommendation is that Congress create through legislation a entity structured like the What Works Clearinghouse but with a much broader scope – the effectiveness of all government programs intended to help the economically disadvantaged. It would be the first place for a knowledgeable consumer to shop for vetted evidence on what works in social and education programs.

2. No mother thinks her own baby is ugly. People who deliver federally-funded programs, or create them through policy, or oversee them in federal and state bureaucracies believe their particular program works. They will attack the legitimacy of evidence that suggests the contrary. Further, once a funded program has created significant employment it is a jobs program that benefits those who work in it regardless of whether it benefits its recipients. In short, the forces that will fight to maintain a government program regardless of its effectiveness are very powerful.

   Witness the federal early childhood/adult education program called the William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program. The intent of the program, created by Congress in 2001, was to combine center-based care for children with adult education and parenting training for their parents. Nothing wrong with that as an idea. The principal congressional architect was Representative Bill Goodling, after whom the program was named. He continued to be a very strong advocate for the program after he left Congress in 2001. Both the G.W. Bush and the Obama administrations regularly marked the program for elimination in their annual budget requests. They did so based on three national evaluations that had shown it not to work. In other words, parents and children served by Even Start did no better than families randomly assigned to a control group. But the program lasted ten years, until it was finally defunded by Congress. You think it is difficult to close a military base that is no longer needed? Try shutting down a popular social program that isn't working, or even just shifting a portion of its appropriation to something that might work better.

   My recommendation is inspired by my analogy to base closings in the military, which depended on the appointment of an independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission to make recommendations on which bases should be closed. The commission took some of the politics out of base closures. I believe Congress should create an independent Commission on the Effectiveness of Government Programs for the Disadvantaged. The Commission could house the broad What Works Clearinghouse effort I previously recommended, and, to the present point, could annually report to the President and Congress on the level and direction of evidence with respect to the effectiveness of existing and proposed federal programs within its sphere. The Commission could recommend programs that should be defunded or restructured based on

evidence of ineffectiveness, identify programs for which evidence of effectiveness is positive, and note programs for which evidence is missing or ambiguous. I believe that such a commission, with distinguished appointees, could change the way we think about funding federal programs from what is now a largely evidence-free zone to one in which the emphasis is on successful outcomes. It could also provide political impetus for legislative and executive branch efforts to improve failing programs, and create an appetite for learning what works across all of government. One could think of this as an expansion of the functions of the Ryan/Murray Evidence-based Policymaking Commission.

The federal role in delivering effective programs

In my view Congress should focus on creating a vibrant marketplace for the evidence among government officials, program providers, and service recipients rather dictating particulars of program design. Consider No Child Left Behind, which uses the phrase "scientifically-based research" 111 times, and includes many mandates for states and local education agencies to base their practices on the findings from such research. One example is the now defunct program, Reading First, which dictated at a very granular level how early reading instruction was to be delivered in schools across the nation. A federal evaluation carried out by my former office found that children's reading comprehension did not increase as a result of Reading First, even though the program seemed to be grounded in research-proven practices. It is a fundamental mistake, in my view, for Congress to dictate how states and local government should use findings from research.

Instead of telling states and local agencies what they should do and appealing to research as the justification, Congress should focus on creating incentives for practitioners and policy makers to incorporate findings from the best research into their programs. There are two general ways to go about doing this, both of which have a role to play. The first is regulatory accountability. Thus, as in Chairman Ryan's Opportunity Grant proposal, states would need to provide the federal government with their plan and their benchmarks for success. They would be held accountable for measuring and meeting their benchmarks. I think that makes a lot of sense.

But at the same time, we have to understand that state and local bureaucracies can be pretty good at maintaining the status quo no matter what the plans and benchmarks for success under which they are operating. In my view, regulatory accountability has to be combined with strong market place accountability if real change is going to occur in the effectiveness of government-funded programs intended to help the poor. That means giving the intended beneficiaries of the government program the power to shop for what they need, and the information to shop wisely.

Why should a low-income family that needs a good quality child care center for their four-year-old have to take Head Start or their local school system's pre-k classroom as their only taxpayer supported options? Give the family a voucher and let them shop. And help them shop by

requiring that states, as a condition of federal funds, set up ways of grading those childcare programs on their success and making this information available to those who are to be served.

There is one thing that Americans are undeniably best at, and it is shopping. We've created the world's premiere shopping sites such as Amazon and we have pioneered in business innovation based on unleashing customer's from monopolies so that they can choose. Look at what Uber has done to taxis and Netflix has done to cable service.

The federal government has a critical role to play in unleashing such innovation in what has traditionally been the hide bound sphere of public programs. The federal role has two prongs. The first is transferring the money to low-income families and individuals that will enable them to shop for what they need to better their education and improve their social circumstances. This financial support can be in the form of direct transfers as in Chairman Ryan's Opportunity Grant proposal for increasing the earned-income tax credit. The support can also come in the form of voucher-like mechanisms in which the money follows the recipient to the particular service provider the recipient has chosen. The second prong of the federal role is creating the information sources and tools to let people shop smart. When I go shopping for a car I have a lot of information at my disposal on characteristics such as crashworthiness, fuel efficiency, loan and lease costs, and reliability. Much of this information is available because the federal government requires it. But if I were shopping for a child care facility or a job training program I would be choosing blindly. This is something the federal government, and maybe only the federal government, can fix.

As a result of advances in research we know much more about what works and what doesn't in programs intended to help the disadvantaged than we did 20 years ago, but our level of ignorance dwarfs our understanding by orders of magnitude. We're at the dawn of a new age driven by an evidence agenda that will eventually fill the huge gaps in our knowledge of what works, for whom, and under what circumstances. I appreciate this Committee's understanding of the importance of evidence in guiding policy and the critical role the federal government plays in moving forward its production and utilization.

Chairman BOUSTANY. Mr. Muhlhausen.

STATEMENT OF DAVID MUHLHAUSEN, RESEARCH FELLOW IN EMPIRICAL POLICY ANALYSIS, THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Mr. Muhlhausen. My name is David Muhlhausen, and I am a research fellow in empirical policy analysis in the Center for Data Analysis at The Heritage Foundation.

Chairman BOUSTANY. Mr. Muhlhausen, that microphone on, if you don't mind.

Mr. Muhlhausen. I thank Chairman Boustany, Ranking Member Doggett, and the rest of the subcommittee for the opportunity to testify today on evidence-based policymaking. The views I express in my testimony are my own, and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

My testimony is largely based on my book, "Do Federal Social Programs Work?" My spoken testimony will focus on four points.

First, the effectiveness of federal social programs is far too often unknown. That is why the notion of evidence-based policymaking is so important to finding out what works and what does not work. The use of scientifically rigorous impact evaluations greatly improve policy decisions. The best method for assessing the effectiveness of federal social programs is large-scale, multi-site experimental valuations that use random assignment.

Unfortunately, these scientifically rigorous studies are rarely done. When Congress creates social programs, the funded activities are intended to be spread out across the nation. For this reason, federal social programs should be assessed for their national effectiveness. While an individual program operating at a single site may undergo an experimental evaluation, this small-scale, single-site evaluation will not inform policymakers of the general effectiveness of the broader national program.

The success of a single program that serves a particular jurisdiction or population does not necessarily mean that the program will achieve similar success in other jurisdictions or among different populations. Thus, small-scale evaluations are poor substitutes for large-scale multi-site evaluations.

A multi-site evaluation that examines the performance of a program operating in numerous and diverse settings will produce results that are more—the policymakers. Multi-site experimental evaluations are the best method for assessing the effectiveness of federal programs. Yet, to date, this method has been done on only a handful of federal programs.

Second, the Federal Government does not have a good record of replicating successful programs on a national scale. Policymakers and advocates often assume the social program that is effective in one setting will automatically produce the same results in other settings. This is a faulty assumption.

For example, for the Center for Employment Training replication, the Federal Government attempted to replicate the successful outcomes of a youth job training program in San Jose, California in 12 locations throughout the United States. A multi-site experiment evaluation found that the Federal Government was unable to replicate the successful outcomes in these other sites. Just because an innovative program appears to have worked in one location does

not mean the program can be effectively implemented on a larger scale.

Third, policymakers should be mindful that federal social programs do occasionally produce harmful impacts on participants. However, social program advocates too frequently ignore these findings. Nevertheless, Congress should be aware of these harmful impacts. Here are just two examples.

For the three-year-old—Head Start Impact Study, kindergarten teachers reported that the math abilities of the children given access to Head Start were worse than similar children not given access to the program.

Students participating in school educational activities under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program were more likely to have disciplinary and behavioral problems, such as getting suspended from school. Further, these students were less likely to achieve at high levels in class, and were less likely to put forth effort in English classes.

Last, the adoption of the evidence-based policymaking is an important step in helping Congress become wise stewards of the federal purse. With the federal debt reaching staggering heights, Congress needs to ensure that it is spending taxpayer dollars wisely. The creation of the Evidence-Based Policy Commission, as proposed by Representative Ryan and Senator Murray, is a step in the right direction. I thank the committee for the opportunity to testify today.

Chairman BOUSTANY. I thank the gentleman. Ms. Entmacher.

Ms. Entmacher. Entmacher.

Chairman BOUSTANY. Entmacher. Thank you. You may proceed.

[The prepared statement of David Muhlhausen follows:]

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CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Evidence-Based Policymaking: An Idea Whose Time Has Come

Testimony before
the Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Human Resources
United States House of Representatives

March 17, 2015

David B. Muhlhausen, PhD
Research Fellow in Empirical Policy Analysis
The Heritage Foundation

My name is David Muhlhausen. I am a Research Fellow in Empirical Policy Analysis in the Center for Data Analysis at The Heritage Foundation. I thank Chairman Charles Boustany, Ranking Member Lloyd Doggett, and the rest of the subcommittee for the opportunity to testify today on evidence-based policymaking. The views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

The federal government's total debt is over $18.1 trillion.[1] Given the fiscal crises that the federal government is facing, holding federal social programs accountable for their performance is necessary to regain control over excessive spending. Operating with scarce resources, federal policymakers need to fund programs that work and defund programs that do not work. Americans, especially income tax payers, deserve better than Congress's current habit of continuing to spend taxpayer dollars on programs that do not produce their intended results.

The effectiveness of federal programs is often unknown. Many programs operate for decades without ever undergoing thorough scientific evaluations. In *Do Federal Social Programs Work?*, I reviewed 20 scientifically rigorous multisite experimental evaluations of federal social programs published since 1990.[2] Except for the welfare-to-work programs, federal social programs have been consistently found to be ineffective.

Evidence-Based Policymaking

To plug this information gap, the evidenced-based policy movement seeks to inform and influence policymakers through scientifically rigorous evaluations of the effectiveness of government programs.[3] In other words, the movement provides tools to figure out what works and what does not work.

Evidence-based policymaking is based upon using scientifically rigorous impact evaluations to improve policy decisions. Rigorous impact evaluations that use random assignment provide policymakers improved capability to exercise oversight of government programs and be more effective stewards of the federal purse. There is little merit in continuing programs that fail to ameliorate their targeted social problems. Programs that are unknown to work or that do not work at all do not deserve continued funding.

Congress needs to take the lead in making sure that the social programs it funds are evaluated. First, when authorizing a new social program or reauthorizing an existing program, Congress should specifically mandate multisite experimental (random assignment) evaluation of the program.

Experimental evaluations are the only way to determine to a high degree of certainty the effectiveness of social programs. Thus, Congress should mandate that all recipients of federal funding, if selected for participation, must cooperate with evaluations in order to receive future funding.

Second, the experimental evaluations should be large-scale, nationally representative, multisite studies. When Congress creates social programs, the funded activities are intended to be spread out across the nation. For this reason, Congress should require nationally representative, multisite experimental evaluations of these programs. For multisite evaluations, the selection of the sites to be evaluated should be representative of the population of interest for the program. When program sites and sample participants are randomly selected, the resulting

evaluation findings will have high external validity.

The Problem of Replication and Scaling-Up

Many advocates of social programs have adopted the language of the "evidence-based" policy movement. Under the evidence-based policy movement, programs found to be effective using rigorous scientific methods are deemed "effective" or "evidence-based" and held up as "model" programs. The assumption is that the same successful impacts found at a particular setting can be replicated in other settings or on the national scale.

This faulty reasoning is based upon the "single-instance fallacy."[4] This fallacy occurs when a person believes that a small-scale social program that appears to work in one instance will yield the same results when replicated elsewhere. Compounding the effects of this fallacy, we often do not truly know why an apparently effective program worked in the first place. So how can we replicate it?

An excellent example of a federal government attempted replication of an effective local program is the Center for Employment Training (CET) Replication.[5] Of 13 youth job-training programs evaluated, the JOBSTART Demonstration found only one program to have a positive impact on earnings—the CET in San Jose, California.[6] Based on the results for the CET, the U.S. Department of Labor replicated and evaluated the impact of the CET in 12 other sites using random assignment.[7] The CET model had little to no effect on short-term and long-term employment and earnings outcomes at these other locations. According to the evaluation's authors, "even in sites that best implemented the model, CET had no overall employment and earnings effects for youth in the program, even though it increased participants' hours of training and receipt of credentials."[8]

Just because an innovative program appears to have worked in one location does not mean that the program can be effectively implemented on a larger scale. Proponents of evidence-based policymaking should not automatically assume that allocating taxpayer dollars towards programs attempting to replicate previous successful findings will yield the same results.

Spending and Intentions Do Not Equal Success

Far too frequently, the amount of money spent to alleviate social problems and the good intentions of the social program advocates are considered measures of success. Instead, the actual degree to which social problems are reduced should be the measure of success. While continually spending taxpayer dollars on government programs may symbolize the compassion of program advocates, it does not mean that actual social problems are being alleviated.

Intentions are often confused with results. This wide-ranging problem is especially relevant to early childhood education programs. These programs are automatically assumed by advocates to level the playing field by helping disadvantaged children arrive at school without learning deficits. From time to time, an early childhood education program will appear to work. When a particular innovative early childhood education program seems to produce compelling evidence of success, policymakers and advocates of government social programs around the country appropriately take notice.

Such is the case with the High/Scope Perry Preschool and the Carolina Abecedarian Projects—two small-scale, highly intensive early education programs that served minority children. Based on the experiences of 58 preschoolers and 65 children not granted access to preschool, University of Chicago economist James Heckman and his team of researchers estimate that the Perry program produced $7 to $12 in long-term societal benefits for every dollar invested. The major benefit of the program is derived from reduced crime.[9] The Abecedarian Project, and its study of 111 children, was found to have a long-term effect on increased educational attainment with the treatment and control groups averaging 13.46 years and 12.31 years of education, respectively.[10] However, the Abecedarian Project had no measurable impact on income or criminal convictions.

Based on Heckman's research, President Barack Obama during his 2013 State of the Union Address made the broad generalization that "[e]very dollar we invest in high-quality early childhood education can save more than seven dollars later on—by boosting graduation rates, reducing teen pregnancy, even reducing violent crime."[11] In his fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget proposal, Obama states: "Research shows that one of the best investments we can make in a child's life is high-quality early education. This year, we will invest in new partnerships with States and communities across the country to expand access to high-quality early education, and I am again calling on the Congress to make high-quality preschool available to every four-year-old child."[12] This year President Obama released his FY 2016 budget recommendations that included a huge expansion in early childhood education programs.[13]

The President's proposal is well-meaning, but is based upon the single-instance fallacy.

There are good reasons to question the assumption that the federal government can replicate the beneficial outcomes purported to have been caused by the Perry and Abecedarian Projects. Ignoring the fact that these studies are not based upon well-implemented random-assignment studies, the evaluations of these small-scale programs are outdated. And despite all the hoopla, the results have never been replicated. In more than 50 years, not a single experimental evaluation of the Perry approach applied in another setting or on a larger scale has produced the same results. The same holds true for the Abecedarian program, which began in 1972.

Simply put, there is no evidence that these programs can produce the same results today. If we really knew how these programs actually produced success, would not these results have been replicated elsewhere?

In addition, the federal government has a poor track record of replicating successful programs on a national scale.[14] This point is almost never raised by advocates of expanding the federal government's involvement in early childhood education programs. The Perry and Abecedarian programs are not realistic models to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of federal early childhood education programs.

And here is the problem. With no scientific certainty, advocates of expanding the federal role in early childhood education programs cannot answer the following question: Will increased federal spending on early childhood education programs improve children's futures? Instead, the decision to favor a federal expansion of preschool learning opportunities is most often based on the answer to a less scientifically rigorous question: Will proposing increased federal spending

on early childhood programs make advocates feel that they are making a difference in the lives of children?

The answer to the latter, simpler question is almost certainly yes. Unfortunately, this faulty decision-making process often results in federal boondoggles like Head Start and its sibling Early Head Start. Just consider what we really know about Head Start and Early Head Start.

Early Head Start. Early Head Start, created during the 1990s, is a federally funded community-based program that serves low-income families with pregnant women, infants, and toddlers up to age three. The results of the multisite experimental evaluation of Early Head Start are particularly important because the program was inspired by the findings of the Abecedarian Project.[15] By the time participants reached age three, Early Head Start had beneficial impacts on two out of six outcome measures for child cognitive and language development, while the program had beneficial effects on four out of nine measures of child-social-emotional development.[16] While the short-term (age three) findings indicated modest positive impacts, almost all of the positive findings for all Early Head Start participants were driven by the positive findings for black children. The program had little to no effect on white and Hispanic participants, who are the majority of program participants.

For the long-term findings, the overall initial effects of Early Head Start at age three clearly faded away by the fifth grade.[17] For the 11 child-social-emotional outcomes, none of the results were found to have statistically meaningful impacts. Further, Early Head Start failed to have statistically measurable effects on the 10 measures of child academic outcomes, including reading, vocabulary, and math skills.

Head Start. Created as part of the War on Poverty in 1965, Head Start is a preschool community-based program intended to help disadvantaged children catch up to children living in more fortunate circumstances. Despite Head Start's long life, the program never underwent a thorough, scientifically rigorous evaluation of its effectiveness until Congress mandated an evaluation in 1998. The Head Start Impact Study began in 2002, and the immediate-term, short-term, and long-term results released in 2005, 2010, and 2012, respectively, are disappointing.[18] According to *CQ News*, the 2012 study "revealed that children who attended Head Start had lost most of its benefits by the time they reached third grade."[19] This assessment is entirely wrong. Almost all of the benefits of participating in Head Start disappeared by kindergarten.

Overall, the evaluation found that the program largely failed to improve the cognitive, socio-emotional, health, and parenting outcomes of children in kindergarten and first grade who participated compared with the outcomes of similar children who did not participate. By third grade, Head Start had little to no effect on cognitive, social-emotional, health, or parenting outcomes of participating children.[20]

In addition to the failures of Early Head Start and Head Start, multisite experimental evaluations of the Enhanced Early Head Start with Employment Services, which provides early childhood care and employment training services to families, and the now-defunct Even Start Family Literacy Program, which was intended to meet the basic educational needs of parents and children, failed to produce beneficial impacts.[21] The scientific rigor of these evaluations clearly demonstrates that the federal government has serious trouble operating early childhood education programs. These programs have done a poor job of improving the cognitive abilities and socio-

emotional development of children.

Causing Harm

The results of the multisite experimental evaluations of federal social programs generally find that these programs are ineffective.[22] However, social program advocates too frequently concentrate on any beneficial, even if only modest, impacts that have been identified. Nevertheless, politicians and policy experts also need to recognize that federal social programs can produce harmful impacts too. These harmful effects are rarely mentioned in government press releases announcing the findings of evaluations. While all of the programs in this section are identified with producing some harmful impacts, all of these programs were created with the best of intentions..

For Early Head Start, white parents in the intervention group displayed higher dysfunctional parent-child interactions than their counterparts in the control group.[23] Further, participation in Early Head Start appears to have increased welfare dependency for Hispanics.

Enhanced Early Head Start with Employment Services is a demonstration program that involves regular Early Head Start services with the addition of employment and training services for parents. An experimental evaluation of the program based on two sites in Kansas and Missouri was performed. At the time of the 48-month follow-up, the longest job spells of mothers participating in the program were significantly shorter than the job spells of mothers in the control group.[24]

For the three-year-old cohort of the Head Start Impact Study, kindergarten teachers reported that math abilities were worse than for similar children not given access to the program.[25] For the four-year-old cohort, teachers reported that Head Start children in the first grade were more likely to be shy or socially reticent than their peers. By the third grade, teachers reported that the four-year-old cohort with access to Head Start displayed a higher degree of unfavorable emotional symptoms than similar children without access to the program.[26] Further, children in the four-year-old cohort self-reported poorer peer relations with fellow children than their counterparts in the control group.[27]

The role of the federal government in funding after-school programs increased substantially after passage of the Improving America's School Act of 1994, which created the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. A multisite experimental impact evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program found a whole host of harmful effects.[28] Overall, teachers found participating students to have disciplinary problems that were confirmed by student-reported data. According to their teachers, participating students were less likely to achieve at above average or high levels in class and were less likely to put effort into reading or English classes. These students were also more likely to have behavior problems in school than their counterparts. Teachers were more likely to have to call the parents of participating students about misbehavior. Participating students were also more likely to miss recess or be placed in the hall for disciplinary reasons, while also having parents come to school more often to address behavior problems. 21st Century students were also more likely to be suspended from school than similar students.

Upward Bound was created in 1965 and is an original War on Poverty social program. Through the provision of supplemental academic and support services and activities, Upward

Bound is intended to help economically disadvantaged high school students successfully complete high school and attend college. Despite the program's lofty goal, Upward Bound participants with high expectations to earn a college degree were less likely than their counterparts to earn associate's degrees, while being no more or less likely to attain any other college degree.[29]

The Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Labor funded the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project, initiated in 1998, to assess the effectiveness of 12 different employment retention and advancement programs across the nation.[30] Participation in ERA programs targeting unemployed Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients in Houston, Texas, and Salem, Oregon, was associated with increased dependence on the receipt of TANF benefits, while participation in the program in Fort Worth, Texas, was associated with increased dependence on food stamps. The Chicago ERA program targeting employed TANF recipients was associated with increased dependence on food stamps, while the Medford, Oregon, ERA program targeting employed individuals not on TANF was associated with decreased employment.

Conducted in five cities, the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) demonstration assessed the impact of offering families with children under 18 living in public housing developments or concentrated poverty areas the opportunity to move out of their neighborhoods. The evaluation consisted of two intervention groups, MTO voucher recipients and Section 8 voucher recipients, compared to a control group that did not receive MTO or Section 8 vouchers but was eligible to receive public housing assistance. For adults and children with access to MTO or Section 8 vouchers, several harmful impacts were produced.[31] Access to a MTO voucher was associated with increased dependence on drugs and alcohol for adults. Also, MTO adults had higher participation rates in food stamps and received more food stamp benefits than their similar counterparts not given access to MTO or Section 8 vouchers. Youth from families given access to MTO vouchers were less likely to be employed and more likely to have smoked than their peers. These youth were also more likely to be arrested for property crimes. As for Section 8, adults offered access were more likely to be currently unemployed and less likely to have employment spells with the same job for at least a year. In addition, Section 8 adults were less likely to be currently working and not receiving TANF than their counterparts. Section 8 youth were more likely to have smoked than their peers in the control group.

Adult men participating in Job Training Partnership Act programs were more likely to be dependent on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits than similar men not given access to the training.[32] Male youths with no criminal arrest record at the time of random assignment were more likely to be arrested after participating in federal job-training programs, while male youth with histories of arrest experienced long-term declines in income.

In an attempt to help Americans start businesses, the Department of Labor teamed with the Small Business Administration to create an employment program to assistant people in creating or expanding their own business enterprises.[33] After receiving entrepreneurship training, Project GATE participants spent more time collecting Unemployment Insurance benefits than their counterparts who were not taught how to be entrepreneurs. While Project GATE had no effect on the self-employment income of participants, participants experienced initial periods of decreased wages and salaries earned from overall employment.

The Quantum Opportunity Program (QOP) demonstration, operated by the U.S.

Department of Labor and the Ford Foundation from 1995 to 2001, offered intensive and comprehensive services with the intention of helping at-risk youth graduate from high school and enroll in postsecondary education or training. QOP provided services to participants year-round for five years. The findings from the QOP experimental evaluation, according to its authors, provide some insight about the effectiveness of WIA youth programs. For the initial post-intervention impacts, youth participating in QOP were less likely to find jobs that provided health insurance benefits.[34] At the six-year follow-up period, youth participating in QOP were more likely to be arrested.[35] Increasing criminality appears to be a common effect of federal job-training programs supposedly benefiting youth.

The previously discussed CET Replication job-training programs were associated with several harmful outcomes.[36] Men experienced periods of declines in employment, earnings, and number of months worked. Individual participants who possessed a high school diploma or GED at the time of random assignment experienced periods of declines in the number of months worked and earnings. In addition, participants in the high-fidelity sites were less likely to find jobs that provided health insurance. Also, those older than 18 and those with high school degrees or GEDs at the time of random assignment were less likely to have jobs that provided health insurance.

Job Corps is another federal training program that has negative effects. Created in 1964, Job Corps is a residential job-training program that serves disadvantaged youths ages 16 to 24 in 125 sites across the nation. A multisite experimental evaluation of Job Corps found, compared to non-participants, Job Corp participants were less likely to earn a high school diploma.[37] In addition, youth participating in the program worked fewer weeks and worked fewer hours per week than similar youth in the control group.[38]

In sum, federal social programs that harm their participants are not uncommon. This fact is all too often ignored by advocates of these social programs.

Conclusion

With the enormous federal debt increasingly shaping policy debates in Washington, DC, Congress should subject all federal programs to rigorous evaluations to determine what works and what does not work. The adoption of evidence-based policymaking is an important step in helping Congress become wise stewards of the federal purse. To assist in accomplishing this goal, Representative Paul Ryan (R–WI) and Senator Patty Murray (D–WA) introduced the Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2014 (H.R. 5754) in the 113th Congress. Shortly, Representative Ryan and Senator Murray are expected to introduce a revised version of the bill for the 114th Congress.

Changing the federal government's emphasis on measuring success by the amount of spending and intentions will not be easy. However, the creation of an Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission would be a step in the right direction for changing the culture in Washington towards funding programs that work and defunding those that do not work.

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STATEMENT OF JOAN ENTMACHER, VICE PRESIDENT FOR FAMILY ECONOMIC SECURITY, NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER

Ms. Entmacher. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Doggett, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the National Women's Law Center.

Millions of women struggle every day to support their families and give their children a chance at a better life. And safety net programs work, and help them lift their families out of poverty.

For example, the Earned Income Tax Credit lifted more than five million people, more than half of them children, out of poverty. SNAP, formerly food stamps, lifted more than 3.6 million people above the poverty line. But the EITC and SNAP don't count as income under the official poverty measure, so the effectiveness of the safety net in reducing poverty is often underestimated.

Research shows multi-generational and lasting impacts from programs that alleviate poverty. For example, the EITC encourages increased work, particularly among single mothers, and leads to higher wages. Moreover, children whose families receive more income from refundable tax credits are healthier, more successful in school, and have increased earnings as adults. Children whose families receive food stamps were healthier, more likely to graduate from high school, and more self-sufficient as adults. And SNAP is an increasingly important work support for low-income workers and their families.

However, there are major gaps in safety net and work support programs. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, TANF, is the core safety net for poor families with children. When it was enacted in 1996, 2 out of 3 poor families with children received assistance. By 2013, only 1 in 4 did. TANF benefits are insufficient to bring a family's income above 50 percent of poverty in any state. So TANF does little to reduce poverty, or even bring children out of deep poverty. When millions of jobs disappeared in the great recession, the response from TANF was weak.

When Congress overhauled the welfare program in 1996, it recognized that parents of young children need child care to be able to work. But federal funding for child care assistance has dropped below the level it was in 2001, taking inflation into account. And the number of children served is at its lowest level since 1998. Only one in six children eligible for federal child care assistance receives it.

Mr. Whitehurst testified about a mother who walked miles to a Head Start center to give her babies what was best. I will take his word for it, that this center that they were going to was not adequate. The key question is, what should policymakers do in response?

I think Congress and the George W. Bush Administration had the right approach when they reauthorized Head Start in 2007. They didn't turn it into a voucher program. We actually have a voucher program, CCDBG, and it was reauthorized last year on a bipartisan basis because it wasn't giving parents access to quality care. But what happened after the Head Start reauthorization was that measures were instituted to improve quality and accountability, as described in my written testimony. And the Obama Ad-

ministration is continuing the efforts to try, learn from efforts, and hold programs accountable.

But implementing and sustaining quality improvements takes adequate and stable resources. Budget cuts, short-term funding bills, and the threat of sequestration are not conducive to investing in quality. Here are a few examples of programs within the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee where solid evidence calls for increased investments.

One, make the improvements in the EITC and Refundable Child Tax Credits permanent. Failing to do so will push about 16 million people, including 8 million children, into or deeper into poverty.

Two, improve the EITC for childless adults, to increase their work participation and income. That is an idea with bipartisan support.

Three, reauthorize the home visiting program. There is widespread evidence of its effectiveness, yet it is set to expire in just two weeks.

And, third, provide adequate funding to implement the reforms in last year's bipartisan reauthorization of the child care program, so states can improve the health and safety of children and child care without cutting back on the number of children they serve.

These things take money. Where can we find it? Well, we could subject tax expenditures to the same level of scrutiny that is being called for on social programs. According to CBO, the Federal Government spends 1.5 trillion—with a T—dollars a year on tax expenditures, more than it spends on Social Security, Medicare, or Defense. And the benefits, according to CBO, disproportionately go to the wealthiest households and large corporations. Trimming tax expenditures by just one percent equals 15 billion a year, or $150 billion over 10 years. And careful scrutiny would likely produce additional savings.

In short, we have evidence that works, and the resources necessary to make the investments that will help families get ahead.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Joan Entmacher follows:]

Testimony of Joan Entmacher
Vice President for Family Economic Security, National Women's Law Center

Testimony before the Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Human Resources

Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works: Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead

March 17, 2015

Chairman Boustany, Ranking Member Doggett, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the National Women's Law Center. This hearing on "Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works: Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead" is especially important to women and their families: women are at greater risk of poverty than men at all stages of their lives, and nearly six in ten poor children live with single mothers.[1]

Millions of women struggle to support themselves and their families, and give their children a chance at a better life. Full-time, year-round work at the federal minimum wage leaves a family of three thousands of dollars below the poverty line—and women are two-thirds of minimum wage workers.[2] Many low-wage workers can only find part-time work; many have jobs with unpredictable and inflexible schedules that are especially challenging if they also are caring for children or aging parents.[3] The child care they need to go to work consumes a large share of what they earn. Thus, women and their families disproportionately rely on public programs to access quality child care, higher education, and job training; to protect their health; and to help meet their basic needs during difficult times and as they age.[4] Expanding opportunity by funding what works is vital to helping women, their families, and America succeed.

In brief, my testimony will show that:

- Public programs lift millions of Americans out of poverty, helping them meet their basic needs and get ahead.
- However, there are major gaps in safety net and work support programs, including TANF and child care assistance.
- Evaluating social programs is more complicated than Moneyball.
- We have solid evidence to support increased investments in programs that help families get ahead.
- We can find additional resources to make needed investments by applying the same standard of evaluation to tax expenditures as to programs serving low-income people.

Public programs lift millions of Americans out of poverty, helping them meet their basic needs and get ahead.

By analyzing Census data and using tools provided by the Census Bureau,[5] we can see the impact of government programs in lifting people out of poverty. For example:

- The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) boosted the incomes of more than 5.3 million people, including 1.5 million women and 2.7 million children, above the poverty line.[6]

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly Food Stamps) lifted the incomes of more than 3.6 million people above the poverty line, including 1.4 million women and 1.5 million children.[7] It was particularly effective in alleviating deep poverty, defined as income below 50 percent of the official poverty line. The family incomes of almost 2.0 million children, representing more than three in ten children living in deep poverty, were lifted above deep poverty by SNAP.[8]
- Social Security is widely recognized as the foundation of retirement security for average Americans—and it's also the nation's largest anti-poverty program. It lifted 22.1 million people out of poverty, including 12 million women and 1.2 million children.[9] Without income from Social Security, half of all women 65 and older would be poor.[10]

Yet the importance of public programs in reducing poverty is often underestimated, because the official poverty measure does not count as "income" the value of non-cash benefits such as SNAP and housing subsidies, or tax credits such as the EITC and refundable Child Tax Credit (it does count cash benefits such as income from Social Security, unemployment insurance, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)).[11] The official poverty measure, developed in the 1960s, is flawed in other ways: it uses a measure of need that is woefully out of date, does not take account of geographic differences, and does not take account of significant expenditures that affect the amount of income people have available to meet basic needs, including out-of-pocket medical expenses, work-related expenses such as transportation and child care, and taxes.[12] Recognizing the shortcomings in the official poverty measure, Congress funded research to develop an updated and more comprehensive poverty measure, and the result is the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), developed by the Census Bureau with support from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.[13]

Analyzing the SPM data provides a clearer picture of the impact of the safety net and the needs of low-income people at different stages of life.

- For children, the poverty rate drops from 20.4 percent under the official measure to 16.4 percent under the SPM, a 20 percent decrease. Refundable tax credits and SNAP, which are targeted to households with children, play the largest role in reducing child poverty. Social Security—even though it's rarely thought of as a children's program—ranks third. But even under the SPM, children have the highest poverty rate of any age group.[14]
- For people 65 and older, the SPM reveals a different, and more troubling, picture of poverty than the official measure does. The poverty rate for seniors increases from 9.5 percent under the official measure to 14.6 percent under the SPM – an increase of over 50 percent. The main reason for the increase is that the SPM takes account of out-of-pocket medical costs that are especially high for seniors—and the cash benefits that seniors receive from Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are already counted in the official measure.[15]
- For adults ages 18 to 64, the poverty rate increases from 13.6 percent under the official measure to 15.4 under the SPM, an increase of 13 percent. The adult population includes many low-income workers who receive little assistance from the EITC but face significant work expenses.[16]

Reducing hunger, providing shelter, and reducing the constant stress of trying to make ends meet is an important achievement. Research shows that growing up in poverty hurts children, creating disadvantages that are hard to overcome.[17] Conversely, research shows broader, multigenerational, and lasting impacts from programs that reduce poverty. For example:

- An extensive body of research shows that the EITC encourages increased work effort, particularly among single mothers, and improves later wage growth, which in turn will increase their Social Security benefits later in life.[18] New research also shows that children whose families receive more income from refundable tax credits are healthier as children and adults, have higher test scores, increased high school graduation rates, are more likely to attend college, and to have increased work and earnings as adults.[19]
- By helping poor families access nutritious food, SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) improves children's health and their chances for success in life. Children whose families received Food Stamps when the program expanded in the 1960s and 1970s were healthier as adults, and girls grew up to be more self-sufficient, than those born in counties that had not yet implemented the program.[20] In addition to meeting its core goal of alleviating hunger and improving nutrition, SNAP has become increasingly effective as a support for low-income workers and their families. SNAP households with at least one working-age, non-disabled adult have high work participation rates, and SNAP benefits provide an important supplement to earnings, encouraging and rewarding work.[21]

However, there are major gaps in safety net and work support programs, including TANF and child care assistance.

While the safety net has been strengthened for workers in low-wage jobs through policies like improvements to the EITC and refundable Child Tax Credit, it has been weakened for parents who can't find jobs or are unable to work. This is especially clear with regards to TANF.

When TANF was enacted in 1996, more than two-thirds of poor families with children (68 percent) received TANF assistance; by 2013 only about one-quarter (26 percent) did.[22] Cash assistance amounts have declined and are too low to meet the basic needs of the families who receive them; TANF benefits are insufficient to bring a family's income above 50 percent of the federal poverty line in any state.[23] TANF is the core safety net program for poor families with children, but it does little to reduce poverty—or even deep poverty. In 2013, TANF lifted only 284,000 children out of deep poverty,[24] compared to two million for SNAP.

The restructuring of TANF into a fixed block grant made it less responsive during the Great Recession. TANF responded "only modestly" to significant increases in need at the national level—and in some states was wholly inadequate, with caseloads actually declining during the recession.[25]

Child care assistance is a crucial work support for low-income parents. To be able to work, parents of young children need access to safe, reliable, affordable child care that promotes their children's healthy development. But child care is a major expense, especially for lower-income families. Families who pay for child care for children under five spend, on average, 36 percent of their incomes if they are below the federal poverty level; 20 percent, if they are between 100-200 percent of poverty; and 8 percent, if they are at or above poverty.[26]

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is the major federal child care program. When the program was reauthorized in 1996 as part of the broader welfare overhaul, Congress recognized that making child care assistance more available to low-income families would help families avoid going on welfare and help them stay off. It increased funding for CCDBG and the number of children served increased. Research found that single mothers who received child care assistance were about 40 percent more likely to be employed after two years than those who did not receive such help.[27] But federal funding for child care assistance is significantly below where it was in Fiscal Year 2001, after adjusting for inflation,[28] and the number of children served by CCDBG has declined.

The average number of children receiving child care assistance each month in 2013, 1.46 million, was at its lowest level since 1998; since 2006, an estimated 315,000 children have lost child care assistance.[29] The latest data shows that only one in six children eligible for federal child care assistance received it.[30] Eighteen states had waiting lists or frozen intake as of February 2014.[31] Even families that receive assistance often face substantial co-payments that consume a large portion of their incomes,[32] and reimbursement rates for providers—often low-income women themselves—are frequently inadequate. As of February 2014, only one state paid child care providers receiving CCDBG assistance at the federally recommended rate—a sharp decline from 2001, when over 40 percent of states set their reimbursement rates at this level.[33]

Parents' stories, as well as statistics, provide evidence of the importance of child care assistance.

When Sheila, a Maine mother, testified to the Senate Health, Education, and Pensions Committee in 2002, she had left her abusive husband and was on her state's waiting list for child care assistance. She described her struggle with child care costs. "The problem I'm facing is, although I believe my day care deserves every penny of it, my child care expenses are 48 percent of my weekly net income. I see no other way to fully provide for my son if this program can't help us. I make $18,000 a year……I'm asking for the ability to work to provide for my son." After testifying, Sheila did receive a child care subsidy. Years later, she wrote to the National Women's Law Center years. "I have been working as an Insurance Agent for 8 years now. My son is doing excellent. He was recently invited to test for the Johns Hopkins University Talent Search due to his high scores on the standardized tests at school. I was able to buy a home through the Rural Development agency a year ago. I honestly would not have been able to accomplish any of this without the child care assistance when I needed it."

Rita, a Maryland mother who received the child care assistance she needed, states the case concisely. "You can't go to a job interview with a baby. It just doesn't work. And you can't go to a job every day unless your child is safe, and cared for, reliably. I have that peace of mind. I needed just a few months of child care assistance to help us get our life together."

Evaluating social programs is more complicated than Moneyball.

Spring is in the air and opening day is just a couple of weeks away. I'd like to go with a baseball metaphor—but Moneyball has its limits as a model for government.[34] Moneyball is about using

"sabermetrics" statistics to identify baseball players with a high likelihood of winning who are undervalued by the market—and therefore affordable by teams that aren't the New York Yankees. That's a smart approach for a major league team manager. But the manager of a government-funded program who did that would be "creaming"— making performance statistics look good by selecting participants who are most likely to succeed, while leaving people more in need behind.

Evaluating the effectiveness of social programs is more complicated than Moneyball. It's easy to define the goal of a major league team manager and to measure success by games won and lost. There are multiple ways of defining and measuring "improved outcomes for at-risk children." And government programs are attempting to solve profoundly difficult problems in a challenging and changing environment; single interventions are unlikely to produce miraculous results.

> We seek better lives for our children even as the nation is experiencing more income inequality, less upward mobility, larger numbers of single-parent families and greater numbers of people living in census tracts where at least 40% of residents are at or below the federal poverty line. The characteristics of these neighborhoods, including not only poverty but also crime, violence, dilapidated housing, high unemployment, poor schools and few social supports, are all risk factors for poor long-term outcomes.[35]

To better use evidence to solve these tough problems, researchers are developing broader frameworks for gathering and analyzing evidence about how to achieve better outcomes, seeking information from multiple sources, including insights from clients and providers as well as researchers—and using the information for real-time learning and improvement. [36] Large scale, multi-site experimental impact evaluations of the type described by David Mulhausen in earlier testimony to the Subcommittee [37] are one source of evidence about what works—but they are only one type of evidence. As the General Accountability Office (GAO) has explained, randomized experiments may be infeasible—or unethical—in evaluating the effectiveness of government programs.[38] Multi-site, multi-year experimental research takes time and money. And, by the time an experiment is fully evaluated, the needs of the target population, the social and economic environment, and the program may have changed—so results need to be interpreted with care and evaluated with other evidence.

The Head Start program provides a good example of the importance of evaluating multiple sources of evidence and using it for real-time learning and improvements. The multiple benefits of high-quality early education—especially, but not only, for children in lower-income families—are demonstrated by both small experimental studies and large scale studies of Head Start as well as state or local prekindergarten programs in places as diverse as Tulsa, Boston, and Chicago.[39] The experimental Head Start Impact study, begun in 2002, found that participants made statistically significant gains over the course of the program in a number of areas, including cognitive-academic development, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, and health; however, for participants overall, the differences did not persist into elementary school.

The results of the Head Start Impact Study need to be evaluated carefully, as several researchers have noted.[40] The study does not show whether the convergence of test scores in elementary school between the test group and the control group was the result of "fade out" among the test group or "catch up" among the control group because they received additional help. It has not continued long enough to see if some of the non-cognitive gains children made in Head Start led to better outcomes in adulthood, as other longitudinal studies of Head Start and early education programs have found.[41] And conducting controlled experiments with real people has limits; researchers couldn't tell parents whose children were assigned to the control group because they were turned down for enrollment in one Head Start program that they couldn't enroll their children in a different early education program. About half of four-year-olds and 40 percent of three-year-olds in the "control" group were enrolled in other early learning programs, including child care centers, preschool programs, and other Head Start programs.[42]

The Head Start program we have today is not the Head Start program that was evaluated by the Impact Study starting in 2002. Several important steps were taken to reform and strengthen the Head Start in its 2007 reauthorization. These included requiring increased credentials for teachers—today, 73 percent of Head Start teachers have a B.A. degree; expanded observations for evaluation; and competition for programs not meeting certain quality benchmarks. Under the Designation Renewal System established pursuant to the reauthorization, grantees that fall short on quality benchmarks, including classroom quality, health and safety, financial accountability, and program management standards, are now required to re-compete for funding. In addition, evaluation and data are being employed to continuously strengthen the program; the Office of Head Start uses the best available science on early learning and development to review and update quality performance measures and target quality improvement efforts at grantees that most need it.[43]

Congress and the Administration have created a framework for evaluating and promoting quality improvements in Head Start. But implementing and sustaining quality improvements takes adequate, stable, and predictable resources to hire well-qualified staff, invest in safe and well-equipped facilities and materials, and provide children sufficient instructional time. Short-term funding bills and the threat of sequestration are not conducive to investing in quality. For example, cuts from sequestration in 2013 forced Head Start programs around the country to cut slots for children, lay off staff, reduce staff training, cut back full-day and full-year programs, cut back on materials and snacks, and eliminate transportation and other services.[44]

Head Start is not the only area in which the Obama Administration is using research to evaluate the effectiveness of programs. As Ron Haskins, a frequent witness before this Subcommittee, who helped House Republicans design the 1996 welfare overhaul and later advised President George W. Bush on social policy, concluded, "Hardly anyone knows it, but since its earliest days the Obama Administration has been pursuing the most important initiative in the history of federal attempts to improve social programs."[45]

There's always more we can learn about what works—and in a changing world, the process of trying and learning, and trying and learning, must be ongoing. But we know enough—today—to support increased investments in programs that help low-income individuals and families get ahead.

We have solid evidence to support increased investments in programs that help low-income people get ahead.

I'll just give a just few examples, focusing on programs within the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee, where solid evidence calls for further investments.

- Refundable tax credits for working families dramatically reduce poverty, encourage work, and provide long-lasting health and educational benefits for children, as my earlier testimony explains. Conversely, failure to extend the 2009 improvements in the Earned Income Tax Credit and refundable Child Tax Credit will push about 16 million more people, including eight million children, into, or deeper into, poverty, after the improvements expire in 2017.[46] The case for making these improvements permanent could hardly be clearer.
- The EITC has been dramatically effective in increasing work effort by single mothers. But it provides virtually no help to a childless adult working full-time in a minimum wage job. Indeed, millions of childless workers are taxed into, or deeper into, poverty by federal income and payroll taxes. By increasing the EITC for workers without qualifying children, as policy makers in both parties have proposed, Congress could reward and encourage their work.[47]
- There's widespread agreement about the effectiveness of home visiting programs for vulnerable families.[48] Ron Haskins highlighted home visiting as one of the programs that "produce solid impacts that can last for many years."[49] But when the program came up for reauthorization in 2014, it was only reauthorized for a year—and that expires in just two weeks, on March 31. There's no reason—and little time—to wait.
- Last year, on a bipartisan basis, Congress reauthorized the major federal child care program, CCDBG. The prior reauthorization was nearly 20 years ago, during the 1996 welfare overhaul, when many Members of Congress viewed the program primarily, if not only, as a work support to enable low-income parents to avoid welfare. The latest CCDBG reauthorization recognizes that child care is a two-generation support with two important and complementary goals: supporting parents' work by helping them access affordable and reliable child care, and promoting children's healthy development by improving the health and safety of children in child care settings.

  The new law includes a number of provisions designed to improve the health and safety of children and strengthen the quality of care, including having states set more consistent health and safety standards; requiring more consistent evaluation and monitoring of providers; increased training for providers; and an increased set-aside for investments in quality and to increase the supply and quality of infant and toddler care. The law also includes provisions to make it easier for parents to access child care assistance to help them maintain employment and to provide more stable care for their children, including simplifying eligibility and redetermination requirements. This will also allow child care assistance to be better coordinated with other programs. The new law also calls for strengthening consumer education requirements so that parents will have more information when choosing their child care arrangements.[50]

  The reauthorization of CCDBG reflects a new vision for child care in the United States. However, Congress failed to authorize adequate funding to implement the new

requirements.[51] Additional mandatory funding, because it is more stable and predictable than funding through the annual appropriations process, would be particularly helpful to states as they make decisions about implementation. However, CCDBG's mandatory funding has been frozen since FY 2006, and funding in many states is already inadequate to meet the need.[52] Without additional resources, states may find it difficult to meet the law's requirements without reducing the number of children served or support to providers.

This Subcommittee should recommend the mandatory funding needed to implement the law effectively, so that parents to can earn while their children learn.

We can find additional resources to make needed investments by applying the same standard of evaluation to tax expenditures as to programs serving low-income people.

My testimony recommends increased funding for programs that help low-income people get ahead. By subjecting tax expenditures—also within the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee—as well as defense and other programs to the same standard of evaluation applied to social programs, Congress can identify ways to achieve savings to fund needed investments.

As the Congressional Budget Office explains, tax expenditures "resemble federal spending in that they provide financial assistance to particular activities, entities, or groups of people. Like conventional federal spending, tax expenditures contribute to the federal budget deficit. They also influence people's choices about working, saving, and investing, and they affect the distribution of income."[53]

The more than 200 tax expenditures in the individual and corporate income tax code are projected by CBO to total $1.5 trillion in FY 2015 alone—substantially more than the federal government spends on Social Security, Medicare, or defense.[54] Tax expenditures are not subject to annual appropriations; they are entitlements available to anyone who qualifies. But, because of their budgetary treatment, tax expenditures are much less transparent than spending on mandatory benefit programs.[55]

In addition, the benefits of tax expenditures are distributed unevenly across the income scale. CBO analyzed the distribution of the ten largest individual tax expenditures, which account for about two-thirds of all tax expenditures. It found that in 2013, more than half of the tax benefits went to households in the top fifth percent of the income distribution, with 17 percent going to the top one percent. In contrast, 13 percent of the benefits of these tax expenditures go to households in the middle fifth. Only eight percent went to households in the bottom fifth of the income distribution—even though the tax expenditures analyzed included the refundable portions of the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit.[56] Tax incentives in the individual income tax code designed to help people build assets—to save and invest, buy a home, finance a college education—are upside-down, disproportionately benefiting higher-income families while doing little or nothing for families that need help the most.[57]

Tax expenditures on the corporate income tax side, including those decried as "lobbyist loopholes" by former Ways and Means Chair Dave Camp when he released his tax reform plan,[58] are also costly and concentrated among the largest corporations. A study by Citizens for Tax Justice and the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy found that of the 288 Fortune 500 companies that were consistently profitable over a five-year period, 26 paid no corporate income

tax at all over the period; 111 (39 percent) paid zero in at least one year—and they were profitable every year; and 93 (32 percent) paid an effective corporate tax rate of less than 10 percent over the period. The 288 companies received a total of $364 billion in tax subsidies over the five year period.[59]

In short, we have evidence of what works and the resources necessary to make the investments that will help families get ahead. Thank you again for giving me this opportunity to testify.

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[5] For example, the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey Table Creator, http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html, permits users to compare various income definitions to a number of different poverty measures.
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[7] *Id*.
[8] NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement 2014 (CPS ASEC) using CPS Table Creator, http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html (last accessed March 12, 2015).
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[12] *Id*.
[13] *Id*.
[14] *Id*., and NWLC calculations based on *Id.* at Tables 1 and 5a.
[15] *Id*.

[16] *Id*.
[17] See, e.g., Children's Defense Fund, Ending Child Poverty Now (2015), http://www.childrensdefense.org/newsroom/mediaresources/ending-child-poverty-now.pdf.
[18] Chuck Marr et al., Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, *EITC and Child Tax Credit Promote Work, Reduce Poverty, and Support Children's Development, Research Finds* (March 3, 2015), http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3793.

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[20] Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, *Introduction to SNAP* (Jan. 8, 2015), http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=2226.
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[31] *Turning the Corner, supra* note 28.
[32] *Id.*
[33] *Id.*
[34] Materials about "Moneyball for Government" are at http://moneyballforgov.com/.
[35] Lisbeth Schorr et al., Friends of Evidence at the Center for the Study of Social Policy, An Evidence Framework to Improve Results (2014), *available at* http://www.cssp.org/policy/evidence/AN-EVIDENCE-FRAMEWORK-TO-IMPROVE-RESULTS.pdf.

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[50] Karen Schulman, Hannah Matthews, Julie Vogtman, Christine Johnson-Staub, and Helen Blank, National Women's Law Center and CLASP, *Implementing the Child Care and Development Block Grant: A Guide for States* (forthcoming 2015).

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[52] *Id*.

[53] Congressional Budget Office, *The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2015 to 2025* (Jan. 2015), at 101 http://www.cbo.gov/publication/49892.

[54] *Id*. at 102.

[55] *Id*.

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Chairman BOUSTANY. Thank you. And, for the record, I want to mention that yesterday Representative Dave Reichert and I introduced the Home Visiting Extension Act of 2015. We are going to reauthorize that.

Ms. Entmacher. Thank you——

Chairman BOUSTANY. Because it is a program that is showing promise. And we are hoping to get data toward the end of the year to truly prove that case. So I just wanted to make sure that goes on the record.

I think there is a lot of room for bipartisan agreement here. This is an area that we can make a difference in the lives of many Americans who are struggling. But I think it is—we have a moral imperative to look at the facts, and to really start to make, you know, heads or tails—to make sense out of these programs, and what is working.

And I could tell you my previous life was in medicine. I was a cardio-thoracic surgeon. And I remember in 1988 there was an article that came out in the New York Times looking at cardiac surgery programs in the State of New York. And the mortality and morbidity statistics were all over the map. And one of the finest institutions in New York State had some of the worst outcomes, based on that analysis. But it turned out that the analysis was faulty, because they weren't doing risk adjustment. And that particular institution was getting all the difficult cases.

We have, I think, a moral imperative to look at the scientific basis behind this, and to get the data, get the evidence, and use it appropriately. Because, at the end of the day, those on this side of the aisle and those on this side of the aisle want to have programs that work. We owe it to the taxpayer and we owe it to those who are most in need.

Mr. Bridgeland, in your testimony you laid out six points. You have talked at length in your testimony, and you described these in your chapter in Moneyball for Government. But—and these all make complete sense to me. I think they are common-sense approaches. But, given your experience in the Bush Administration, and now, in your current capacity, working with Results for America on the Moneyball project, help us understand. What are the one or two steps we can start with to really get the ball rolling on this?

Mr. Bridgeland. Well, first, let me say congratulations on the new information about the expansion of home visiting. We discovered David Olds in Baltimore actually built in evidence at the very beginning of the Nurse Family Partnership Program. Because he did that, because it was subject to randomized control trials, the program has been expanded in 31 states. And now $1.5 billion across the United States goes to help boost the life incomes—outcomes for newborn children, their mothers, their health, their employment.

I would say that the nice thing about all the testimony, including your opening statements, is that we need to build an evidence base and be serious about it. Every sector in our country invests billions of dollars in research and development. You talk about Consumer Reports, trying to understand what is it that is going to actually help the people we are trying to serve.

In 2005 I was contacted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and asked if we could look at a—the first-ever national cross-sample of the more than million young people in this country who drop out of high school every year. And we did a survey and we discovered remarkable things: that most could have made it; that there were significant life challenges that caused them to drop out; that they had big dreams, just like other children.

And I think, Joan, you mentioned in your testimony the power of actually listening to the people that we are trying to help, to see what is the intersection between what a young person faces in school, and why they decide to drop out. And what does the evidence tell us about what will help them stay in school?

I mentioned, obviously, investing one percent—and that is a significant investment. Imagine if, across every department and agency, we actually had one percent of funds, discretionary funds, invested in evidence base and evaluations. You would eventually have a Consumer Reports and an annual update to the nation on how programs across government are helping to serve low-income youth and families.

Joan mentioned SNAP. I was completely taken by the 2014 longitudinal study. Mr. Doggett, you mentioned the power of longitudinal studies. So SNAP not only helps address severe malnutrition, and give access to alleviate hunger, we now know, from a longitudinal study in the 1970s—tracked those who had the program to the present day—that high school graduation rates have increased by 18 percentage points, that the employment rates of the mothers is much higher, and that the welfare receipts are much lower.

You talk about the moral and societal imperative, Mr. Chairman. I would just close by saying there is also an economic and taxpayer imperative. When the White House Council for Community Solutions, we discovered 6.7 million opportunity youth—young people disconnected from school and work, representing tremendous loss to—human capital—to the country, they cost taxpayers $93 billion every year if we fail to reconnect them. So there is a social, moral, and economic imperative to do better. Thank you.

Chairman BOUSTANY. Yes. Longitudinal studies are important, because they go beyond just simply a snapshot.

Mr. Bridgeland. Right.

Chairman BOUSTANY. They give you real trends, and they allow policymakers to use that information for quality improvement.

Mr. Whitehurst, I—one of the things that came out of that newspaper article in the New York Times about thoracic surgery programs was the creation of a database that 90 percent of cardiac surgeons participate in now. And I used that, and I had to fight some obstructionists. But in my early days of my practice, we used that to actually implement significant cost savings and quality enhancement in the hospitals where I worked, achieving a top 100 status in the country for our heart program.

And one of the steps Mr. Bridgeland mentions in his testimony is setting up what-works clearinghouses at each agency to build evidence around interventions that are effective and those that are not. And you have done this. You have gone through this at the De-

partment of Education. So could you talk to me about some of the challenges you faced as you went through this process?

Mr. Whitehurst. I am glad to try to do that. There were significant challenges.

The first was to convince people there was any reason to do this. There was an assumption that we know what works in education, we just need to spend on it. And, in fact, we knew almost nothing about what works. And that was one of the challenges of creating the what-works clearinghouse.

Mr. Bridgeland and I were talking before the meeting, that Secretary Spellings for a while called it the nothing-works clearinghouse, because we were spending a lot of money on it, and weren't finding anything that worked. So the first challenge is convincing people that, actually, evidence is extremely important. And it is a first-order investment, if you are delivering social and education programs.

The second challenge was to build something that was—could survive the almost-certain attacks that would come from those whose oxes [sic] were gored. And so, we couldn't have just a bunch of people sitting around a table, talking about it, and deciding, based on their own views, that this program works and that program doesn't. So we had to build a rule-based system that was reliable, such that anybody could take the same rules, and, if they were well trained, come to the same conclusions. And that wasn't an easy technical job.

The third challenge was to create an interface to this information that people would actually access and use. And I think that continues to be a challenge for the what-works clearinghouse. I haven't been associated with it for six years now. It is better than it used to be, but it is still written more for researchers than it is for ordinary consumers.

And I think the final challenge is to pull together and make some sense not only of whether particular programs or interventions work, one by one, but what is the appropriate policy stance to take with respect to those findings. And it is difficult for a Federal Government agency to do that, because you are going beyond strictly the information given to recommendations that are, essentially, political, as to what needs to be done with that.

So, you know, I think that is a missing element here, and maybe is something that a Commission on Evidence-Based Policy could address, that an individual agency-based what-works clearinghouse could not. Thank you.

Chairman BOUSTANY. Thank you.

Mr. Doggett.

Mr. DOGGETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is a new report out this morning from the Center for Budget and Public Policy Priorities, indicating that the safety net lifted 39 million Americans out of poverty in 2013.

And I would ask that a summary of that report be made a part of that record.

Chairman BOUSTANY. Without objection.

[The information follows: The Honorable Mr. Doggett Submission]

Safety Net Lifted 39 Million Americans out of Poverty in 2013

March 17, 2015 at 8:01 AM

http://www.cbpp.org/blog/safety-net-lifted-39-million-americans-out-of-poverty-in-2013

As the House Ways and Means Committee holds a hearing today on empirical evidence for poverty programs, it's worth recalling that safety net programs cut poverty nearly in half in 2013, lifting 39 million people out of poverty. The figures rebut claims that government programs do little to reduce poverty.

Our analysis of Census data shows that, in 2013:

- Government policies cut the number of poor Americans by 39 million — from 88 million to 49 million.

  Of the 39 million people, "universal" assistance programs such as Social Security and unemployment insurance, which are widely available irrespective of income, cut poverty by 19 million. "Means-tested" benefits such as rent subsidies, SNAP (formerly food stamps), and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which target households of limited means, cut poverty by another 20 million.

- For millions more people, government assistance makes poverty less severe: 34 million poor people were less deeply poor because of safety net benefits.

These figures use the federal government's new Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), which — unlike the official poverty measure — accounts for taxes and non-cash benefits as well as cash income. (The SPM also makes other adjustments, such as taking into account out-of-pocket medical and work expenses and differences in living costs across the country.) Because the SPM includes taxes and non-cash benefits, it gives a more accurate picture of the impact of anti-poverty programs than the official poverty measure.

Other analysts have recently used SPM data to show the strong impact of poverty programs. For example,

- Safety net programs lift thousands of children above the poverty line in every state, from 15,000 in Wyoming to 1.3 million in California, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count project.
- Two tax credits for working families — the EITC and Child Tax Credit — combine to lift more than 9 million people in working families out of poverty, including more than 1 million each in Texas and California, according to the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program.

If anything, these figures, understate the safety net's impact. That's because survey data miss a large share of safety net income due to underreporting by participating households, who often have trouble recalling benefits received months earlier or may feel embarrassed about receiving help.

Mr. DOGGETT. And let me ask you, Ms. Entmacher, about that. For all of the problems, the inefficiencies, and the need to seek improvement, what is the effect likely to be of having substantial cuts to that safety net program of the type that—we will get shortly the Republican budget for this year—but the Republican budget for last year had, I believe, some 69 percent of its cuts from these low-income programs, including the SNAP program we have heard about this morning. What would be the effect on the inequality gap that this country has already, and on those poor families, if we make those type of cuts in the budget?

Ms. Entmacher. It is really frightening to contemplate what the effect would be. I mean the first thing we know is that cuts that focus on programs for low-income people would fall most heavily on women and children who are the large majority of poor people in this country, and the people who rely most on these safety net programs.

I talked about deep poverty. These are families who are living with incomes below 50 percent of the poverty line. For many of them, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families does not exist. It is gone. The only thing they had when they couldn't find jobs during the great recession, and they couldn't get unemployment insurance because they didn't qualify, or it had run out, and they couldn't get TANF, all they had was SNAP. And SNAP helped. It really was effective, because it was automatically there when need increased. And during part of the great recession, benefits were increased, so at least these families could get food on the table.

It is really frightening to imagine what will happen when that goes away. And we have heard—Mr. Bridgeland just talked about what a difference it makes to have children and people who are trying to get jobs have an adequate diet. You can't go to work if you are hungry, if your kids are hungry. You can't go to work with a child in tow. You can't, you know, take a baby to a job interview. You are not going to get hired. So we really need to maintain a strong safety net if we want families to get ahead.

Mr. DOGGETT. And I suppose, just generally, the question on evidence-based evaluations is whether the goal is to enhance, to strengthen, to improve, see that the taxpayer's money is well spent, and we accomplish the maximum good, or whether it is the conclusion that it is just not worth spending any money in this area, and the goal is to terminate, cancel, and cut, which seems to be the approach taken in this unfortunate Republican budget.

Let me ask you also—several of you referred to the family visiting programs, and I am pleased to hear for the first time that the chairman and the former chairman of this Committee intend authorization legislation. It was a real struggle to get the funding for that program through the next two weeks last year. We couldn't get more than another year extension. And now we are two weeks away from a program that has broad support, and all that is being suggested, unlike the permanent answer for health care providers in the proposed SGR fix, is another two years.

Does this stop-start lack of certainty about a program that does enjoy broad support, evidence-based support—even though we don't have the final evaluation in that was originally incorporated in the legislation, we do have other evidence of it—what is the effect on

programs like home visiting, family visiting, of approaching its funding in that way?

Ms. Entmacher. Well, actually, Mr. Chairman, I am not as familiar with the home visiting program as I am with the Head Start program, where the National Women's Law Center went back and documented the effect of sequestration, which actually happened in 2013. And programs, first of all, had to turn away increased numbers of children. They had to cut back on the number of staff. They had to cut back on the supplies, books, and instructional materials they had for children. They had to cut back on the number of hours that they were open. And we know that additional instructional time is very important to children's success in these programs.

So, having—you know, when we find what is important to a program's success, it is important to have both adequate resources and stable resources, so programs can improve.

Mr. DOGGETT. Thank you.

Chairman BOUSTANY. Before I turn to Mr. Young I just want to offer a little bit of clarification. We have heard some suggestion that this is all about a budgeting cutting exercise, and I cannot be more emphatic that it is not about simply that. We have a moral obligation, as policymakers, to help those in need, and to make sure that the programs that we are using taxpayer dollars for actually work, and get the intended effect.

And we are not going to do this overnight; this is going to be a long-haul process, which I think has largely been neglected over a number of years. So we start with evidence, and we start with how to use it, and hopefully start to move the needle to getting effective programs to really help those who are in need.

And, with that, I will turn to Mr. Young.

Mr. YOUNG. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is an essential hearing. It is one that, frankly, I wouldn't mind if it lasted all day. I find it so important. I think members of staff and some of the other attendees would be less enamored of that idea. But I appreciate all of you being here today.

So, our focus is, as the chairman said, trying to figure out how we can get the most return on our investment, to the benefit of the beneficiaries and, really, to the benefit of broader society. And so, let me emphasize the extent to which we could all benefit from focusing more on the evidence about what works, what doesn't work, rigorously evaluating all these programs in the future.

I read Robert Putnam's book over the weekend, his new "Our Kids" book. He's a communitarian, he teaches at Harvard School of Public Policy, and has some interesting perspectives on different things. And I thought he made a compelling point in there. Perhaps I found it compelling because I just wrote a column on the very same topic, which will appear in National Review. And I know my good colleagues will be reading that in coming days.

[Laughter.]

Mr. YOUNG. But the point is, to distill it in sort of my language, I will borrow from John F. Kennedy, "A rising tide lifts all boats." So I think, to the extent we can get the economy moving more quickly, that is the best thing we can do to benefit all our children, all individuals in this country, and so forth, whatever their circumstances.

But some boats do need patching, right, to get them involved in this growth that we hope we will enjoy in the future. And, to the extent that we can get more of those boats rising, the tide will actually begin to rise faster, as more people get involved in productive activities, as they can make their own way in life, and realize their own human potential.

So, that goes back to a point about using evidence. I actually think—and I am speaking only for myself in this regard—but if I have compelling evidence that a program works, I am prepared to spend more money on that program in the future, if it is a real positive ROI. So this could be a revenue-neutral exercise. I don't anticipate this to be a budget-cutting exercise. I actually think the argument becomes more compelling to invest in effective social programs in the future.

Now, that will only be possible if we get our economy moving faster. It is going to require some structural changes to other policies, like tax reform. It is going to require that we make some very tough decisions related to making the largest programs of government solvent. And so we need some leadership from all sides on those issues. So they are all interconnected.

What happens—I will pose this question to Mr. Bridgeland in my limited time remaining here—what happens when a program doesn't work? Is it improved, in your experience? Is it ended? Do we continue to fund it? Maybe you could share one example for speaking generally to that issue.

Mr. Bridgeland. I just have to say Dr. Putnam is a member of our policy council, we work very closely with him. And "Our Kids" is actually a frightening indictment of the state of the access to the American Dream, and I hope required reading for all of us.

Thank you for your question. I think, consistent with what the chairman and Mr. Doggett have said, we want to create an environment of continuous learning, and not too quickly just pull on and off switches. I think it is important to look at the quality and sophistication of the evaluations. But there are examples. I will give you one.

I worked a lot in prison reform and with children of incarcerated parents. And this Scared Straight program had multiple evaluations across many sites, showing that those young people at risk have actually—entering the juvenile justice system—when they met with inmates the evidence showed that they had a 28 percent higher rate of committing crime, higher rates of recidivism. And the studies were sound, so sound that the U.S. Department of Justice actually issued guidance across the country that funding for Scared Straight ought not to continue.

There was another program where I thought the evidence was strong, but the program could have been improved before it got eliminated. The Even Start Family literacy program was the subject of three national evaluations. It showed that those in the treatment group who actually had the literacy interventions with their parents did no better than the control group. That program went on to spend $1 billion over the next 8 years. And think about the opportunity cost to young people. I wish that investment had been made in the Reading Recovery program, which, since 1984, has

reached 2 million young people, and boosted their literacy rate significantly.

So, when the chairman talks about this isn't a budget-cutting exercise, he is exactly right. It also can be a bipartisan exercise, looking at the programs that are effective, and then also those programs that clearly aren't working, and perhaps redirect funds from those programs into those that do.

Mr. YOUNG. So, to take that term, "opportunity cost," you are essentially saying that, by continuing to invest in a sub-optimal program, we are actually—as any economist would view this—we are hurting——

Mr. Bridgeland. Correct.

Mr. YOUNG [continuing]. Other recipients of better programs. Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman BOUSTANY. Mr. Meehan.

Mr. MEEHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to attach myself to the chairman's words underscoring that our objective here is not just simply to cut spending, but to find the most effective way we can use those resources.

I had a great experience in an earlier, prior life as a county district attorney working with intervention programs. And many of these things do work, and it was attaching to those that can have an impact, as we are working through. But I also remember in college reading the institutional imperative. Once something is created in government, it continues to exist on its own. So, finding the sweet spot here is really a key thing. And I am intrigued by this discussion.

One of the programs that I often hear discussed is the Head Start the early intervention with the children. My school teachers tell me that it is an effective program, and really important because, if they could do one thing, it would be to intervene at that age. But later—it catches up.

Mr. Whitehurst, what is there about the program that is good, and what is problematic?

Mr. Whitehurst. Actually, very strong research on Head Start, the National Head Start Impact Study, which was planned in the Clinton Administration, carried out in the Bush Administration, reported in the Obama Administration, nationally representative, every Head Start center was represented in the draw of participants, if they were over-subscribed—that is, if there were more families who wanted to get in than not, and there was random assignment based on that over-subscription.

There were some effects, modest effects, at the end of the Head Start year, whether it was for three-year-olds or four-year-olds. But, in kindergarten through third grade, nothing. So, just no impacts at all——

Mr. MEEHAN. And those students did not——

Mr. Whitehurst. Do better.

Mr. MEEHAN [continuing]. Ahead, they did not do better after third grade?

Mr. Whitehurst. They didn't do better after kindergarten, and they were followed through third grade. And no positive effects. No difference between the kids who were randomized and—versus

those who lost the lottery and had to get whatever they could get on their own resources.

So, that is a great disappointment. I helped plan the study, and I thought we would find positive effects. We did not. And so it suggests, I think, that we need to look very carefully at that investment.

Mr. MEEHAN. How do we—the problem when we are dealing with children at that critical age is we lose more if we continue to try to figure out what is work—what will—how do we find out, and do these kinds of testing in a real way, so that we can take advantage of the programs that work in a timely fashion?

Mr. Whitehurst. Sure. I think that some states are leading in the effort to tie children's school readiness when they begin kindergarten to the experiences they had in center-based care during the pre-K period, so they can identify the centers that are doing a good job, and shut down the ones that are doing a bad job. I think that is important.

I think if we knew that, and made that information available to parents, so they could shop for a good child care center, just as they can shop for a car or a cell phone plan——

Mr. MEEHAN. But a lot of these are school-based. I mean it is very, very difficult to have a program that may or may not be consumed by the students.

Mr. Whitehurst. Well, in the pre-school period, actually, most of the providers are not school-based. They are non-profits, and some for-profits, and—who——

Mr. MEEHAN. Well, that variable there, is that part of the problem, that you have got a lot of different providers operating them in different fashions?

Mr. Whitehurst. I think certainly the variability in quality is a huge problem. We actually don't know much about it. This is an area in which we know almost nothing. We have no information systems, we don't collect data. And so we are left with people having strong views, but not a strong basis on which to improve what is out there.

Mr. MEEHAN. I just have two more inquiries. One just generally for the panel, and then, Ms. Entmacher, I have a closing request for you.

Is there—unfortunately, a lot of times we look at programs in isolation. And the children are being exposed to a broad spectrum of things. As we have said, the safety net has good parts and bad parts. How do you isolate and determine what works and what does not when you have an overall package of goods?

Mr. Whitehurst. Well, you do it through a randomized trial, or the best approximation you can. So, with the Head Start National Impact study, all these kids were subject to and supported by the safety net. Some got access to Head Start, and very equivalent children and families did not. And so that is how you start to tease out the effect of the particular components of the overall safety net.

This is not to say that pre-K for four-year-olds—that the service for four-year-olds is unimportant; it is very important. It is to say, however, that Head Start doesn't seem to be doing the job of preparing children for school as we think it does.

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Bridgeland, you may answer that. But, Ms. Entmacher, I—one of the issues that concerns me when I look at this—and we looked at programs—the biggest factor, as I understand it, is a child growing up in a single-parent household. And that is the biggest challenge, because so many other factors impact it. What are we doing about the spouse who is not the caregiver, and responsibility on that part, so that there is a continuing obligation on the non-custodial spouse to play a role and be responsible for some of the outcomes for the children?

Ms. Entmacher. Thank you. Actually, child support enforcement was one of the issues that I worked on starting 20 years ago, when I first came to Washington. And the program, at that point, was very ineffective in helping get support from the non-custodial parent. And——

Mr. MEEHAN. Effective?

Ms. Entmacher. Ineffective. Fewer than one in three children who are in the program received any support from the other parent. And there was a long process. I testified before this Subcommittee on a number of occasions, talking about what was needed to improve the programs. There had been commissions that identified the problem of interstate child support enforcement. Parent moved to another state, state programs didn't have a way of tracking it.

So, Congress addressed that issue with a number of mandates that required states to collect and share information; learned from states what were the best practices in collection, automatic wage withholding, required states to implement that. The improvements were part of the 1996 law. They had an effect, but not quite enough.

In 1998 Congress looked at the incentives in the program and said, "We need better performance indicators, and performance indicators that will drive collections for the hardest-to-serve children, children whose parents were never married, who were poor, and reward states for those incentives." That was adopted, the program continued to improve. And the biggest collection gains were for low-income children.

Unfortunately, Congress let lapse some of the increased incentive rewards that had helped drive those performance indicators. But I think, you know, we are—you know, we have made progress in trying to get children support from both parents. But, clearly, it is much tougher to be both the primary breadwinner and caregiver, and we need to support those families.

Chairman BOUSTANY. The gentleman's time has expired. We will go to Mr. Davis next.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and let me thank you for calling this hearing.

As one of the authors of the evidence-based provisions of MIECH, the home visiting program, I am delighted to have a discussion on how policy helps to shape decisions. I must begin by stressing that Congress should extend the MIECH program as a part of the upcoming doc fix, as we call it.

In Fiscal Year 2014, home visiting programs served approximately 115,000 parents and children, 514 of whom engaged with the Southside Early Learning Network program in my congres-

sional district, one of the six MIECH sites in Illinois. In addition to directly helping almost 1,000 parents and children in Illinois, a remarkable success of MIECH is the outstanding coordinated home visiting system in the state. We must continue to fund this historic investment in evidence-based policy, and I am delighted to know that we are approaching reauthorization.

I also mentioned two evidence-based programs on which I am working. In line with the goal of this hearing, I have a bill that requests the National Academy of Sciences to make recommendations to reduce child poverty, based on the evidence of what works. By charging the National Academy with recommendations, we take the politics out of it, and focus more directly on the science. This model worked well on criminal justice reform, and I think applying it to child poverty makes a great deal of common sense.

Further, I have a bill that draws on what works in teen pregnancy prevention, to reduce teen pregnancies among foster youth to help delay pregnancy until the youth are ready to be parents. Nearly half of all teen girls in foster care have been pregnant by age 19, compared to only 27 percent of their non-foster care peers. Moreover, youth in care are more likely than their peers to have a second pregnancy by age 19. Despite these numbers, federal child welfare policy lacks evidence-based interventions to help these youth delay pregnancy until they are ready to be parents.

Ms. Entmacher, could you comment on this evidence-based approach, and how policy to support low-income youth and families through programs like home visiting, child poverty reduction, reduction, and teen pregnancy prevention [sic]?

Ms. Entmacher. Yes. The evidence shows, just looking at the reduction in teen pregnancy, that there are, you know, effective interventions. Certainly providing family planning services free of cost to low-income people has been remarkably effective.

And a recent evaluation of family planning services for low-income women found that not only was it effective in reducing unintended pregnancy, which was the primary goal, there were multiple other health benefits which produced cost savings that people who did not have multiple pregnancies that they did not want, they—the women were in better health, the babies that they did have intentionally were in better health. And, again, those early health outcomes helped them succeed better in life, as well as providing more economic security for their families, because they were able to avoid unintended pregnancy.

On the other hand, as Mr. Doggett has indicated, the success of abstinence-only programs, you know, it was—you know, those programs have not been proven effective. So I think, clearly, that one of the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, you know, would ensure that contraceptive services are available. Some of the most effective provide long-term contraceptives, if that is what women want, so that they can truly intentionally decide when they are ready to have a baby. They cost a little more up front, but could be extremely cost-effective in the long term. So I think this is why that provision is important, and supporting it is important.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much. And, Mr. Chairman, I am very pleased to hear you and other Members of the Committee emphasize that this is not a budget-cutting exercise, although we ex-

pect to receive, and I guess we may be receiving at any minute, the budget that is being proposed. And I can't help but remember that last year 69 percent of the proposed cuts would have come from programs that are designed to assist low-income individuals and families. So I appreciate your emphasis that this is not about budget cutting, but finding the best solutions and the best results.

Chairman BOUSTANY. I thank the gentleman. Mrs. Noem, you are recognized.

Mrs. NOEM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a very important hearing, specifically, because not only are we looking at our programs, but then we are trying to identify some solutions, and then hold the programs accountable to those solutions.

I live in the state of South Dakota. Our state unemployment is around three percent, so very low. But I have portions of my state that have 90 percent unemployment. And those are mostly on Native American reservations that have struggled for decades to be successful and stimulate economic development and help their families get to a position to where they can truly provide for themselves and their children.

And so, for me, this is critically important, that we not just continue to rubber-stamp programs, but that we evaluate them to see if they are fulfilling goals and actually helping people not just create a better situation for them and their children, but for their grandchildren, and their grandchildren's children, because that is how long these communities and these families have been in poverty and have struggled.

And I was very interested to hear Mr. Whitehurst talk a little bit about how he had a vision for some federal programs that currently are operating right now changing to somewhat of a voucher system, just because what I have seen in South Dakota many times—is not only does a lot of the dollars in a federal program get eaten up administratively at the federal level, but if we send them to the states at times, the states can eat up a certain portion, as well, that doesn't reach people. And even if you send them to local governments, then a portion of those dollars are gone, and they never touch the individuals, particularly, that need it the most. And it is so watered down by the time it gets there, that it is not enough to truly make a difference.

So, I was wondering if you would identify a program for me that you think really could work in that kind of a system, where it could be a program established by Congress or today that is working—or, not necessarily working, but funded—that could work better or be much more effective, potentially, as an individual voucher program.

Mr. Whitehurst. Sure. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act is up for reauthorization. You know, I would like to see the federal dollars that currently go to states and districts to support low-income children, I would like to see that voucherized. A more popular term is a "scholarship." But the point is that the money follows the student to a school that the parents want for their child. And—and this is an important "and"—and that is accompanied by information that helps parents know where the good schools are, and provides access to them. I think that could be important.

I would like to see Head Start work that way. The Child Care Development Block Grant program is an effective voucher. But by the time the states are done with it, there is often not enough money that gets to the parents for them to shop for adequate services. So they buy child care on the cheap, and there are consequences of doing that.

There is roughly $22 billion a year that the Federal Government spends on early child care for the disadvantaged. But it is spread through over 40 programs. The money gets eaten up and distorted and pushed in directions that don't really help the families. And I think people can shop, if you give them the resources to shop, and information. And we get innovation out of that, that we don't get out of ossified government programs that will change, if they ever change, over a 25-year period.

So, I—you know, my approach is to try to think of how a marketplace could solve the problem. It will be a marketplace that needs regulation and information, and sometimes won't work. But I don't think we tried that in a lot of social programs, and I think we should.

Mrs. NOEM. Well, I think it is interesting, because, in some of the areas that I am speaking about, there is not necessarily those services there today. There may be an early childhood program that is failing right now, but there is not necessarily another entity there to create that kind of competition. But if there was children there, and families who had vouchers that could give their kids a choice of where to do it, there may be more services come into that area because of that situation.

Mr. Whitehurst. Yes, I think so.

Mrs. NOEM. And that is a definite change that I think would be generational.

Mr. Whitehurst. Yes.

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Bridgeland, I would like to ask you, particularly. Do you think that programs, when they are established, have goals? And when they do have those goals, what percentage of them tend to stay true to the goals under which they were established? Or what is the percentage of failure rate?

Mr. Bridgeland. I am so glad you asked that, because we talk so much about the power of evaluation and evidence. But when the performance assessment rating tool was developed by the Office of Management and Budget in 2003, we looked at more than 1,000 programs. And it wasn't just, "Does this particular program have an evidence base?" We actually wanted to know what is the concrete goal of the program, what is the strategy to actually meet that goal, what is the implementation plan, who will be managing this program, and then, what does the evidence tell us about the effectiveness of not just the policy and the practice, but the strategy to reach the goal.

The other thing I wanted to highlight, to reinforce what Mr. Whitehurst said, and your excellent point about having these programs and policies actually reach children and families, is that when I was on the White House Council for Community Solutions under President Obama, we visited 36 communities across the country, and we asked them, "What do you need most from the Federal Government?"

And, honestly, I expected people to say more funding. And in every single community they said, "The eligibility requirements, the use of funds, the government oversight, the rules and regulations are paralyzing us. If we could actually have a more holistic approach, and look at these young people we are trying to help in a way that is not so siloed and so programmatic, we could do a better job boosting their outcome."

So, I think Russ's—Mr. Whitehurst's idea of having linkages between what-works clearinghouses across departments and agencies that look at the intersection of various programs, whether it is home visiting with early childhood, with dropout prevention programs, would be a more effective way for the government to analyze effectiveness.

Mrs. NOEM. Thank you.

Chairman BOUSTANY. Mr. Holding, you are recognized.

Mr. HOLDING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The—Mr. Bridgeland, you have referenced in your answer to a previous question, you know, two programs that you found, Scared Straight and the Even Start family literacy program, as two that, you know, evidence showed, you know, were not working. What happened to those programs, at the end of the day?

Mr. Bridgeland. Yes. So the Scared Straight program is still in existence, although the U.S. Department of Justice has issued guidance highlighting the evidence from the Campbell Consortium, Vanderbilt University, and a report to the Congress with 500 indications of the fact that this program resulted in a 28 percent higher rate of crime and recidivism than those in the control group.

The Even Start family literacy program was the subject of three national evaluations, each showing that the children and the parents did no better, in terms of their literacy outcomes, than the control group. Congress went on to spend, over the next eight years, $1 billion on that program. It was finally eliminated. And, as I mentioned previously, it would be great if those funds, from the perspective of young people, had been redirected toward the Reading Recovery program, which evaluations have shown have significantly boosted literacy rates.

Mr. HOLDING. You also referenced that you and your organization have looked at 1,000 other programs to evaluate what their goals are——

Mr. Bridgeland. Yes.

Mr. HOLDING [continuing]. You know, are there any evidence to suggest they are achieving those goals. You know, out of that, the 1,000 that you evaluated, what is the percentage that were successful and still going on, and what is the percentage that have been ended after a demonstration that they are unsuccessful?

Mr. Bridgeland. So the part—the performance assessment rating tool examined more than 1,000 programs. And 19 percent were found to be effective. So less than one in five were found to be effective programs when examining their goals, strategy, implementation plan, and the evidence behind them. Our former——

Mr. HOLDING. Do you have a dollar figure on the 81 percent that were found to be uneffective——

Mr. Bridgeland. I will tell you——

Mr. HOLDING [continuing]. In terms of the——

Mr. Bridgeland [continuing]. Mr. Holding, I—it is, literally, billions and billions of dollars. I did co-chair the White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth, and we discovered 339 federal programs across 12 departments and agencies spending $224 billion every year. And really, the President had asked us to surface initiatives to help boost opportunity for low-income children and their families. And we were able to identify a number of programs. Home visitation was one of them, Nurse-Family Partnership. Some of the early Head Start programs had some evidence of effectiveness with some fade-out effects.

But, unfortunately, many of these programs, we just couldn't tell from the evidence. We knew a lot about their cost, we knew a lot about how many people they served. But too often, we didn't know enough about what was the impact on opportunity——

Mr. HOLDING. Is there any good exemplar of a federal program that has a mechanism within the program itself?

Mr. Bridgeland. Yes.

Mr. HOLDING. Where evidence is going to be continuously and rigorously reviewed? And, you know, that is the trigger to recommend continued funding——

Mr. Bridgeland. Yes.

Mr. HOLDING [continuing]. Or the trigger to recommend——

Mr. Bridgeland. So the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act in the Department of Labor for community colleges is a tiered-evidence approach, which basically builds in evidence, requires third-party evaluations, and then gives more funding to those programs that have better evidence. The Social Innovation Fund at the Corporation for National Community Service is another example, and the Workforce Innovation Fund.

And I think both Chairman Boustany and Mr. Doggett emphasized the importance of creating an environment of innovation. You talk to social entrepreneurs who are solving these problems all across the country, they are building in evidence into the programs that—just as Congressman Davis had built in a mechanism for home visitation at the outset of the program. And it builds support for the program over time, and it also enables us to learn what works.

Mr. HOLDING. And this is for the panel. Are there any examples in the private sector that you can think of that would be analogous that have good evidentiary-based review systems built within their program that you can throw out there?

I believe someone mentioned they Googled, it is 20,000 a year. But some other——

Mr. Whitehurst. Right. Well, there is a huge industry that serves industry, running quick, randomized trials to find—A/B comparisons, they are called—to find out—there are two ways of doing it—which one works better. And the tech industry does this all the time. They can do it, because we are sitting there, clicking, and it is—they have just got to do it two different ways, and see which works best.

So, if you are—you see a big advertisement for a foot-long sandwich, or the nine-inch sandwich, or the four-inch sandwich, you can bet that has been tried, and they know which link that—the sandwich you are most likely to pay for. So it is endemic, particularly

in the tech industry, that we don't do it in government or social services means that they learn and we don't.

So we desperately need to infuse into the government provision of services the ability to collect that information, analyze it quickly, do A/B comparisons, and move forward.

Mr. HOLDING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BOUSTANY. I thank the gentleman. Let's go to Mr. Lewis next.

Mr. LEWIS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank each one of you for being here today.

Could you tell me, members of the panel, what does the evidence show is the result of letting important safety net programs expire, elapse? Do we have any evidence?

Ms. Entmacher. Well, I think the experience, particularly during the recession, but—of the increase in child poverty, and the number of children living in deep poverty, showed that TANF worked very differently in the late 1990s, when jobs were available, the Earned Income Tax Credit had been increased, and the combination of factors of the strong economy, work incentives, and, yes, some of the changes in TANF, increased the employment of single mothers, and led to a decline in child poverty.

But when economic circumstances changed, jobs were harder to come by, jobs were disappearing, welfare mothers had to compete with people who had college educations who couldn't find jobs, either. And the safety net had disappeared.

States—TANF is structured so that states are rewarded for cutting their welfare rolls. Even the work participation requirements are based on the number of TANF recipients that you have working over the number of TANF recipients. Well, in some places—and South Dakota is a good example—it is hard to find jobs for people. It is really tough. In a recession it is really tough. So, how do you keep your work participation rates up? You cut back the denominator. You don't serve the hardest-to-serve people.

And I know Mr. Haskins, who has testified many times before this Committee, has talked about the fact that there is a large group of what are often referred to as disconnected people, people who are not getting help from any—certainly not getting help from TANF, maybe getting a little help from SNAP. During the recession, the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund created jobs for people who couldn't find work. It was effective, but then it was abandoned.

So, I think, you know, we need to see that we have our incentives right, and programs designed so they can quickly respond to people in need.

Mr. LEWIS. Let me just ask—I know you all are experts—this morning. Have any of you ever had the ability, had an opportunity to walk in the shoes of the people that depend on these safety net programs? I just want to hear from each one of you.

Mr. Bridgeland. I will answer that, Mr. Lewis, and thank you for all you have done for this country for so many for so long.

One of the areas I work a lot, I am co-chair with Ethel Kennedy of the Earth Conservation Corps, here in the Anacostia. We work with young people from Congress Heights and Anacostia and other

areas, literally in view of the Nation's Capitol, who sometimes wake up to the sound of gunfire.

Mr. LEWIS. It is a great program, thank you.

Mr. Bridgeland. And just give you one example—because I have walked in her shoes, now, for 10 years—LaShante Moore was a teenage mother. She had three children, she was homeless, she was, literally, living on the streets of Washington, D.C., in view of the Capitol. The Earth Conservation Corps gave her a service year opportunity to come in and have a transformational experience that Crystal and I are going to have the opportunity to talk to you about tomorrow, Chairman Boustany, where she was able to not only see herself not as a problem to be solved, but a potential to be fulfilled.

And to help clean up the Anacostia River, this group of young people from Anacostia literally brought the nation's symbol, the bald eagle, back to the nation's capital. They fly over our Capitol today because of these young people. Imagine the hope that that gives them. I have seen her intersection with welfare, I have seen her intersection with food stamps, SNAP, I have seen her intersection with a whole host of programs. And so we walk in the shoes of these young people from Anacostia every day.

One issue I want to put on the—a subject of this distinguished subcommittee is there are 1.2 million homeless youth in the United States in public schools today. And, under McKinney-Vento there is an obligation to help them with homeless liaisons. And that is a huge area that I view as a silent epidemic within the larger epidemic of high school dropout, and I think we need to walk in their shoes. Thank you.

Mr. LEWIS. Thank you.

Mr. Whitehurst. Mr. Lewis, if it is a personal question, I don't think any of us have really walked in the shoes of somebody who is hungry. And I won't go there. I will say that I grew up relatively poor in a hard scrabble small community in the South, and everybody around me struggled. And I retain a strong sense of personal obligation to people who are having a tough time and need some assistance, and I think we need to do the best job we can to see that that assistance really helps them, rather than simply makes us feel good.

Mr. LEWIS. Appreciate it.

Mr. Muhlhausen. Mr. Lewis, I used to—in another lifetime, I used to work at a juvenile correctional facility in Baltimore, Maryland. And we would get young kids coming in who were detained for committing various crimes. And, with a little bit of structure in their life, many of these kids behaved very well. And we would just think to ourselves, why, you know, this kid here, he is—with a little bit of guidance, seems like a perfectly great kid to be around.

But, as soon as he was released back into the community, he had no structure in his life, and he would end up getting re-arrested again for various crimes, usually selling drugs on the street, and come back. And it was just a rotating door, where, as much as we tried to help him in the correctional setting, there was nothing we could do when he went back home and he had no structure in his life, somebody there, whether it was the parent, or some other person who could help give him guidance.

And so, while I haven't walked in the shoes of the poor, as—in the question you say, I feel that, in many ways, and the case of my personal experience is that, you know, sometimes a supporting family is the best solution to all these problems.

Mr. LEWIS. Thank you.

Ms. Entmacher. Thank you. I mean I have spent a lot of time listening, talking to poor mothers, trying to understand the struggles that they are encountering. Personally, I know that I never have.

I have lived on a very low stipend provided by a non-profit organization, and I tried to make it, you know, by eating a lot of peanut butter and day-old bread. Then I got sick. I went to a free clinic, and I got a prescription for an expensive antibiotic. When I went to fill it, I realized it was going to be, you know, a couple of weeks' pay, and I almost walked out, and then I realized, "You're crazy. Call your parents," you know? "You can afford it. You're sick. You need it." And the Bank of Mom and Dad, needless to say, came through. I got healthy, got—you know, got better, went back to school. I have never been really poor.

My husband was hospitalized. While he was in the hospital, being treated for a condition that I later learned had a 50 percent mortality rate, I got a note from the insurance company, saying, "Oh," you know, "this doesn't qualify for coverage." And so, I thought we would have to cover that emergency—you know, and at that point he had been in the hospital for five days. And that was very upsetting, of course. And—but I realized, okay, you know, my parents, his parents, our savings, we will cover whatever it takes and I will—you know, when I am stronger, I will fight with the insurance company to get it covered.

But for some people, you know, without health care coverage, that is—you know, that is homelessness. That is hunger forever. That is a total disaster in their lives. So, you know, I have been fortunate. I haven't had to depend entirely on the safety net, which is why I feel really committed to try to make sure that those supports are available to other people.

Mr. LEWIS. Well, I want to thank each one of you for your response.

And, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for holding this hearing, and being so liberal with the time.

Chairman BOUSTANY. I thank the gentleman. Let's go to Mr. Reed next.

Mr. REED. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I will follow up on Mr. Lewis's question about personal experiences. And I think it is clear that we bring all of our life experiences to this issue, in particular. And you know, being on the Republican side, sometimes I am accused of being part of the groups that are coming from the—the people that are born with silver spoons in their mouth. And I can assure you, being the youngest of 12 whose father passed when I was 2, and I had a single mother raise 6 of us in the household that were left, that was not the case. But——

Mr. CROWLEY. Tom, I think you had several spoons in your mouth, just——

[Laughter.]

Mr. REED. I used to. I am down 110 pounds. That is why Mr. Crowley is picking on me.

Mr. CROWLEY. What a set-up I gave you.

Mr. REED. Thank you very much. And he is a good friend over there.

So, I am committed to this issue, too, because you are really talking about a core issue in America. And so, I am interested in hearing from you, our experts here today, from the point of view from the social worker on the front line. And, Mr. Muhlhausen, I believe, with your experience at the juvenile detention facility, other folks who have done research, you have talked with numerous people on the front line.

And what I am very interested from you—and we will start with Mr. Muhlhausen, possibly—is what do they feel is how they are judged, whether or not they are effective when they are dealing with the government bureaucracy out of Washington, D.C., or in the State of New York, where I am from, Albany, or our county seats in the relevant 11 counties I represent? How do they feel they are judged? What is the metric that they have to adhere to, presently? And is that the right metric we should be creating, in their mind set, on a front-line basis? Or is there something better we could do? Do you understand the question?

Mr. Muhlhausen. Yes. Well, I—my experience is the metric that was used was getting the day without having—getting through the day without having a major incident, just making sure that nobody was hurt, that the facility was secure. And you are so focused on that, that you are not always able to take the long-term perspective of, "How can I actually change the lives of these troubled youth?"

And one of the things that profoundly impacted me was that we were told we were implementing a program called Therapeutic Communities at this correctional facility, and that it was proven to work in randomized experiments. And we were trained. We had about two days of training, and that is about it. And when I left the job and I came to Washington, D.C., I went up and I started to research the literature on Therapeutic Communities. And I found that we were in no way implementing the program that was in the literature. We were barely getting by with what we were implementing, and it was poorly implemented. And—but we were able to tell the state legislators that we were running an effective program, because it was based—it was evidence-based, it was based on a program that was proven to work, even though we were poorly trained.

So, I think your answer is, you know, it is tough when you are on the day-to-day front line. The thing about the long-term—when you are just trying to get through the day and make sure that everybody is safe, in the case when I was—when I worked in juvenile corrections.

Mr. REED. So maybe Mr. Whitehurst will go there.

Mr. Whitehurst. I don't know a lot about front-line social workers. I do know a fair amount about front-line teachers and child care workers. And I think one of the problems in that industry, if you think of it as an industry, or willing to think of it that way, is there aren't any measures of effectiveness. Whereas, we know that there are great pre-K teachers and terrible pre-K teachers,

and family child care providers who do a great job and a terrible job, and they are all treated the same way.

And, you know, I would love to see a system where, you know, if somebody is working in the criminal justice system, there are metrics that indicate whether you are being successful or not. And if you do a great job, you can make a living wage, and if you are not doing a great job, you can go do something else.

Mr. REED. Well, before we go there, Mr. Chairman, that is something I would like to explore and go on record here.

You know, one of the things I think we forget in Washington, D.C. is we issue these edicts, or these standards from afar, from the ivory tower. I think we really need to reach out to the people on the front line and say, "Okay, how would you judge yourself to say if you are effective or not in impacting lives in a positive way," and then hold people accountable to their own metrics. I think that is the best way to go about this.

And in my last few minutes, Ms. Entmacher, I read your testimony with interest. And there is 80 programs that we are essentially talking about here today that have been summarized in the material. You talk a lot about what works. Identify to me one program that doesn't work, from your point of view.

Ms. Entmacher. Well, I think, actually, Mr. Muhlhausen—I looked at the testimony from an earlier hearing on a similar subject that this Subcommittee had. Marriage promotion—I think it was Mr. Meehan who talked about, you know, single-parent families having——

Mr. REED. Because you talked a lot specifically about programs in your——

Ms. Entmacher. Yes, yes, okay. Well, marriage——

Mr. REED. So the marriage promotion program?

Ms. Entmacher. Marriage promotion programs.

Mr. REED. I am not familiar with them.

Ms. Entmacher. Yes, there is——

Mr. REED. Oh, just those general programs. Is there an actual program that you could point to that would help me to show a program that doesn't work, from your point of view?

Ms. Entmacher. Yes. There is money specifically—well, allocated in TANF for states to run marriage promotion programs. There is specific funding for it. It was evaluated. And Mr. Muhlhausen testified about it in earlier testimony to this Subcommittee. And the results found that it did not increase marriage rates in any site, which was the program's primary goal. Of course, programs can have benefits beyond a primary goal, one of which could have been the relationship between couples, so that they could work together more effectively to parent.

But, as Mr. Muhlhausen found, in only one site, Oklahoma, were there any positive benefits in the couples' relationships. And, in several sites, there was actually harm done, and there was more conflict between the couples. So, you know, again, an interesting and worthy goal, but the evaluations indicated that it wasn't working.

Mr. REED. Thank you. And so, from what I heard from that testimony is that the marriage promotion programs are something we should not support and go forward with.

Ms. Entmacher. Yes.

Mr. REED. Thank you. All right. With that, I yield back.

Chairman BOUSTANY. Thank the gentleman. Let's go to Mr. Crowley next.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this Committee hearing today. And, aside from my teasing of my colleague from New York, who I have fond affection for, Mr. Reed, I also would like to note for the record that the lack of green at the table before us—the only thing green is the light indicating that I am able to speak right now. And I am—just want to make that point, Mr. Chairman.

[Laughter.]

Mr. CROWLEY. But I do find the focus of today's hearing very interesting, in that—using evidence-based experience to formulate policy. I think that is interesting.

And, Mr. Muhlhausen, I am sure you—maybe you will find this interesting, as well. Do you have any thoughts about whether there is currently sufficient evidence about human actions significantly contributing to global warming? I don't expect you to answer that question.

But it seems to me that, with so much scientific evidence, overwhelming scientific evidence, like from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we should be pursuing government policies that reduce effects of global warming. Having said that, this hearing today—and I do appreciate the chairman calling this hearing—refers to funding that works. And I agree, we should fund programs that work.

So, I—Ms. Entmacher, I appreciate the response you just gave to my colleague from New York, as well, in terms of what is or is not working.

The federal safety net programs lifted 39 million Americans out of poverty, cutting the number in poverty nearly in half. Programs like Social Security, nutrition assistance, and tax credits for working families, like the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit, actually make a difference in people's lives. They are keeping people from falling deeper into a policy, and, to me, a policy that is working [sic].

So, we do need to fund what works, and that is fund the social safety net programs that help people, particularly low and middle-income families. EITC, the Child Tax Credit, are vital resources for millions of American families, many of whom are military families struggling to simply get by. Together, these two tax credits improve health, school performance, and provide a critical boost to a family that sets children on a path towards a much better way in life. Would you agree with that, Ms. Entmacher?

Ms. Entmacher. Yes.

Mr. CROWLEY. Thank you. I think that is why it is so important to keep supporting programs, and ensuring that they remain refundable for the low-income families that can benefit mostly from them.

We will be talking a lot over this week and the weeks to come about budgets. I suspect, as we speak, there is probably press conferences about a budget that is being proposed by my Republican colleagues, and others, as well. A budget is meant to reflect our

policies, as a country. In this case, as a party, to some degree, as well, and the same in terms of our budget, what Democrats have proposed. The budgets that have been performed [sic] by my colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle, I believe, have disproportionately cut programs that serve working families. I think that is a mistake.

And if we are focused on what works, we should be supporting, not weakening, these programs that do work to help lift Americans in their lives. If these programs keep children from going to bed hungry at night, I think we should continue them. If they provide child care and assistance, and enable parents to work and support the families, I think we should support that. If they help to keep the lights on, and the heat on, or over—a roof and—over a family's heads, I think we should support those types of programs. To me, those are programs that are working.

The research being done, and the focus on long-term outcomes, is important. And evidence-based policymaking is important. I agree. But let's not lose sight of the real goal, the goal of helping people, regardless of your political persuasion. And I did appreciate the answer that all of you gave, in terms of Mr. Lewis, in terms of walking in the shoes. I have been fortunate, as well, not to have walked in the shoes of people who are starving or hungry or without work or employment, nor my family. But I have tremendous empathy for folks who do—are faced with those crises, and I think we, as a government, should do what we can to help lift them out of that, and that includes helping parents work.

One of the toughest things I think my constituents had—have to make is when there is snow or no snow in New York State, and schools are closed, and parents are in a quandary as to what to do with their children, because they have no other means of child care but the school system. And it is painful for those individuals.

So, I thank all the panelists today. In particular, I want to thank the chairman for calling—holding this hearing.

Chairman BOUSTANY. I thank the gentleman. That concludes all the questions.

I want to thank our panelists for their, really, tremendous testimony and answers to questions in this hearing, looking at expanding opportunity by funding what works. I think this created a great foundation for us to start with, to really look at how we are going to approach these programs.

I also want to note that there may be additional questions that Members have, which is customary. And they will submit these in writing, and we will provide your answers to be part of the record, as well. We would hope that you can get those answers back to us within a two-week period.

And, with that, the subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:41 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

[Questions for the record follow:]

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April 10, 2015

Chairman Charles Boustany
Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives
Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Boustany,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources on March 17, 2015. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the good questions from you and Congressman Davis.

Please find enclosed my responses to those questions as well as a mark up of my testimony for the record.

If you have any further questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-898-0310.

Sincerely,

John M. Bridgeland

John M. Bridgeland
CEO, Civic Enterprises
Senior Advisor, Results for America

Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works:
Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead
Questions for the Record – Chairman Charles Boustany

Responses by John Bridgeland on behalf of Results for America

Question 1

In terms of federal spending on these programs, what do we usually mean when we talk about a program that "works?"

When Results for America talks about a program "working," we mean every program should have a clear purpose and strategy for implementation and follow the evidence. While the government typically collects a lot of data about the cost of programs and even how many individuals are served, these inputs and outputs do not necessarily track outcomes. RFA suggests that more programs should invest in tracking outcomes – for example, not just how many students are served by a tutoring program at what cost, but rather how those are students performing in school as a result of that tutoring intervention. We also mean how well a program is working compared to its cost. RFA thinks we should improve both the effectiveness and efficiency of government. In order to understand what programs are working, the federal government needs to invest in studies and evaluations and creative an environment of continuous learning over time.

How do we judge programs now? Do we look at just the accuracy of programs or whether they meet immediate needs, instead of looking at the outcomes of those who are served? Can you share any examples?

We know that many programs are never evaluated and there does not appear to be a culture of using evidence to judge the efficacy of programs. In our review of non-defense discretionary spending programs, for example, we estimate that less than $1 out of every $100 is currently backed by evidence – not just Randomized Control Trials (RCTs), but any sound evidence. A GAO report detailed that 37 percent of program managers said that there had not been an evaluation of their programs in the last 5 years. Another 40 percent did not know whether or not an evaluation had been conducted. However, there are pockets of progress where we know what works as a result of a serious commitment to evidence, including SNAP and Home Visiting Programs.

For instance, there are eight social programs subject to RCTs that evidence shows "work" – Career Academies, the CAS-Carrerra Program to combat teen pregnancy, Small Schools of Choice in New York City, the National Guard YouthChallenge, Reading Recovery, Success for All, LifeSkills Training and Multidimensional Treatment for Foster Care Youth. The Social Innovation Fund and Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund are tiered evidence programs that provide funds to grantees with an evidence base,

with greater funds going to grantees with greater amounts of evidence, while also requiring evaluations of all grantees to build the evidence base.

Some programs set aside a portion of funds for evidence-based activities. For example, in the last two years Congress has directed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to set aside up to 5% of Mental Health Services Block Grant dollars for evidence-based activities. And several programs give bonus points to those grantees demonstrating evidence. Pay for Success is an interesting, new approach where government only pays for programs that deliver results, using private or philanthropic dollars to fund an evidence-based intervention up front. Federal policy has supported Pay for Success projects at the U.S. Department of Labor and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Question 2

A key focus of the work of this Subcommittee is to design and administer programs that help people escape poverty and move up the economic ladder. Some argue our goal should be to reduce poverty by simply providing more benefits to more people. However, this misses the larger point. For example, we could create a program that randomly selects low-income families and individuals and provides them with cash. This would reduce poverty at least in the mathematical sense, as some recipients might now have earned income closer to or even above the federal poverty threshold. But would doing that be good enough for a program to claim that it is "effective" in your view?

The example illustrated in the question would not deem that program "effective" because it is not rooted in an evidence-based framework. The goal of social programs is not to foster dependence on government, but to provide a pathway out of poverty and toward independence. This can be accomplished even with programs that are designed to meet immediate needs of individuals or families for cash, food, or shelter. SNAP is a good example of a program that has a long track record of building evidence of what works, going back to the 1960s. SNAP helps 46 million Americans afford a nutritiously adequate diet. The outcomes of the program indicate that recipients with access to food stamps, compared to those without access, have much higher rates of graduation and earnings, and lower rates of obesity, heart disease and welfare receipt.

How do you think we should judge the success of programs for low-income individuals and families? Should the outcomes we seek be whether we have changed people's trajectory for the future by improving their habits, skills and ability to work, instead of simply providing them more money today?

Yes. Every individual wants the opportunity to climb ladders of economic mobility, have independence, and seek the American dream. One of the best anti-poverty programs has been a strongly bi-partisan one that provided benefits and incentives to work – the Earned Income Tax Credit, which has lifted millions out of poverty every year while incentivizing work. We have examined interventions in many discretionary programs to determine if a particular intervention with a targeted population

produces life outcomes, which is the ultimate goal. For example, we found that low-income schools that establish Career Academies, which combine academic and technical/career curricula, while offering workplace opportunities through employer partnerships, produces higher graduation rates and large increases in annual earnings.

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Question for the Record – Congressman Danny K. Davis

Responses by John Bridgeland on behalf of Results for America

Question

Many providers of social service programs, like social work or psychology, are being educated and trained in evidence-based practice or using current best evidence to make decisions about the care of individuals or families. Do you think the federal government could be doing more, and providing more support, to help educate and train its workforce professionals to be able to analyze, support, and use evidence to strengthen social programs?

Yes. The federal government should use its resources to ensure federal employees know how to collect and use data and evidence to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of federal programs. Results for America has had ongoing conversations with federal agency staff on this topic, and we know firsthand there is a real desire to do this work. It is likely that federal agencies are not devoting enough resources to this topic. Our series of Invest in What Works Indexes, examining how well federal departments and agencies use data, evidence, and evaluation, has found that most agencies lack a Chief Evaluation Officer to spearhead such efforts. And a 2013 GAO study found that only 37 percent of federal managers reported that an evaluation had been completed in the past five years of any program, operation, or project they were involved in and an additional 40 percent reported that they did not know if an evaluation had been completed. This tells us that the federal government needs to improve its efforts, both in conducting evaluations to build the evidence base and in building the capacity of staff to collect and use evidence to improve federal programs.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER
EXPANDING THE POSSIBILITIES

April 10, 2015

The Honorable Charles Boustany, Chairman
Human Resources Subcommittee
Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Response of Joan Entmacher, National Women's Law Center, to question from Rep. Danny Davis

Dear Chairman Boustany:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the National Women's Law Center at the hearing on March 17, 2015 on Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Families Get Ahead. Following the hearing, I received an additional question from Representative Danny Davis. His question and my response are enclosed.

Sincerely,

Joan Entmacher

Joan Entmacher
Vice President for Family Economic Security

Response of Joan Entmacher, National Women's Law Center, to question from Representative Danny Davis following the hearing on March 17, 2015, in the Human Resources Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee on Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Families Get Ahead

> "Many providers of social services programs, like social work or psychology, are being educated and trained in evidence-based practice or using current best evidence to make decisions about the care of individuals or families. Do you think the federal government could be doing more, and providing more support, to help educate and train its workforce professionals to be able to analyze, support, and use evidence to strengthen social programs?"

The federal government could do more to help educate and train its workforce professionals to be able to analyze, support, and use evidence to strengthen social programs. For example, in the child welfare area, Congress could liberalize student loan forgiveness for public service employees to develop a more skilled workforce. It could allow Title IV-E reimbursement for child protective investigation training, to help front-line staff make critical initial decisions about whether neglect and abuse reports are sufficiently substantiated. It could allow Title IV-E federal reimbursement to states for all activities of the primary caseworker, including non-clinical counseling to children and families which is not currently reimbursable. More generally, increased federal funding to states under Title IV-E would allow for more manageable caseloads, more intensive casework, and wages and benefits that reflect the education and training necessary to do this challenging work.

However, when federal law and regulations establish standards and incentives that are not consistent with evidence-based practice, trained caseworkers are put in a difficult situation. For example, in the case of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), federal law requires states to meet their Work Participation Rate by ensuring that a certain percentage of their TANF recipients are engaged in narrowly defined "work activities." Ironically, getting recipients into stable paid employment is not a key measure of success under TANF. Moreover, states can boost their Work Participation Rate by denying assistance – employment services or help meeting basic needs – to families with the greatest needs and greatest barriers to work participation, thereby eliminating them from the denominator. And caseworkers may be discouraged from connecting parents to the services that evidence shows are most likely to help them find jobs that will allow them to escape poverty, if participation in those activities does not count toward meeting the Work Participation Rate. With better designed program objectives and incentives in TANF to reward states for helping parents achieve long-term employment success and for reducing poverty, increased funding for staff education and training, and adequate services and supports for families, would enable the TANF workforce to use evidence of what works to design appropriate strategies to help families succeed.

generosity of welfare benefits will likely decrease the incentives for individuals to improve themselves. Such generosity may prevent them from engaging in meaningful activities that will boost their economic mobility. Instead of being a springboard, increased generosity could be become a trap.

If you need any further questions answered about the topics covered during the hearing, please contact me.

Sincerely,

David B. Muhlhausen, Ph.D.
Research Fellow

Question to Grover Whitehurst from Representative Danny K. Davis:

"Many providers of social services programs, like social work or psychology, are being educated and trained in evidence-based practice or using current best evidence to make decisions about the care of individuals or families. Do you think the federal government could be doing more, and providing more support, to help educate and train its workforce professionals to be able to analyze, support, and use evidence to strengthen social programs?"

Answer from Grover Whitehurst:

In my view, it is important for professionals who manage social programs and deliver social services to have better training in how to understand and use evidence to support their work. The federal government could be doing more to support better professional education around using evidence. One area in which the federal government has a unique role is in funding research and development to identify approaches to professional development in using evidence that work and are cost effective. I know of no present federal research funding that is devoted to that goal. The U.S. Department of Education could do more through its oversight of the postsecondary accreditation process to encourage accreditors of professional degree programs to consider the extent and quality of training in evidence use as one of the factors on which accreditation is based. Congress could provide permissive language the reauthorization of the ESEA, the HEA, and other relevant statutes that makes it clear that funds that are appropriated by Congress for professional development can be used to support training in the use of evidence.

[Submissions for the record follow:]

American Evaluation Association, Statement

AMERICAN EVALUATION ASSOCIATION

DATE: March 28, 2015

TO: Chair Charles Boustany, Subcommittee on Human Resources of the House Ways and Means Committee

SUBJECT: Testimony submission for the Hearing on "*Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works: Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead*," held Tuesday, March 17, 2015

Via Email: waysandmeans.submissions@mail.house.gov

The American Evaluation Association (AEA) is pleased to write in support of the work of this subcommittee regarding rigorous evaluation of federal social programs intended to help low-income Americans. This area has a rich tradition of applied research and experiments that have provided invaluable information to policy makers. We applaud your interest in applying evidence to identify those programs which can best help low-income individuals and families.

Program evaluation is essential because it contributes to assessing the strengths and weaknesses of programs, policies, and organizations to improve their effectiveness. It provides a useful and important tool to address the need for credible information, well-grounded decision making, and governmental transparency. Evaluation uses systematic data collection and analysis to address questions about how well government programs and policies are working, whether they are achieving their objectives, and why they are, or are not, effective. It produces evidence that can be used to compare alternative programs, guide program development and decision making, and reveal effective practices. By its very nature, it supplies the publicly accessible information that is at the heart of transparency and open government.

AEA heartily endorses the use of rigorous evidence about what works. However, we caution against over reliance on any one method. For example, ethical or logistical restrictions may constrain the assignment of program participants in a randomized control trial, yet strong quasi-experimental study designs might supply high-quality, credible evidence for decision making.

In general, depending on the focus of the inquiry and the circumstances under which programs operate, a range of evaluation study designs are available to provide high-quality actionable evidence about programs. Furthermore, evaluations of program impact are most likely to be useful in a broader portfolio of evaluation activity which includes attention to program enhancement, program implementation, and evidence about the generalizability of impact evaluation findings. For example, ancillary study of the operations and best practices of programs could inform managers and policy makers how best to modify promising programs in order to maximize their effectiveness.

AEA encourages Congress to ensure more social programs are evaluated to determine their impact and to consider how high-quality evidence can best be used to inform the design of social programs at the federal level. In particular, AEA believes that Congress should ensure that sufficient resources are made available for quality evaluation and encourage agencies to set guidelines for the conduct of evaluations, including the development of evaluation agendas and plans for disseminating evaluation findings to staff and the public.

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AMERICAN
EVALUATION
ASSOCIATION

AEA has approximately 7,000 members representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia as well as over 80 foreign countries. Members have backgrounds in government, academia, foundations, and organizations, bringing with them a wealth of knowledge on evaluation approaches and the use of evaluation results. We offer our assistance to the committee on the issues you are reviewing. On the AEA website is posted a document we developed to help governments engage in effective evaluation: *An Evaluation Roadmap for a More Effective Government.* *[http://www.eval.org/evaluationroadmap]* I hope you will find it useful.

AEA has long sponsored academic research and fostered exchanges among evaluation practitioners regarding evaluation methodologies that can most effectively shed light on the causes and remedies for poverty. If we can be of assistance, or if you need more information on our organization, please do not hesitate to contact me (Stewart.Donaldson@eval.org) or Dr. Cheryl Oros, our senior advisor for evaluation policy (EvaluationPolicy@eval.org; 202-367-1166).

Sincerely,

Stewart Donaldson, Ph.D.
President, American Evaluation Association

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Campaign to End Obesity: Action Fund, Statement 3/17/15

CAMPAIGN TO END OBESITY
ACTION FUND
805 15th St. NW Washington DC 20015
(202) 466 8100 • www.obesityactionfund.org

United States House Committee on Ways and Means
Human Resources Subcommittee Hearing: "Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works: Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead"
March 17, 2015
Statement for the Record
Submitted by:
Chris Fox, Vice President, External Affairs

Today, two-thirds of U.S. adults and nearly one in three children struggle because they are overweight or have obesity. The effects of the nation's obesity epidemic are immense: taxpayers, businesses, communities and individuals spend hundreds of billions of dollars each year to address the challenges of obesity, including an estimated $168 billion in medical costs alone. In fact, because of skyrocketing rates of obesity, the current generation of U.S. children are – for the first time ever -projected to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

The Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund advocates for changes in federal policy that will enable more Americans to eat healthy and be active, as well as those that provide appropriate medical treatment for patients. In its work, the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund convenes leaders from across industry, academia, patient and disease communities and public health to speak with one voice for measures to reverse the obesity epidemic and promote healthy weight in children and adults.

The Campaign applauds House Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee Chairman Charles Boustany (R-LA) for his leadership and his dedication to ensuring that tax dollars are used wisely to help elevate the standard of living for many low income individuals across the country. The Campaign appreciates the opportunity to provide submission for the record following the hearing held on March 1ih and looks forward to reviewing testimony and submissions from other stakeholders.

As the Committee continues to examine the Tax Code and its uses in society, the Campaign implores the Committee to carefully examine how tax policy can be used to advance health, nutrition, and opportunity for low income families that we know can lead healthy lifestyles. There is an important role for the Tax Code in addressing elements of this challenge. Indeed, the Tax Code has long been used to encourage actions which are valued by society and which are

likely to yield benefits to the taxpayer base as a whole. Reducing the U.S. obesity rate is doubtless a national policy goal that would yield enormous, immediate, and long-term benefits for taxpayers.

While there have been discussions in policy circles about tax approaches to penalize unwanted behaviors – and this submission takes no position on such measures – it is important to make clear that there are tax approaches that Congress can and should contemplate that can help to target desired policy and behavior outcomes at the personal, community and business level. It is that range of thoughtful, strategic, positive tax approaches that we believe has been missing from Congressional consideration, and that we urge policy-makers to consider at this critical time.

Indeed, there is significant evidence that certain obesity prevention and treatment interventions pay dividends. These interventions take place in a variety of settings and are generally categorized as community-based, school-based, workplace-based, surgical, or pharmaceutical in nature. Noted economist Alex Brill released a study on the "Long-Term Returns of Obesity Prevention Policies" in April 2013 that reviewed some of the obesity prevention measures which have been studied extensively, and for which effectiveness has been clinically demonstrated. One such program that his study highlighted is the diabetes prevention program (DPP), which was created by Congress and administered by the Center for Disease Control to help at-risk children prevent developing Type II diabetes by targeted efforts to improve their diets and increase physical activity[1]. The program has resulted in medically significant weight management and a reduction in the prevalence of Type II diabetes among participants. Another program where the evidence demonstrates success is a community initiative to encourage 30 minutes or more of walking a day. In one state, a media campaign to promote this goal reported significant successes, including among older Americans.

Most successful obesity prevention programs have been conducted at the local and community level. The Stanford Five-City Project was a six-year community wide program to raise awareness of the health and weight reduction benefits of physical activity. At its conclusion, it was estimated that the ratio of cost to the quality- adjusted life-year was improved by $68,557. More recently, New York City's Move to Improve program has reported a nearly ten-percent drop in "severe" obesity rates from 2006 to 2011 among public school students. The program educated teachers in the public schools on how to incorporate fitness into their lesson plans. It includes things like walking in place or standing desks to encourage fitness throughout the day.

As the primary source of health insurance for the working-age population within the United States, employers have also created workplace interventions with a focus on healthy weight control. This can take on a variety of programs including incentives for healthy activities, on-site work place fitness centers, individual counseling, and self-help educational materials. On

[1] Brill, Alex. "The Long-Term Returns of Obesity Prevention Policies." April 2013. http://obesitycampaign.org/ documents/Fina ILong-Term ReturnsofObesityPrevention Policies.pdf.

average, studies have found that these programs reduced medical costs by $3.27 and absenteeism by $2.73 for every dollar spent by the employer. Applying these programs to government healthcare programs like Medicare and Medicaid could produce large savings.

The evidence is clear and compelling that many local, community based programmatic interventions – a number of which have been supported or prompted by Congressional policy-making -help prevent and, in some cases, reverse obesity. From a tax policymaking perspective, then the question, is where and how Congress might use tax policy tools to make more progress, leveraging the kinds of programs where evidence tells us there will be a beneficial impact and multiplying that impact many times over. Since there is so much to be gained for taxpayers in terms of long-term budget benefits from lowering the U.S. obesity rates, it's clear that now is a vital time to contemplate such measures.

One of the main contributors to the obesity epidemic in America is the lack of access to healthy foods and opportunities to be physically active. Data shows that obesity rates are positively impacted by meaningfully increasing access to healthy, affordable foods and safe recreational spaces. For instance, according to a study by Ernst and Young, there is a direct correlation between obesity rates and the inability to access fresh, affordable, healthy foods. The data show that for every one percentage point increase in households able to access these foods, there is a nearly one percent decrease in the obesity rate in those counties. For the average county, that would mean 875 fewer individuals with obesity.[2]

Additionally, accessing recreational spaces can have a meaningful impact on obesity rates. The same study found that an increase in the number of fitness facilities in a county from one facility per 10,000 residents to two facilities per 10,000 would lower the average obesity rate from nearly 30 percent to under 28 percent and lower the diabetes rate from ten percent to nine percent. For an average county, that would result in nearly 1,000 fewer individuals with obesity and nearly 450 fewer cases of diabetes.

Finally, while there are some tax policies that may have an indirect, albeit beneficial impact on obesity prevention and reduction, we believe that now is the time to advance strategic tax measures that are explicitly designed to promote healthier communities, prevent obesity, reverse the current epidemic, and generate hundreds of billions of dollars of benefits for U.S. taxpayers in the near and long term.

Tax policy does, to a modest extent, already contemplate lifestyle improvements that can result in effective obesity prevention. In the Ernst and Young study, they issued an analysis of the impact of the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) on health outcomes associated with access to

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[2] Ernst and Young. The New Markets Tax Credit: Opportunities for Investment in Healthy Foods and Physical Activity, December 2013. http://campaigntoendobesity.org//documents/EYCEONMTC-OpportunitiesforInvestmentinHealthFina l.pdf.

healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity.[3] The NMTC is targeted at communities that often lack access to health food, basic transportation, and poor health outcomes in addition to a lack of private sector investment. The study showed that low-income individuals face barriers to safe recreation facilities and over 38% have limited access to healthy food. The NMTC has the potential to increase nutritious food access and access to safe recreation facilities in low-income communities. NMTC funded supermarkets and grocery stores have improved access to healthy foods for more than 345,000 Americans, including 197,000 children. Providing access to a wide array of nutritious foods in these at-risk neighborhoods shows the ability for the NMTC to address the obesity crisis with private sector investment in at risk communities.

Ultimately, the analysis from Ernst and Young showed that, while the NMTC is a valued tax tool, it is not enough to specifically address the U.S. obesity epidemic by promoting positive, obesity-related health outcomes, likely because it was not designed specifically to achieve these purposes. Accordingly, we believe that tax policy should also include more intentional, targeted measures to promote the type of infrastructure investments that will help make healthy lifestyles more accessible in communities where they currently are not.

Specifically, we believe that tax policy should embrace new approaches that will:

- Spur private interests to increase access to healthy, affordable foods in economically disadvantaged communities;
- Yield increased access by these communities to safe recreational spaces;
- Support economically disadvantaged individuals specifically for their efforts to adopt health lifestyle choices that are likely to reverse or prevent obesity and other chronic diseases, as well as businesses who invest in tools and resources for these consumers to effect such choices; and
- Be targeted to benefit those individuals and communities most at risk for obesity and other chronic diseases.

Please find attached a letter restating these principals from the Campaign with signatures from a wide range of interested parties that care about the ongoing obesity epidemic.

Finally, the Campaign has begun an effort to examine measures that could spur market based solutions to increase access to healthy foods and safe activity spaces in underserved communities. As the Committee continues to study this important issue, the Campaign looks forward to being part of the conversation and would hope that you will use our expertise and that of other like-minded groups to resolve the obesity crisis that is affecting America.

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[3] Ernst and Young. The New Markets Tax Credit: Opportunities for Investment in Healthy Foods and Physical Activity, December 2013. http://campaigntoendobesity.org//documents/EYCEONMTC-OpportunitiesforInvestmentinHealthFina I.pdf.

Campaign to End Obesity: Action Fund, Statement 1/23/14

CAMPAIGN TO END OBESITY
ACTION FUND
805 **15th** St. NW Washington DC 20015
(202) 466 8100 • www.obesityactionfund.org

January 23, 2014

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dave Camp
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sander Levin
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We are writing to encourage you to use the opportunity presented by ongoing efforts to improve the Tax Code to advance cost-effective policies that can bolster healthy lifestyles in key populations, and hold promise for halting or reversing the nation's costly and unsustainable obesity epidemic.

As you know, the nation's obesity epidemic has the potential to bankrupt the healthcare system. Today, there are nearly 100 million Americans – children and adults – with obesity. American taxpayers spend nearly $200 billion on medical costs associated with obesity each year. Current projections show that, absent major changes, 50 percent of the American population will have obesity by 2030, driving health care costs even further.

There is an important role for the Tax Code in addressing elements of this challenge. Indeed, the Tax Code has long been used to reward priority corporate and individuals' actions which are valued by society and which are likely to yield benefits to the taxpayer base as a whole.

Against this backdrop, we ask you to champion new tax policies that can drive private sector efforts to bolster access among high-risk populations to improved food options and opportunities for safe physical activity. We believe that tax policy should include measures specifically designed to promote the type of infrastructure investments that will help make healthy lifestyles more accessible in communities where they currently are not.

Specifically, we believe that tax policy should embrace new approaches that will:

- Spur private interests to increase access to healthy, affordable foods in economically disadvantaged communities;
- Yield increased access by these communities to safe recreational spaces;
- Support economically disadvantaged individuals specifically for their efforts to adopt health lifestyle choices that are likely to reverse or prevent obesity and other chronic diseases, as well as businesses who invest in tools and resources for these consumers to effect such choices; and
- Be targeted to benefit those individuals and communities most at risk for obesity and other chronic diseases.

We look forward to working with you to advance more specific measures which can fulfill these principles and, in doing so, yield crucial and urgent health and economic benefits for our nation.

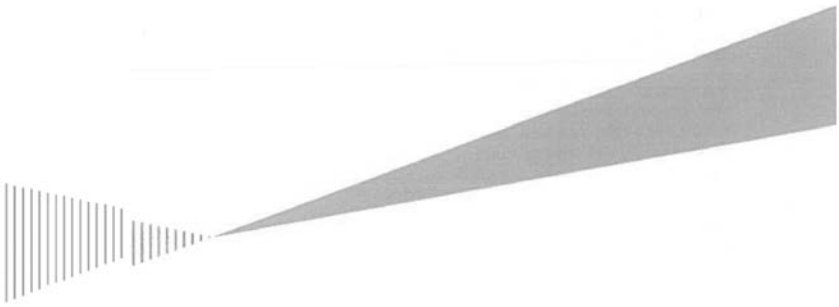
Sincerely,
Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund
American College of Preventive Medicine
American College of Sports Medicine
American Council on Exercise
American Heart Association
American Hiking Society
Arena Pharmaceuticals
Change Lab Solutions
Health Education Council, Break Free Alliance
Hepatitis Foundation International
Humana
International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association
MEND Foundation
MomsRising.org
NAACP
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Center for Weight and Wellness
National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity
National Hispanic Medical Association
Orexigen Therapeutics, Inc.
United States Soccer Foundation
Weight Watchers International

Campaign to End Obesity: Action Fund, Statement 12/13

The New Markets Tax Credit: Opportunities for Investment in Healthy Foods and Physical Activity

Prepared for the Campaign to End Obesity

December 2013



EY
Building a better working world

Executive summary

The Campaign to End Obesity asked Ernst & Young (EY) to analyze the impact of the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) on health outcomes associated with access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity. The NMTC, which is administered by the US Department of the Treasury, was established in 2000 to encourage new and increased investment in low-income communities.

Since the program's inception it has distributed $39.5 billion in federal tax credit authority matched by private sector investments in qualifying locations. By statute, NMTC investments are targeted at low-income areas, which are often characterized by limited access to healthy food, limited opp9rtunities for safe physical activity, and poor health outcomes.

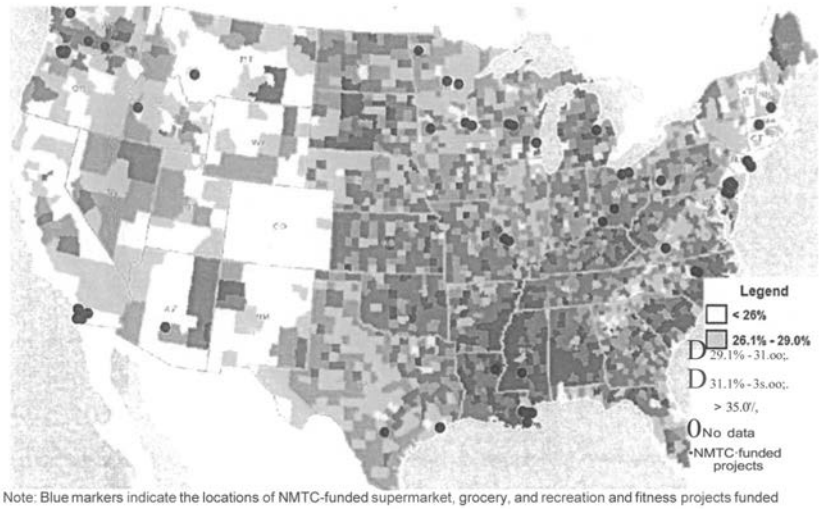
Supermarkets and recreation and fitness facilities are examples of NMTC projects that may provide positive health impacts in low-income communities. Changing the community environment to add more supermarkets, grocery stores and recreation and fitness facilities cannot make anyone eat healthy foods or become physically active. However, it can remove significant obstacles for people in lower-income communities who wish to make healthy choices. There is evidence that this type of intervention is effective at improving health outcomes. For example, living closer to a supermarket or grocery store is associated with increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Similarly, counties with more recreation and fitness facilities have lower rates of obesity and diabetes.i

By providing low-cost financing, the NMTC allows businesses to be built in low-income communities that otherwise would not provide a large enough market to support one. For example, one detailed case study shows that a NMTC-funded supermarket could support itself financially on only 89% of the sales needed to support a typical supermarket. This allows supermarkets and other businesses to offer their services in low-income neighborhoods that they otherwise might have passed over as unprofitable.

While the NMTC has potential to improve access to healthy foods and provide opportunities for physical activity outcomes in targeted communities, supermarkets, grocery stores and recreation and fitness facilities are often not directly supported by NMTC-funded projects. The NMTC helped finance 49 supermarket and grocery store projects between 2003 and 2010 that improved healthy food access in low-income communities for more than 345,000 people, including 197,000 children. However, these projects represented less than 2% of total NMTC allocations during that time period. The NMTC's contribution to improving physical activity was even more limited during this time period, funding only seven projects primarily focused on recreation and fitness facilities.

For NMTC projects funded from 2003 to 2010, 57% of supermarket and grocery projects and 69% of total NMTC funding for such projects went to counties with adult obesity rates higher than the national average {Figure 1). Similarly, four of the seven recreation and fitness projects funded by NMTC were in counties with obesity rates higher than the national average.

Figure 1. Obesity rates with NMTC-funded grocery and recreation and fitness projects



Note: Blue markers indicate the locations of NMTC-funded supermarket, grocery, and recreation and fitness projects funded from 2006 to 2010. County-level obesity rates are from 2009.

Source: US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Environmental Atlas, Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund, EV analysis.

This report draws the following conclusions about the current NMTC program:

- The NMTC has the potential to increase food and recreation facility access in low-income communities. Access to healthy foods and recreation facilities within communities can influence diet, body weight, and other health outcomes. Low-income people are less likely to have access to recreation and fitness facilities, and more than 38% of low-income people have limited access to healthy food. The NMTC can be used to help alleviate barriers to healthy food and physical recreation.
- Program take up is limited for projects that promote healthy choices. Until recently, the application process for NMTC allocations included no criteria related to healthy food access and still include no criteria related to recreation and fitness access.
- Small projects benefit less. NMTC transactions are complex and costly, which limits the benefit to smaller projects like supermarkets and community centers.

Opportunity exists for projects that promote healthy choices. The NMTC's low-cost financing can help businesses expand into underserved areas by allowing them to support themselves on less revenue in smaller markets. A NMTC-funded supermarket could support itself financially on only 89% of the revenue required by a typical supermarket of the same size.

[1] Economic Research Service (ERS), US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food Environment Atlas. http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas.aspx.

Center for the Study of Social Policy, Statement

Center for the Study of Social Policy | Ideas into Action

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS HUMAN RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE

HEARING ON USING EVIDENCE TO HELP LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES GET AHEAD

MARCH 31, 2015

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Chairman Boustany, Representative Doggett, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on how to most effectively use evidence to help low-income individuals and families get ahead.

Like the members of this Subcommittee, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) is committed to expanding opportunity for low-income individuals and families and to making sure taxpayer dollars spent to achieve this goal are used effectively and efficiently. We are working with a group of experts drawn from many fields—anti-poverty efforts,

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employment, child welfare, education and health—called the Friends of Evidence to document and recommend methods for generating the evidence we need to achieve better outcomes for children, families and communities, at scale. We share the Subcommittee's distress with the expenditure of public funds on efforts designed to alleviate poverty that are not effective. We also share the Subcommittee's belief that the wise use of evidence will ensure the most effective use of public funds.

We support the recommendation of John Bridgeland, Senior Advisor to Results for America, in his appearance before the Subcommittee on March 17, that "Congress should create an environment of continuous learning, not simply an 'on-off switch' when the evidence is unclear." We believe this approach is critical to ensuring a wise use of public funds. To solve complex societal problems such as entrenched poverty, we need a knowledge base that consists of more than a list of programs that have been experimentally proven to work—in the past and in a limited number of contexts. We need to adapt and continuously improve those interventions for bigger and broader results, now and in the future. In addition, we need to generate innovative new approaches to achieve better results.

Experimental research is important, but there are number of reasons why we also need a wider range of evidence to solve society's most complex problems. To begin with, complex problems such as entrenched poverty require multi-layered solutions that often involve multiple programs or systems, such as place-based initiatives. These solutions often do not lend themselves easily to experimental research. Second, there is enormous variability in the impact of solutions to complex social problems across different populations,

organizational contexts, and community settings. Experimental methods can tell us *whether a programmatic component* of a broader solution has worked. But they often cannot tell us *whether the whole solution* has worked, let alone *how, why* and for *whom* the solution is working. Only by generating a wider range of evidence to answer all of these questions can we gain the knowledge needed to improve and scale solutions to complex societal problems.

We are in the process of documenting exemplary initiatives that draw on a wider range of evidence to meet the needs of low-income individuals and families. Thus far, we have identified six common elements that many of these initiatives share:

1. Many sources of evidence are used to inform the understanding of needs, assets, and context, and the consequent intervention design.
2. Results are systematically tracked and used as part of on-going management and regular feedback processes to shape and reshape implementation.
3. Learning networks of many practitioners are used to accelerate knowledge development and the dissemination of effective practices and innovations.
4. Multiple methods of evaluating an initiative are used for diverse purposes.
5. A strong infrastructure supports continuous learning for improvement.
6. The people implementing the intervention and the people most impacted by the intervention participate in the process of generating and analyzing evidence.

Taken together, these six elements constitute a broader and more useful approach to evidence than more traditional approaches. To illustrate why, we summarize below how two initiatives are putting these elements to work to improve results for low-income individuals, families and communities: the Carnegie Foundation's Pathways Improvement Communities and the Northside Achievement Zone.

Carnegie's Pathways Improvement Communities has used the elements above to improve the success rates of developmental math students. This initiative addresses the problem of the extraordinarily high failure rates among the half-million community college students annually assigned to developmental (remedial) math instruction as a prerequisite to taking degree-level college courses. Traditionally, only about 20 percent of those enrolled ever make it through these courses.

A network of faculty members, researchers, designers, students and content experts joined to create a new system built on the observation that "structured networks" accelerate improvement. They are a source of innovation and of the social connections that facilitate testing and diffusion of effective practices. They provide a safe environment for participants to analyze and compare results and to discover patterns in data. In addition, they involve the people on the ground in generating and analyzing the evidence that comes out of their daily work.

Network participants identified six primary causes for high failure rates, and then tested improvement hypotheses. They used evidence "to get better at getting better," and thereby

dramatically improved outcomes—tripling the student success rate in half the time. And these improvements have occurred for every racial, ethnic and gender subgroup and at virtually every college where the innovation has been taken up.

While, as the Carnegie example demonstrates, the six elements of a broader approach to evidence can be used to improve the results of individual interventions, these elements are also particularly beneficial for initiatives that involve multiple systems, interventions or programs, such as place-based initiatives. As discussed above, experimental methods such as randomized control trials can demonstrate whether individual program components of such initiatives work. But they can neither determine the effectiveness of the entire initiatives nor can they can they generate the full range of evidence needed to improve the initiatives.

This is why the Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ), a Promise Neighborhood in Minneapolis, has adopted a broad approach to evidence that includes many of the elements listed above. NAZ is using a randomized control trial, conducted by the University of Minnesota, to evaluate the effectiveness of its parenting program for parents of infants and toddlers. However, this study is only one component of NAZ's overall research and evaluation process. NAZ also uses a steady flow of data and periodic reflections on results to establish a cycle of rapid, continuous learning and refinement of its effort to improve the "cradle-to-career" outcomes of children in its community.

For example, NAZ leaders are using a process they call the "NAZ Seal of Effectiveness." It

aims to build on the best knowledge available by adapting existing models or creating new solutions. A panel of local leaders, residents, researchers, and program experts, augmented by national consultants in the subject area, synthesize all they know from research and experience to design an intervention that NAZ and its partners put into practice. The essential ingredients are specified, along with indicators that will show whether the ingredients are used appropriately. Implementation is carefully tracked to assess evidence of impact as well as fidelity to essential ingredients. A NAZ "Results Roundtable" consisting of staff, partner organizations and a parent advisory board meets regularly, using assessment data to determine if the intervention is being implemented as intended, having the desired effect, or needs to be adapted to increase the chances of success.

As these and other exemplary initiatives demonstrate, a broader approach to generating, analyzing, and applying evidence is necessary to support the creation and adaptation of innovative solutions that will enable low-income individuals, families and communities to get ahead.

H& R Block, Statement

H&R BLOCK

Statement for the Record
H&R Block
Before the Subcommittee on Human Resources
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Hearing on Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works: Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead
March 17, 2015

Dear Chairman Boustany, Ranking Member Doggett and Members for the Subcommittee:

H&R Block prepares millions of Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) returns annually through both tax preparer assistance in offices nationwide and through our do-it-yourself offerings, which gives us unique insight into the administration of this credit. Being one of the largest filers of EITC returns, we have been monitoring the longstanding issues in the administration of this credit, particularly the improper payment rate. The Treasury Department estimates that between 24%-29% of all EITC claims were improperly paid in FY 2014 – equaling $16.2 to $19.1 billion, or approximately $1 out of every $4 EITC dollars.

We believe the efficiency of the EITC, or any refundable credit, could be improved if the Department of Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) would take the necessary steps to address improper payments both due to fraud, and due to inadvertent taxpayer error. To that end, we believe the following three steps will help to reduce the improper payment rate for the EITC:

1. The IRS should ensure all taxpayers – whether they self-prepare their returns or seek the assistance of a tax preparer – answer the same eligibility questions for the EITC.
2. Congress should enact minimum standards for all compensated tax return preparers.
3. Congress and the IRS should address the complex eligibility and qualification rules for the EITC.

To further illustrate the complexity of the EITC, we have included the following report: *The Earned Income Tax Credit: Illustrations of Complexity*, prepared by The Tax Institute at H&R Block, also available at http://newsroom.hrblock.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/TTIatHRB-EITC-Complexity-Illustrations.pdf.

We would be happy to answer any questions you or your staff may have.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kathy Pickering
H&R Block's Vice President Regulatory Affairs &
Executive Director, The Tax Institute at H&R Block

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I. Introduction

According to the U.S. Treasury Department Agency Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2013, released on December 16, 2013, (Treasury Financial Report)[1], the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) improper payment rate, reported annually as part of the IRS National Research Program, has remained consistently above 20% for more than 10 years.

According to the Treasury Financial Report, two types of errors cause improper EITC payments:

1. Authentication errors (70 percent) result when taxpayers cannot prove qualifying child eligibility, mainly because of relationship and residency requirements, filing status, and nontraditional or complex living situations.[2]
2. Verification errors (30 percent) result when taxpayers improperly report their income, allowing them to fall within EITC income limitations and qualify for the credit. These errors include underreporting and overreporting of income by wage earners and self-employed taxpayers.[3]

National Taxpayer Advocate Nina Olson, in recent Congressional testimony, uses data from an unpublished Internal Revenue Service (IRS) study to explain the sources of the EITC improper payment rate.[4]

This paper, by using specific scenarios and applying the relevant law, illustrates how some portion of the EITC improper payment rate may be the result of the complex eligibility and qualification rules.

II. Applicable Law & Discussion

The Working Families Tax Relief Act (PL 108-311) was enacted on October 4, 2004, and established the Uniform Definition of Child (UDC). As its name implies, the UDC established a standard definition for a qualifying child for five child-related tax benefits: the dependency exemption (section 152(c)), head of household filing status (section 2(b)), the Child Tax Credit (section 24(c)), the Dependent Care Credit (section 21(b)), and the EITC (section 32(c)). However, eligibility rules are not identical for the five tax benefits.

Navigation of the UDC rules can be confusing and burdensome for taxpayers and may lead some to incorrectly conclude that they are eligible for the EITC and other tax benefits when they are not. One or more broad issues are frequently involved:

1. Differences in eligibility rules for the dependency exemption and the EITC
2. The special rule for divorced or separated parents
3. The tie-breaker rule
4. Dependency exemptions for qualifying relatives
5. Head of household requirements and complications

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[1] Department of the Treasury, Agency Financial Report: Fiscal Year 2013 at 210, available at http://www.treasury.gov/about/budget-performance/annual-performance-plan/Documents/2013%20Department%20of%20the%20Treasury%20AFR%20Report%20v2.pdf (Dec. 2013).
[2] *Id.* at 207.
[3] *Id.* at 207.
[4] See http://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP23/20140226/101771/HHRG-113-AP23-Wstate-OlsonN-20140226.pdf pages 32-39.

Issue 1: Differences in Eligibility Rules for the Dependency Exemption and the EITC

See Appendix A for qualifying child eligibility rules for all five child-related benefits. Despite the uniform definition, the qualifying child tests for the dependency exemption and the EITC are different. In addition to the qualifying child tests, the EITC has other requirements that may not pertain to the dependency exemption, or vice versa. As a result, a taxpayer claiming the dependency exemption may erroneously assume that he or she is eligible for the EITC, as well.

Test	Differences between Dependency Exemption and EITC Requirements	
	Dependency Exemption	**EITC**
RESIDENCY	The taxpayer and qualifying child must have the same principal place of abode for more than half of the year.	The taxpayer and qualifying child must have the same principal place of abode for more than half of the year. For the EITC, the residence must be in the 50 states of the U.S.
SUPPORT	The child must not provide more than half of his or her own support.	No test for support
CITIZENSHIP	The child must be a U.S. citizen, national, or resident; or a resident of Canada or Mexico.	The child may be a U.S. citizen, national, or resident.
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER	Any lawfully obtained tax identification (SSN, ITIN, ATIN, etc.) is acceptable.	The taxpayer, qualifying child, and all individuals listed on the tax return must have valid SSNs.
DEPENDENTS CLAIMING DEPENDENTS	A taxpayer who is a dependent of another taxpayer may not claim his or her own child for the exemption.	A dependent taxpayer may claim a child for the EITC. However, a taxpayer who is a qualifying child of another taxpayer for EITC purposes (regardless of whether the taxpayer is also a dependent), may not claim the EITC for his or her own child.
FILING STATUS LIMITATION	No filing status restrictions	A taxpayer using the married filing separately (MFS) status may not claim the EITC.

Issue 2: Special Rule for Divorced or Separated Parents

A custodial parent may release a child's exemption to the noncustodial parent if the parents meet all of the following requirements under section 152(e):

- The parents are divorced or legally separated, or they were never married.
- Separately or together, the parents provide more than half of the child's support.
- The child was in the custody of one or both parents for more than half the year.
- The custodial parent completes Form 8332, *Release/Revocation of Release of Claim to Exemption for Child by Custodial Parent*, for one or more years, and the noncustodial parent submits it with his or her tax return.

If a child's exemption is released under this special rule, the noncustodial parent may claim the child's dependency exemption and, if applicable, the Child Tax Credit. However, the noncustodial parent may not claim the EITC. If eligible, the custodial parent or another taxpayer for whom the child is a qualifying child may claim the EITC or other child-related tax benefits. This is the only instance in which child-related benefits may be split for one child.

Issue 3: The Tie-breaker Rule

When a child meets the eligibility requirements to be a qualifying child of more than one person, the UDC in section 152(c)(4) includes a set of "tie-breaker rules" (see Appendix B). Under the rules, parents who do not file a joint return may decide and cooperate on who will claim the child; the tie-breaker rules are invoked only if the parents cannot agree and both try to claim the child. The rules become more complicated if other taxpayers are involved. For instance, even if the parent is willing to let another taxpayer (a grandparent, for example) claim the child, the other taxpayer may do so only if his or her adjusted gross income (AGI) is higher than the parent's.

Perhaps the most vexing and poorly understood ramification of the tie-breaker rules is that child-related tax benefits cannot be split among taxpayers. The taxpayer who "wins" the tie-breaker rule claims the benefits for which he or she is eligible. Using the parent/grandparent example, if the grandparent wins the tie-breaker rule and files using the head of household filing status, but has AGI that is out of the EITC range, then nobody can claim the EITC for that child.

The special rule for divorced parents (Issue 2) is the only exception to the "no-split" rule.

Issue 4: Qualifying Relatives

A child who does not meet the eligibility rules to be a qualifying child may instead meet the eligibility rules under section 152(d) to be a "qualifying relative." See Appendix C for these rules and a comparison to the qualifying child rules. A child who is a qualifying relative of the taxpayer may be claimed for the dependency exemption and, in some circumstances, head of household filing status and the Dependent Care Credit. However, a qualifying relative is never a qualifying person for the Child Tax Credit or for the EITC. In particular, two of the qualifying relative rules may cause some confusion with taxpayers, especially if EITC is involved:

- *Not of qualifying child test (section 152(d)(1)(D))*. If a child meets the eligibility rules to be a qualifying child of any taxpayer, the child may not be claimed as a qualifying relative by another taxpayer, even if that taxpayer fully supports the child.
    - The IRS provides in Notice 2008-5 that an individual is not a taxpayer if he or she has no tax return filing requirement and does not file a tax return for any reason other than to get a refund of all withheld taxes.
- *Unrelated child in the home (section 152(d)(2)(H))*. An individual may claim the dependency exemption for an unrelated individual in the home if all other eligibility rules are met and the individual lives in the taxpayer's household the entire tax year. However, a child or other dependent claimed under these circumstances is not a qualifying individual for any other tax benefit, including head of household status (see Issue 5), the Child Tax Credit, or EITC.

Issue 5: Head of Household Status

A taxpayer who is not married, or who can be treated as not married, may be eligible to file using the head of household filing status. In general, this status is usually more favorable (i.e., results in a better tax outcome) than either the single or married filing separately status. Also, keep in mind that the EITC and many other tax benefits are not available for taxpayers who file as married filing separately.

- *Maintaining a home*. The support test for head of household filing status is more stringent than that for a qualifying child. The taxpayer must pay more than half the cost of maintaining a home that is the main home of the qualifying child or other qualifying dependent. If the test is not met, the taxpayer may still be able to claim the dependent, but must file as single or married filing separately and, if the latter, would be ineligible to claim the EITC.
- *Considered unmarried*. A taxpayer who is still married may be treated as not married under section 7703(b) if the taxpayer's spouse did not live in the taxpayer's household for the past six months of the year, and the home the taxpayer maintains (see above rule) is for the taxpayer's child, as defined in section 152(f)(1) (that is, the taxpayer's son or daughter, including natural children, adopted children, and stepchildren). Thus, to be considered unmarried, a much narrower relationship test applies.

III. Scenarios

Consider the following stories and accompanying analysis on EITC eligibility. In each scenario, assume:

- There is no intent on the part of the taxpayer to commit fraud; the taxpayer who claims the EITC believes he or she is entitled to it.
- Unless a parent is specifically discussed in a scenario, the parent does not live in the home and is not involved with the child.
- Any qualifying child or qualifying relative eligibility test (such as the joint return test) not specifically discussed in a particular scenario is not at issue (i.e., assume the eligibility test is met).

Scenario 1: My Girlfriend's Son

Andy lives with and fully supports his girlfriend, Barbara, who has no income. Andy also supports Barbara's 2-year-old son, Ben. Andy is not Ben's father and is not related to him in any way. Andy files his return using the head of household filing status, claims dependency exemptions for Barbara and Ben, and claims the Child Tax Credit and EITC for Ben. Barbara does not file a tax return.

Analysis: Andy may not claim Ben for the EITC. Ben is Andy's qualifying relative under the rules of section 152(d)(2)(H) and IRS Notice 2008-5 that apply to a taxpayer living with an unrelated child and the child's parent. These rules allow Andy to claim the dependency exemption for Ben, but do not allow him to claim any other child-related tax benefits with respect to Ben (see Issue 4, qualifying relatives). In this scenario, nobody can claim the EITC.

Scenario 2: My Canadian Family

Carla, a U.S. citizen, moves to Canada in March and marries her fiancé, David. David's 14-year-old daughter, Danielle (Carla's stepdaughter), also lives with the couple in Quebec City. David and Danielle are Canadian citizens and residents and have not lived in the U.S. for any part of the year. They both have ITINs. The appropriate election has been made to treat David as a U.S. resident for tax purposes. Carla and David file a joint return and claim Danielle as their dependent. They also claim Danielle for the Child Tax Credit and EITC.

Analysis: Carla and David may not claim Danielle for the EITC. Danielle is Carla and David's qualifying child, and they may claim her for the dependency exemption. They may not claim the EITC because Danielle is not a U.S. citizen or resident, because the family did not live in the U.S. for more than half of the tax year, and because Danielle and David have ITINs (see Issue 1, differences in eligibility rules for the dependency exemption and the EITC). *Note:* They cannot claim the Child Tax Credit either, because Danielle is not a U.S. citizen or resident. In this scenario, nobody can claim the EITC.

Scenario 3: My Husband Moved Out (and My Grandchildren Stayed)

Elaine's husband, Earl, moved out of their home in May and has not returned. The couple will likely get divorced, but have not yet taken any legal action. They have raised their twin grandchildren, Frank and Fred (now age 10), who continue to live with Elaine. The boys' parents do not live in the home. Elaine files her return using the head of household filing status and claims dependency exemptions, the Child Tax Credit, and EITC for Frank and Fred.

Analysis: Elaine may not claim Frank and Fred for the EITC. Frank and Fred are Elaine's qualifying children, and she may claim dependency exemptions and Child Tax Credits. However, she may not claim the EITC because her proper filing status is married filing separately rather than head of household (see Issue 5, head of household status). Although they have been living apart for the past six months of the year, Elaine and Earl are still legally married. To be treated as not married, the rules of section 7703(b) require Elaine to maintain a home for her son or daughter. Elaine may be paying more than half the cost of maintaining her home; however, the home is for her grandchildren rather than her children, so she cannot be "considered unmarried" under the head of household rules. In this scenario, Elaine may claim the EITC only if she and Earl are willing to file a joint return and they have income within the EITC range.

Scenario 4: My Brother's House

Gina (age 28) and her daughter, Gaby (age 4), live with Gina's brother, Hank. Gina's earnings and AGI are $7,000. Hank's earnings and AGI are $65,000. Hank files his return using the head of household filing status and claims the dependency exemption and Child Tax Credit for Gaby (which Gina has agreed to). Gina files her return using the single filing status and claims the EITC for Gaby.

Analysis: Gina may claim Gaby for the EITC only if Hank does not claim Gaby on his tax return. Gaby may be a qualifying child of her uncle, Hank, or her mother, Gina, but she cannot be both. Gaby meets the eligibility rules to be a qualifying child of both taxpayers. Because of his higher AGI, Gina may allow her brother to claim Gaby as his qualifying child under the tie-breaker rule of section 152(c)(4), but she may not claim her, too (see Issue 3, the tie-breaker rule). The fact that only Gina's income is in the EITC range or that the dependency exemption is more valuable to Hank does not allow them to split child-related benefits. In this scenario, the family must make a choice about how they file.

Scenario 5: My Parents Support Me and My Son

Irwin (age 25) and his son, Ike (age 3), live in the home of Irwin's friend (no relation). Irwin's parents, Joe and Jane, who do not live with him, have agreed to support Irwin and Ike until Irwin finishes college. Irwin earns $1,500. Joe and Jane's combined earnings and AGI are $90,000. Joe and Jane file a joint return and claim dependency exemptions for Irwin and Ike, and the Child Tax Credit for Ike. Irwin files a return using the single filing status and claims the EITC for Ike.

Analysis: Irwin may claim the EITC for Ike only if Joe and Jane do not claim Ike on their tax return. Ike may be a qualifying relative of his grandparents, Joe and Jane, or he may be a qualifying child of his father, Irwin, but he cannot be both. Joe and Jane may claim Ike as their dependent only if Irwin is not a "taxpayer," as defined in IRS Notice 2008-5 (see Issue 4, qualifying relatives). Although Irwin doesn't have a tax filing requirement, if he files a return to get the EITC, he *is* treated as a taxpayer, and, consequently, Ike is his qualifying child and cannot be claimed as a qualifying relative by his grandparents or anyone else. Note that unlike the previous scenario, the tie-breaker rule is not invoked because Ike is a qualifying child of his father only. However, this family, too, must make a choice about how they file.

Scenario 6: My Children and My Ex-wife

Kate and Ken are divorced. Kate is the custodial parent of their two children, Larry (age 12) and Linda (age 9). Kate has given Ken a signed Form 8332 agreeing to relinquish the children's exemptions for this year and all future years. Ken pays alimony, child support, and many of the household expenses. He files his return using the head of household filing status and claims dependency exemptions, the Child Tax Credit, and EITC for Larry and Linda.

Analysis: Larry and Linda are treated as the qualifying children of their father, Ken. Under the rules for divorced parents under section 152(e), custodial parent Kate has properly released the children's exemptions to noncustodial parent Ken (see Issue 2, special rule for divorced or separated parents). The release allows Ken to claim the dependency exemptions and Child Tax Credits, but not any of the other child-related tax benefits. If she qualifies, Kate may file as head of household and claim the EITC for the children. This is only instance in which the tax benefits may be split. In this scenario, Linda or another qualifying taxpayer may be able to claim the EITC.

Scenario 7: I Pay My Bills

Maria (age 20) lives with 6-month-old daughter, Millie, and her grandmother, Nora, in Nora's home. Maria is a full-time student and works, earning $20,000 a year. Nora works and earns $16,000 a year. The two adults share most household expenses, including rent, utilities, and food. Because Maria provides more than half of her own support, she is not a dependent of Nora's (qualifying child or qualifying relative) for the dependency exemption or head of household purposes. Maria files her return using the head of household filing status and claims Millie for the dependency exemption, Child Tax Credit, and the EITC.

Analysis: Millie is a qualifying child of her mother, Maria, but cannot be claimed by her mother for the EITC. That is because Maria *is* a qualifying child of her mother, Nora, but only for EITC purposes. Because of Maria's income and support, she is not a dependent of Nora's. However, there is no support test for the EITC (see Issue 1, differences in eligibility rules for the dependency exemption and the EITC), and Maria meets all of the other qualifying child tests and requirements with respect to Nora. Maria may use the head of household filing status and claim the dependency exemption and Child Tax Credit, but she is precluded from claiming the EITC. Note that if Nora had no income and no tax filing requirement, she would not be treated as a taxpayer, and Maria could claim the EITC. In this scenario, nobody can claim the EITC for Millie.

IV. Conclusion

Taxpayers may reasonably conclude that they are eligible to claim the EITC when in fact they are not. It may be that the taxpayer is legitimately able to claim the child's dependency exemption, or supports the child financially, or is the only family member with income in the EITC range. Based on family dynamics, it could be that a different taxpayer is eligible for the EITC or that nobody may claim the credit. These scenarios illustrate that taxpayers may not understand the intricacies of the EITC both in and of itself and as part of the Uniform Definition of Child.

Appendix A: Qualifying Child Tests

Qualifying Child Tests	Dependency Exemption	Head of Household Filing Status	Child Tax Credit	Earned Income Tax Credit	Child and Dependent Care Credit
AGE 1) younger than taxpayer and under 19 or under 24 and full-time student, or 2) Any age and totally/permanently disabled	✓	✓	Under age 17	✓	Under age 13 or disabled
RELATIONSHIP Taxpayer's son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, eligible foster child, brother, sister, half-sibling, stepsibling, or descendant of any of these individuals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RESIDENCY Child must have the same principal residence as taxpayer for more than half the year	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SUPPORT Child must not provide more than one-half of own support	✓	✓	✓	No support requirement	✓
CITIZENSHIP Child must be U.S. citizen or resident of Canada or Mexico	✓	✓	U.S. citizen or resident only	U.S. citizen or resident only; valid SSN needed	✓
MARRIED CHILD May not file a joint return with spouse other than a claim for refund	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR TAXPAYER	Must not be claimed (or allowed to be claimed) as a dependent of another taxpayer	Must pay more than half the cost of maintaining home	Must meet AGI limitations; must have over $3,000 in earned income to qualify for refundable portion of credit	Must meet earned income, investment income, AGI limitations; SSN; U.S. residency; and other tests	Must pay for child/dependent care so taxpayer (and spouse) can work
THIS TAX BENEFIT MAY BE CLAIMED FOR A QUALIFYING RELATIVE	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

Appendix B: The "Tie-breaker" Rules

IRC section 152(c)(4) Special rule relating to two or more who can claim the same qualifying child.

(A) In general. Except as provided in subparagraphs (B) and (C) , if (but for this paragraph) an individual may be claimed as a qualifying child by 2 or more taxpayers for a taxable year beginning in the same calendar year, such individual shall be treated as the qualifying child of the taxpayer who is—

(i) parent of the individual, or

(ii) if clause (i) does not apply, the taxpayer with the highest adjusted gross income for such taxable year.

(B) More than 1 parent claiming qualifying child. If the parents claiming any qualifying child do not file a joint return together, such child shall be treated as the qualifying child of—

(i) the parent with whom the child resided for the longest period of time during the taxable year, or

(ii) if the child resides with both parents for the same amount of time during such taxable year, the parent with the highest adjusted gross income.

(C) No parent claiming qualifying child. If the parents of an individual may claim such individual as a qualifying child but no parent so claims the individual, such individual may be claimed as the qualifying child of another taxpayer but only if the adjusted gross income of such taxpayer is higher than the highest adjusted gross income of any parent of the individual.

Appendix C: Qualifying Relative and Qualifying Child Comparison

Test	Qualifying Relative Section 152(d)	Qualifying Child Section 152(c)
AGE	N/A	1) Younger than taxpayer and under 19 or under 24 and a full-time student, or 2) Any age and totally/permanently disabled
RELATIONSHIP	Taxpayer's: • Child or descendant of the child, • Sibling, or son/daughter of the sibling, • Father/mother, or ancestor or sibling of either, • Stepsibling or stepparent, • Son/daughter-in-law, father/mother-in-law, brother/sister-in-law, or • An individual (other than a spouse) who is a member of the taxpayer's household the entire tax year	Taxpayer's: • Son, • Daughter, • Stepson, • Stepdaughter, • Eligible foster child, • Brother, • Sister, • Half-sibling, • Stepsibling, or • Descendant of any of these individuals
RESIDENCY	The related individuals on the above list do not have to live with the taxpayer. An unrelated individual (the last item on the above list) must live with the taxpayer all year.	The child must have lived with the taxpayer for more than one-half of the year.
GROSS INCOME	The individual's gross income subject to tax must be less than the exemption amount for the year.	N/A
SUPPORT	The taxpayer must provide more than one-half of the individual's support (multiple support agreements okay).	The child must not provide more than one-half of his or her own support (multiple support agreements are N/A).
CITIZENSHIP	The individual must be a U.S. citizen or resident of Canada or Mexico (same test as for qualifying child).	The child must be U.S. citizen or resident of Canada or Mexico.
MARRIED DEPENDENTS	The individual may not file a joint return with spouse, other than a claim for refund (same test as for qualifying child).	The child may not file a joint refund with spouse, other than a claim for refund.
NOT A QUALIFYING CHILD	The individual may not be a qualifying child of the taxpayer or of any other taxpayer.	N/A (but tie-breaker rules apply if the child is a qualifying child of more than one taxpayer)
POTENTIAL TAX BENEFITS	Dependency exemption, Child/Dependent Care Credit, head of household filing status	Dependency exemption, Child Tax Credit, EITC, Child/Dependent Care Credit, head of household filing status

On behalf of Healthy Relationships California (HRC), we submit these comments for the record of the Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Human Resources hearing of March 17, 2015, on the topic "Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works: Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead."

HRC is a nine-year recipient of Healthy Marriage and Relationships competitive grants from the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, and we have used this funding to serve over 200,000 individuals with life-changing Relationship and Marriage Education programs.[1] The participants we serve come from diverse backgrounds, including: all races; Hispanic and non-Hispanic ethnicities; all marital statuses; and ranging in age from teenagers to the elderly. During the past four years, our participants have also primarily been low-income.

We are pleased that the Committee on Ways and Means is considering how best to evaluate the performance of federally funded human service programs, and we agree that program performance should be a criteria for continued funding eligibility. But we also are concerned by the opinion expressed by Ms. Joan Entmacher of the National Women's Law Center, in response to a question from Committee member Tom Reed, that the federal "marriage promotion" program as a whole has been found to be less than successful, and therefore should no longer be considered for funding.

While a few studies have concluded that specific marriage promotion initiatives did not produce measurable positive results,[2] there have been even more studies that have reinforced the need for the programs that are provided by such organizations.[3]

We welcome additional research and evaluation of what works in Marriage Education, and which organizations are the most effective at providing successful programming. But it is premature to defund the entire field based on a few reports of failure.

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[1] In 2006, HRC received the nation's largest five-year Healthy Marriage Demonstration grant, which was followed in 2011 by a four-year Community-Centered Healthy Marriage and Relationship grant.

[2] Wood, R. G., Moore, Q., Clarkwest, A., Killewald, A., & Monahan, S. (2012). *The Building Strong Families Project: The long-term effects of Building Strong Families: A relationship skills education program for unmarried parents*. OPRE Report 2012-28A. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/bsf_36_mo_impact_report.pdf

Hsueh, J., Alderson, D. P., Lundquist, E., Michalopoulos, C., Gubits, D., Fein, D., & Knox, V. (2012). *The Supporting Healthy Marriage Evaluation: Early impacts on low-income families*. OPRE Report 2012-11. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/early_impacts_low.pdf

[3] Howell, P. (2011). *The Case for Relationship Education: Creating social benefit through skills training*. Leucadia, CA: Healthy Relationships California. http://www.relationshipsca.org/store/index.php?route=product/product&filter_name=case%20for&product_id=56

The Evolution of the Marriage Promotion Program

When marriages fail or when parents fail to marry, a range of social services must be activated to prop up the lives of the affected family members, the national cost of which has been assessed at $112 billion per year.[4]

Ten years ago, to address the negative impacts of family disintegration, the federal government implemented the HHS/ACF Healthy Marriage Demonstration Grant (HMDG), which was renewed five years later through the Community-Centered Healthy Marriage and Relationship (HMR) project.

As implied by the name change, what began as support for "marriage promotion" activities has since evolved into a recognition on the part of HMDG recipients and our federal project managers that the promotion of marriage does not go far enough. Backed by hundreds of research studies on the positive impact marital stability can have on key social factors,[5] we have come to see that it is imperative to provide individuals with the skills they need to create and sustain ***healthy*** marriages and, beyond that, healthy relationships in all aspects of their lives.

We do this through a range of research-based Relationship and Marriage Education (RME) programs, some of which have been designed to address the specific needs of low-income individuals and families as well as other at-risk groups, including those who are incarcerated and the reentry population. RME programs teach invaluable life skills such as communication skills, conflict management strategies, and conflict resolution tools, as well as other vital relationship skills.

The Use of Evidence in the Relationship and Marriage Education Field

1. **Healthy Relationships California's Research**

As a recipient of federal funding, HRC is committed to responsible stewardship of taxpayer monies. To help us achieve this, we have developed evaluation strategies to track our progress toward our stated goals, and to determine which approaches result in the best outcomes for our participants.

For example, a few years ago we conducted an internal study to examine the effectiveness of the various RME curricula we teach. As a result of our findings, we discontinued some courses which were less effective, and focused our efforts going forward on curricula that had the most positive impact for our participants.

To monitor pre-class, post-class, and 30-days-after-class surveys of each participant who completes an HRC-sponsored RME class (HRC averages around 500 classes annually), we have an outcome-evaluation team led by two co-Directors of Research, each of whom hold a Ph.D. in Human Development.

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[4] Scafidi, B. (P.I.). (2008). *The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing: First-ever estimates for the nation and all fifty states*. New York, NY: Institute for American Values. http://www.americanvalues.org/search/item.php?id=52

[5] See HRC's Healthy Marriage booklet series for a review of the literature. http://www.relationshipsca.org/store/

In 2013, we published the largest field-study conducted on the impact of RME on participants.[6] The *Impact Report: Research on the Impact of Relationship and Marriage Education Programs* analyzed data collected from 17,766 adult participants taught in RME classes in California between 2007 and 2012. Participants completed pre-class and post-class surveys, and, in some cases, follow-up surveys at 30 days and six months after the class. Overwhelmingly, the results were positive.

Between pre-class and post-class, many participants improved their communication skills and relationship satisfaction. This was true for participants of all ethnicities, races, marital statuses, seasons of marriage, and income levels. Of particular note is that 52% of individualss who were highly distressed with their marriages prior to their RME course reported a significant decrease in relationship distress after attending RME. In addition, 49% percent of moderately distressed individuals reported being satisfied with their relationship after attending RME.

Data collected at 30 days and six months after the class ended provide evidence that these results continue over time, although these results must be interpreted with some caution as we were not able to gather follow-up data from all participants who completed pre- and post-class surveys.

When participants were examined across income levels, those participants who were low-income demonstrated the greatest gains in all three measures considered: relationship satisfaction, communication skills, and problem-solving skills. Those participants reporting annual incomes below $15,000 demonstrated drastic improvement after attending RME. After attending, unmarried participants in this income bracket improved their communication skills by 80%, their relationship satisfaction by 65%, and their problem-solving skills by 48%. Married participants in this income bracket improved their communication skills by 67%, their problem-solving skills by 50%, and their relationship satisfaction by 36%.

More recently, in 2014, we released a study focused on the impact of RME in prisons and jails.[7] At present, HRC has taught over 15,000 incarcerated individuals, and over 5,000 participants in rehabilitation or re-entry facilities. This population is particularly in need of intervention. In 2012, nearly 3% of the U.S. adult population was incarcerated or living under community supervision (i.e., on probation or parole).[8] One out of 28 children in the U.S. has an incarcerated parent.[9]

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[6] Howell, P., Krafsky, K. J., McAllister, S. & Collins, D. (2013). *Impact report: Research on the impact of relationship and marriage education programs.* Leucadia, CA: Healthy Relationships California. http://www.relationshipsca.org/store/index.php?route=product/product&filter_name=impact&product_id=192

[7] Howell, P., Krafsky, K. J., Larsen-Rife, D., Early, D., Collins, D. & McAllister, S. (2014). *Unshackled Potential: The Impact of Relationship Education on Incarcerated Populations.* Leucadia, CA: Healthy Relationships California. http://www.relationshipsca.org/store/index.php?route=product/product&filter_name=unshackled&product_id=196

[8] Glaze, L. E. & Herberman, E. J. (2013). *Correctional populations in the United States, 2012.* Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics. http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus12.pdf

[9] The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2010). *Collateral costs: Incarceration's effect on economic mobility.* Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts. http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2010/CollateralCosts1pdf.pdf

Our study looked at men and women taught in six correctional facilities in California from November 2012 to May 2014. Eighty-four percent of participants reported that RME would help them in their relationships; 65% felt RME would assist them in avoiding criminality in the future; and 65% felt that RME would help them with successful employment upon release.

Participants were given a chance to describe, in their own words, the impact of the intervention. Their answers demonstrated positive personal development across three dimensions: better impulse control and anger management; increased empathy for others; and overall character development. One inmate expressed, "I wish I had went [*sic*] to this class a long time ago to avoid all the drama and trouble in my life." Another stated, "Skills in the class will keep me away from criminal activity by helping me step back and evaluate actions before acting upon them."

In addition to our quantitative data, HRC receives testimonies from many participants who have attended our classes. We often hear powerful stories of transformation. For example, Alondra from Santa Ana, CA, shared with us:

> We were going through a situation that would have ended in divorce. But with the tools I've been learning, I didn't give up and made efforts for my marriage. I started putting into practice what I learned and I started to have more communication with him….Today everything is fine…I've made a change in me, and that is why, I'm so grateful.[10]

Marie from Live Oak, CA, said:

> We came to this class because we needed help with our relationship. When we came we were living apart from each other, we had been separated for about a month and a half….Through this course I have learned to focus on the positive of our relationship not the negative. The frustration that we are not hearing each other is now consciously thought through on a daily basis and practiced with dialogue. We are now living in a positive marriage enjoying each other, loving each other more every day.[11]

2. Evaluations of the Federal Healthy Marriage and Relationship Project Grantees

The RME field is fairly new and is growing rapidly. It takes some time before accurate evaluation and studies can be conducted, evaluated, and reported on. Therefore, only a few studies conducted by independent evaluators have been published on Healthy Marriage and Relationship grantees. Hawkins and Fellows produced a meta-analysis in 2011 examining data

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[10] Healthy Relationships California. (2013). *Lives transformed: Real voices on how relationship and marriage education impacts lives.* Leucadia, CA: Author. http://www.relationshipsca.org/store/index.php?route=product/product&filter_name=lives&product_id=193

[11] Ibid.

from 31 Healthy Marriage and Relationship grantees.[12] Together, these grantees taught just under 50,000 participants. Overall, the researchers found moderate positive effects. Specifically, positive program outcome effects included improved relationship quality, communication skills, relationship confidence, relationship aggression, healthy relationship knowledge, and co-parenting.

Although this study is limited in scope, since it did not look at all 125 federal grantees, and most programs examined were evaluated without a control group, it still offers early, encouraging evidence that grantee programs are making a difference.

In another study, Hawkins, Amato, and Kinghorn examined Healthy Marriage Initiatives funded through ACF from 2000-2010.[13] They completed a regression analysis of state-level data using the amount of funding spent on Healthy Marriage Initiatives to predict demographic changes during this time period. Their study found little evidence of an impact in the percentage of married and divorced adults in the population, although they did find cumulative per capita funding was associated with an increase in the percentage of married adults in the population for 2005-2010.

These seemingly inconsequential results may have been due in part to difficulty with the data. The researchers' analyses were limited by the fact that they could only look at the percentage of divorced adults in the population, rather than the percentage of marriages that end annually. However, they did identify other positive benefits. Cumulative per capita funding was associated with a small but significant decrease in the percentage of nonmarital births and children living with single parents, an increase in the percentage of children living with two parents, and a decrease in the percentage of children who were poor or near poor. These findings provide some support that RME may help prevent child poverty. Their results caused some debate in the field,[14] but we agree with the researchers that their results suggest potentially positive effects for RME that deserve further study.

Much has been said about the Building Strong Families (BSF)[15] and Supporting Healthy Marriage (SHM)[16] studies, large multi-site studies conducted on early grant-funded RME programs. The BSF project focused on responsible fatherhood, while SHM focused on married couples, and the overall results of these projects were disappointing.

However, it was not all bad news. The SHM program did in fact yield positive, if small, effects on multiple aspects of couple relationships, as well as slightly lower levels of

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[12] Hawkins, A. J., & Fellows, K. J. (2011). *Findings from the field: A meta-analytic study of the effectiveness of healthy marriage and relationship grantee programs*. Washington, DC: National Healthy Marriage Resource Center. http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/resource-detail/index.aspx?rid=3928

[13] Hawkins, A. J., Amato, P. R. & Kinghorn, A. (2013). Are government-supported Healthy Marriage Initiatives affecting family demographics? A state-level analysis. *Family Relations, 62*, 501-513.

[14] Johnson, M. D. (2014). Government-supported Healthy Marriage Initiatives are not associated with changes in family demographics: A comment on Hawkins, Amato, and Kinghorn (2013). *Family Relations, 62*, 300–304.

Hawkins, A. J. (2014). Continuing the important debate on government-supported Healthy Marriages and Relationships Initiatives: A brief response to Johnson's (2014) Comment. *Family Relations, 62*, 305-308.

[15] Wood, op. cit.

[16] Hsueh, op. cit.

psychological distress and abuse, leading the researchers to observe that "the consistency of results across outcomes and data sources (surveys and independent observations of couple interactions) is noteworthy."[17]

There also were positive findings in the BSF study. In Oklahoma City, couples who participated in the intervention were 20% more likely to stay together for the three years of the study, when compared to the control couples. Of the sites that were evaluated, Oklahoma City had the highest level of participation, and their participants spent the most time in RME classes, suggesting that Oklahoma City's experience serves as an example of what works in RME. Also worth noting is that some of the relationship break-ups that were attributed to BSF may have occurred because the program helped participants realize they needed to terminate an unhealthy relationship. This possibility calls for further and more in-depth research, not a wholesale end of the initiative.

Recently, renowned family scholar Dr. Paul R. Amato analyzed the BSF data from the first 15 months of the program.[18] Interestingly, his work suggests that the most disadvantaged couples in the study benefitted the most. Dr. Amato created a "disadvantage index" that looked at what factors put couples at risk, factors such as being younger than age 20, lacking a high school degree, and unemployment. Couples who were most disadvantaged under this criteria also experienced the most positive impact in their relationship quality if they stayed together, although the disadvantage index did not predict relationship stability. In Dr. Amato's words:

> It is reasonable to imagine that poor couples are so overwhelmed by financial problems and everyday stress that they are unresponsive to relationship education programs and see them as largely irrelevant to their lives. If this were the case, then the most disadvantaged couples—those most at risk of relationship problems—would receive the least benefit from programs like BSF. This study, however, suggests the opposite: **Contrary to the notion that disadvantaged couples do not benefit from relationship education, these couples may be the main beneficiaries of these services, provided that they are able to keep their unions intact.** (emphasis added)[19]

Finally, a recent meta-analysis by Hawkins and Erickson on low-income couples included the BSF and SMH studies, as well as all data they could track down from the Healthy Marriage Demonstration Grant.[20] Twenty-two control-group studies were included, and for these, small but significant positive effects were found for relationship satisfaction/quality,

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[17] Ibid., p. v.
[18] Amato, P. R. (2014). Does social and economic disadvantage moderate the effects of relationship education on unwed couples? An analysis of data from the 15-month Building Strong Families evaluation. *Family Relations, 63*, 343-355.
[19] Ibid., p. 353.
[20] Hawkins, A. J., & Erickson, S. E. (2014, November 24). Is couple and relationship education effective for lower income participants? A meta-analytic study. *Journal of Family Psychology.* Advance online publication. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/fam0000045

communication skills, and relationship aggression (although effects for relationship stability and coparenting were not significant). A similar look at 25 one-group pre-/post- studies (studies without a control group) found significant positive effect sizes for relationship satisfaction/quality, communication skills, and coparenting (though not for relationship stability or relationship aggression).

3. RME Research Beyond the Federal Grantees

If we are to fully examine the impact of RME, we must consider the ever-growing body of research on this topic. A recent meta-analysis looked at 117 existing studies on RME, and found that, overall, RME participants' relationship quality and communication skills improved after attending a course (2008).[21] Premarital education has been linked with higher levels of satisfaction and commitment in marriage, as well as lower levels of conflicts and reduced odds of divorce.[22]

Initially, studies on RME focused on middle-class, white populations, but more recent studies have found benefits for more diverse audiences. A meta-analysis of RME programs specifically serving lower-income couples found small-to-moderate positive improvements in marital quality and communication skills.[23] Another study found that couples attending relationship education were especially likely to benefit if the wife had elevated risk for divorce, as measured by a risk calculated off factors such as being poorly educated, earning little income, experiencing parental divorce, or having an unplanned pregnancy.[24] These results provide additional support for Dr. Amato's work suggesting that more disadvantaged couples may benefit the most from RME.

More studies are also focusing on minority populations. A recent study in California, for example, examined a program promoting father involvement. Its participants were primarily lower-income Hispanic couples, and they showed small but significant positive effects after attending.[25] Additionally, one of the largest randomized trials of RME found that, two years after the intervention, couples assigned to participate in RME were less likely to be divorced than couples in the control group; this was especially true in the case of minority couples.[26] Even the BSF and SMH studies found evidence that the minority couples who participated benefitted

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[21] Hawkins, A. J., Blanchard, V. L., Baldwin, S. A., & Fawcett, E. B. (2008). Does Marriage and Relationship Education Work? A Meta-Analytic Study. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 76*, 723-734.

[22] Stanley, S. M., Amato, P. R., Johnson, C. A., & Markman, H. J. (2006). Premarital education, marital quality, and marital stability: Findings from a large, random household survey. *Journal of Family Psychology, 20*, 117-126.

[23] Hawkins, A. J. & Fackrell, T. A. (2010). Does relationship and marriage education for lower-income couples work? A meta-analytic study of emerging research. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy, 9*, 181-191.

[24] Petch, J. F., Halford, W. K., Creedy, D. K., & Gamble, J. (2012). A randomized controlled trial of a couple relationship and coparenting program (Couple CARE for Parents) for high- and low-risk new parents. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 80,* 662 – 673.

[25] Cowan, P. A., Cowan, C. P., Pruett, M. K., Pruett, K., & Wong, J. J. (2009). Promoting fathers' engagement with children: Preventative interventions for low-income families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 71*, 663–679.

[26] Stanley, S. M., Rhoades, G. K., Loew, B. A., Allen, E. S., Carter, S., Osborne, L. J., Prentice, D., & Markman, H. J. (2014). A randomized controlled trial of relationship education in the U.S. Army: 2-year outcomes. *Family Relations, 63*, 482-495.

more from the programs than white couples. More research needs to be done to understand the long-term effects of RME, but these powerful results suggests that RME may indeed have the potential to save marriages and stabilize families.

The Case for Relationship and Marriage Education Funding

Ms. Entmacher argues in her testimony that the evaluation of public programs aimed at helping low-income individuals and families is tricky:

> Multi-site, multi-year experimental research takes time and money. And, by the time an experiment is fully evaluated, the needs of the target population, the social and economic environment, and the program may have changed—so results need to be interpreted with care and evaluated with other evidence.[27]

She cites as an example the Head Start program, which, based on the results of the Head Start Impact study, many researchers and experts have deemed a failure, but which Ms. Entmacher believes is deserving of another chance.

The message here is to not defund an entire approach to service delivery based on poor evaluation results from an individual program provider; rather, create "a framework for evaluating and promoting quality improvements,"[28] and invest in rigorous evaluation to determine which specific providers are effective, and which are not.

Ms. Entmacher also states, "The Head Start program we have today is not the Head Start program that was evaluated by the Impact Study starting in 2002."[29] Similarly, we note that the Healthy Marriage and Relationship initiative that exists today is not the same "marriage promotion" program that was evaluated in the BSF and SHM studies.

Dr. Alan Hawkins, a renowned researcher in the RME field, has said:

> ...in the face of toxic social and economic conditions that make forming and sustaining healthy romantic relationships more difficult for disadvantaged individuals, a just society may have an ethical obligation to help disadvantaged couples gain valuable relational skills and knowledge that may improve the internal dynamics of their relationships and help them deal better with the pressures that result from poverty.[30]

HRC and our colleagues in the RME field are committed to fulfilling that ethical obligation of helping low-income individuals and families get ahead, and we are

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[27] Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works: Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead: Hearing before the Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Human Resources, House of Representatives, 114th Congress (2015) (Testimony of Joan Entmacher, p. 5). http://waysandmeans.house.gov/uploadedfiles/joan_entmacher_testimony_031715_hr2.pdf

[28] Ibid., p. 6.

[29] Loc. cit.

[30] Hawkins 2014, op. cit., p. 307.

committed to using evidence to do so. There are positive signs that RME is a cost-effective, successful strategy for improving the lives of at-risk populations. We look forward to working with our federal partners to continue to determine the programs and efforts that best serve low-income populations.

Knowledge Alliance, Statement

knowledge alliance

The Honorable Charles Boustany, Chairman
The Honorable Lloyd Doggett, Ranking Member
House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources
1102 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

March 16, 2015

Dear Chairman Boustany and Ranking Member Doggett:

I am writing on behalf of Knowledge Alliance to provide comments on the occasion of your March 17, 2015 hearing entitled "Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works: Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead."

Knowledge Alliance is a non-profit, non-partisan organization focused on dramatically improving public education by advocating for the widespread, effective use of research-based knowledge in policy and practice. It is our goal to promote the use of rigorous research to figure out "what works," and why, to improve student outcomes and then share those findings with policy-makers, practitioners and the general public. It is our belief that by expanding the use of evidence in federal funding decisions, we can increase efficiency, support the most effective interventions and improve outcomes for low-income individuals and families.

In order to improve program quality and effectiveness across federal agencies, we recommend requiring programs to use strategies grounded in "scientifically valid research," as it is defined in the recent reauthorizations of the Head Start program and the Higher Education Act (HEA), to carefully evaluate program effectiveness, and ensure that scarce federal funding is focused on those initiatives that are proven to be most effective for low-income individuals and families.

We also recommend updating federal legislation to ensure that adequate funding is set aside to provide technical assistance by qualified experts on the implementation of practices that scientifically valid research indicates are most successful. The provision of high quality technical assistance ensures that best practices are shared across federal agencies and that program grantees are learning directly from one another about the most effective strategies.

An important part of learning "what works" is effective evaluation, and we recommend

knowledge alliance

updating federal legislation to reserve funding for external, independent evaluations of federal programs based upon meaningful evaluation frameworks focused on program effectiveness. The results of these evaluations should be disseminated to all interested parties, policy makers, and the public.

The Knowledge Alliance strongly advocates for evidence-based programs, particularly programs that incorporate specific evidentiary requirements, throughout the federal government. One successful example is the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3), within the Department of Education, which provides grants to support the ongoing development of innovative strategies aimed at closing achievement gaps and improving educational outcomes, and then uses a rigorous evaluation process to ensure that proven success is scaled up.

In sum, Knowledge Alliance believes that federal policy must incentivize the use of evidence, including evidence-based technical assistance to grantees. Moreover, federal programs should be regularly evaluated, and findings should be widely disseminated to the field. This hearing could not be held at a better time, and we thank you for the opportunity to comment. We hope that this represents another step towards the expansion of evidence-based practices in federal programs.

Sincerely,

Michele McLaughlin
President, Knowledge Alliance

20 F Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001 | 202.507.6370 | www.knowledgeall.net

National Association for Relationship and Marriage Education, Statement

Response to Hearing on Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead

Julie Baumgardner (Name)
National Association for Relationship and Marriage Education (Organization)
P.O. Box 14946 Tallahassee, Florida
423-314-3952 (Contact Number)
423-267-8876 –(fax)

This is in response to testimony given by Joan Entmacher concerning the marriage programs that show no evidence of working.

In an effort to strengthen families, decrease poverty and increase the number of children growing up in homes with their two married parents, the Federal government began funding Healthy Marriage Demonstration projects in communities across the country. The programs were completely voluntary and were directed towards lower income populations who have not had easy access to programs of this type in the past.

It is important and significant to acknowledge that this is a first generation attempt to reach out to this population with these types of programs and services. So far, these programs have reached relatively small numbers and have not been scaled as programs across the country attempt to learn what works and what does not work. It takes time to do this.

Some of the programs started in the early 2000's, the vast majority of them were started the end of 2006 when the Bush administration designated $150 from TANF for Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood demonstration projects designed to learn what works with these populations and best demonstrated practices that could be replicated across the country.

Rigorous evaluation began almost immediately after these programs were up and running. It is difficult to measure impacts in rigorous studies and it is worth noting that research that has moved forward in areas such as employment, home visiting, and Head Start, have many more reports of no impact than impact.

Two Early Studies which Entmacher noted

There has been a tremendous amount of focus on the Building Strong Families (BSF) and Supporting Healthy Marriage (SHM) research.

The Building Strong Families program, designed to learn whether well-designed interventions can help couples fulfill their aspirations for a healthy relationship, marriage, and a strong family was started in 2002. An evaluation of BSF included eight sites and 5000 participants. The outcomes of the study received a great deal of attention basically saying the program participants looked no different than the control group 15 months and three years beyond the program. **It would be important to note that less than 40 percent of the 5000 participants received** a

significant dosage of Relationship and Marriage education. In fact, at some sites only 40 percent of participants ever attended one class together. **Additionally, as the first rigorous study in the healthy marriage field, BSF showed a consistent pattern of positive impacts at the Oklahoma site and in the second study, Supporting Healthy Marriage, there was a consistent pattern of positive impacts across all sites at both the one and three years marks.**

Oklahoma's Family Expectations Program, a combination of cutting-edge efforts to reduce barriers to participation, reinforcements for attending, and quality of the services led to exceptional attendance. Only the Oklahoma site had solid results on many dimensions of relationship quality at the 15 month assessment. **As for the past and recent (3 years out) outcomes, the Oklahoma site was the only one where there was a statistically significant impact on an important outcome at the 3 year point: in the program group, 49% of the families had lived together continuously since the birth of the child whereas, for the control group, 41% of the families had remained together in this way. The three year assessment showed that couples who went through this program were 20 percent more likely to still be together. This is HUGE as we look at providing stable homes for children.** (Dr. Scott Stanley, Sliding vs. Deciding) Did Scott say what is bolded, the entire paragraph?

The SHM research showed a small, but statistically significant difference between the couples who participated in marriage education and those who did not. Couples completing the program scored higher on a variety of relationship outcomes one year after enrolling in the program.

What the research indicates:

In spite of the overall results, there are encouraging signs that lead researchers and practitioners to believe that improvements in these initiatives could lead to stronger, more positive outcomes.

Other studies of encouraging findings:

In extensive data from more than 1,400 high school students in 39 public schools across Alabama, half of the students non-white and more than half eligible for free or reduced lunch, showed that participating students:

- still held a more realistic approach to marriage one year after the program
- exhibited decreased faulty beliefs and
- displayed greater conflict management skills than students who did not participate in the program.

A separate study found that students who took the program increased their disapproval of using aggression in dating relationships. This disapproval manifested itself in less dating physical aggression two years later.

A rigorous study of mostly **married, lower income Hispanic couples** in California found significant positive impact. Compared to the control group, fathers and couples showed modest,

positive changes in father involvement, couple relationship quality and children's problem behavior. The couples group surpassed the fathers group showing reductions in parent stress, increased marital stability, increased relationship quality and more consistent, longer-term positive outcomes. Two additional studies replicated these results.

A study of couples with one spouse in the military found that those who participated in the marriage strengthening program, Strong Bonds, were significantly less likely to be divorced two years later, than couples who did not participate. The positive difference was actually stronger for minority couples with 5 percent of African American couples who took the course divorcing after two years versus 18 percent of African American couples who did not participate.

For a more in-depth look at this read ***Facilitating Forever: A Feasible Public Policy Agenda to Help Couples Form and Sustain Healthy Relationships and Enduring Marriages by Alan J. Hawkins and Betsy VanDenBerghe.*** ***http://nationalmarriageproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/FacilitatingForeverFINAL_Web020714.pdf***

Again, a significant and important point to remember is that BSF and SHM studied only a few of the hundreds of demonstration projects funded by the Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood Demonstration grant funding. Stating that relationship and marriage education does not work based on these two studies is equivalent to throwing the baby out with the bath water. Many of these programs started at ground zero and the goal was to find best demonstrated practices. Evaluations of programs began before best demonstrated practices were discovered. The most important point is we clearly are seeing what doesn't work. It would be a waste of money to continue doing the very things we know do not work. However, there are many programs across the country successfully engaging low income couples and they have high completion rates. Research needs to be focused on these programs to determine practices that should be replicated across the country in order to get the broadest reach possible with the funding available.

Analysis of recent national survey data shows that children of divorced and never-married parents are far more likely to have been exposed to domestic violence than children in married two-parent families. **In the 2011-2012 National Survey of Children's Health, conducted by the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, parents of 95,677 children aged 17 and under were asked whether their child had ever seen or heard "any parents, guardians, or any other adults in the home slap, hit, kick, punch, or beat each other up." Among children living with both married biological parents, the rate of exposure to family violence was relatively low: for every 1,000 children in intact families, 19 had witnessed one or more violent struggles between parents or other household members. By comparison, among children living with a divorced or separated mother, the rate of witnessing domestic violence was seven times higher: 144 children per 1,000 had had one or more such experiences**. These comparisons are adjusted for differences across groups in the age, sex, and

race/ethnicity of the child, family income and poverty status, and the parent's education level. (**Children in Single Parent Families are more likely to Witness Domestic Violence** by Nicholas Zill, psychologist, founding executive director of Child Trends and survey researcher who has written on indicators of family and child wellbeing for four decades).

Additional robust studies including the **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study conducted by the CDC** strongly indicate that children growing up in a home with their two married biological parents are significantly less likely to have adverse childhood experiences such as exposure to traumatic events that can have negative lasting effects on health and wellbeing. Traumatic experiences range from physical, emotional and sexual abuse to parental divorce or the incarceration of a parent or guardian. The greater the number of adverse experiences the more at risk the child is for poor health outcomes such as obesity, alcoholism, and depression.

http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/

Child wellbeing has become a public health issue.

While no one questions that children definitely have a better chance of thriving when they are raised in a home with their two, married biological parents,; but what is questionable is deciding to do away with the Healthy Marriage and Relationship education funding based on two studies conducted early in the grant funding process. Children are the future of this country. Some argue that government has no business medaling in the marriage business. Government is already in this business as one has to purchase a marriage license from the government prior to getting married and when a marriage dissolves one must file for divorce and go before a judge who will determine child support, alimony, visitation, custody, etc., in addition to enforcing all of this following the divorce all at a significant cost to the American people. An examination of other programs across the country such as The Ridge Project, First Things First, Healthy Relationships California, Family Expectations, Family Bridges, Relationship Skills Center and The Center for Healthy Relationships could be very helpful in determining best demonstrated practices.

What Works

Finally, we need to look at programs that are showing successful outcomes like the **Nurse-Family Partnership in Lancaster County, PA that served 175 low-income, first time moms. The nurses are trained to form a close relationship with the mother and advise her on prenatal health, child rearing issues and life skills. Typically 20-30 home visits are involved. Three randomized controlled trials have shown that the program has major impacts that last at least until the child is 15. The mothers who participated were less likely**

to be abused, neglect their kids, more likely to be working and their kids were more likely to be healthy and ready for school.

Clearly, home visits are significantly more expensive than classes, but there are several promising studies indicating they work. Another home visit program, **Child FIRST** targets low-income families with children ages 6-36 months at high risk of emotional, behavioral, or developmental problems, or child maltreatment, based on child screening and/or family characteristics such as maternal depression. At the three year follow up there was a 33 percent reduction in families' involvement with child protective services for possible child maltreatment. At the end of one year follow up there was a 40-70 percent reduction in serious levels of child conduct and language development problems and mother's psychological distress.

What Works in Marriage and Relationship Education (MRE)?

Reaching disadvantaged couples and teaching them healthy relationship skills is challenging. Yet, if one examines the SHM research, a stunning number of couples living in poverty and under significant stress completed an average of 18 hours or more of relationship education. That in and of itself is amazing. Substantial progress has been made in being able to reach and engage low income, high-risk individuals and couples.

Individuals and couples need a tremendous amount of help in the arena of healthy relationships. The creative efforts that have been used by programs across the country to engage these people and teach them skills are impressive.

Since the early 2000's but especially since 2006, the sheer amount of content that people have been exposed to in grantee communities about what is healthy in relationships and what is not that should be glossed over.

Theodora Ooms and Alan Hawkins conducted an excellent review of lessons learned concerning marriage and relationship education (MRE) for low-income couples. (*What Works in Marriage and Relationship Education? A Review of Lessons Learned with a Focus on Low-Income Couples* by Alan Hawkins, PhD and Theodora Ooms, MSW.) They examined whether these types of programs actually accomplished the objectives of the Federal initiative. Below are some of the key findings:

Marriage and relationship education programs (MRE) are operating well throughout the US. Low-income couples (married and unmarried) as well as high school students, single parents, refugee families, military couples, prison inmates, and others are participating in large numbers in MRE programs in many communities across the country.

Many MRE programs are successfully engaging low-income men/fathers in learning how to be more effective partners and parents. Studies suggest that the programs' focus on

improving relationships between partners is a very effective strategy for helping fathers become more actively and responsibly engaged with their children.

Investment in program development and program management is critical to helping these new types of government programs be successful. ***In their startup phase many programs faced and with assistance largely overcame many new challenges as they learned how to design and adapt MRE programs and curricula for diverse populations delivered in many different programs.***

MRE programs for low-income populations seem to work best when they create strong organizational partnerships. Programs that work closely with health, employment, domestic violence prevention, child support and related social service programs are more successful with recruiting participants and helping them get other services they need.

Emerging evidence suggests that MRE programs can work for low-income populations as well as for those who are economically better off. Evidence from a new meta-analysis of 15 program evaluations (including three randomized control trials) shows that MRE programs can have positive, moderate-size effects on low-income couples' relationship outcomes, at least in the short run.

Across nearly all the studies reviewed for this report, MRE improves communication – a core essential relationship skill as well as other measures of relationship quality. There is some initial evidence that MRE for low-income couples can decrease divorce rates, reduce aggression and improve children's problem behaviors.

What Does Success Look Like?

The ultimate goal of relationship and marriage education efforts is child-wellbeing: To raise children in the best environment possible that will allow them to thrive and become productive citizens.

Research indicates if practitioners can help people:

- Create stable families
- Improve the quality of parental relationships,
- Decrease unhealthy conflict,
- Enhance communication,
- Improve marital relationship quality,
- Increase parental involvement in the lives of their children, and
- Decrease violence in the home

……it is possible to increase the likelihood that children will be healthier in every developmental aspect of their life and have a greater chance of thriving and being a productive adult.

Perhaps combining relationship education with parent education, which some grantees are already doing, is part of the answer. (See "Don't Dump Relationship Education until Co-Parenting Support has Been Included and the Benefits for Children are Known.)

What Can Be Done Differently?

First, the full range of MRE services should be implemented where possible because the long-term effectiveness of a one-time-only dosage will likely be limited. Typically, those who participate in programs are in need of more than one type of program. For example, it is not uncommon for someone who participates in relationship and career advancement programming to also need parenting classes and marriage enrichment or a class for couples in distress. Concentrating funds with grantees who can offer a semi-comprehensive set of educational offerings for youth, single adults, cohabiting couples, engaged couples, married couples and couples in crisis could make a difference in long term effectiveness and outcomes.

Define Best Demonstrated Practices. Based on outcomes from successful programs, best demonstrated practices need to be utilized at all grantee sites. This concept should be built into the funding contracts.

Build in learning: Develop a solid methodology to build learning into the system so more timely data is obtained on what is working/not working so course corrections can be made quickly. Data points should be identified for family stability improvement in positive family outcomes and decrease in negative family outcomes. Data should be collected, analyzed and information shared across grantees and the public sector to guide best practices.

Changes in Allowable Activities:

Focus on early relationship development skills in middle and high school. As stated earlier, many young people do not have healthy role models to teach them healthy relationship skills that will impact them across all areas of their lives. Teaching basic relationship skills in middle school and building on these in high school has the potential to decrease violence in relationships and increase the chances of these young people to move into adulthood better prepared for work and life.

Focus on premarital couples and young parents to provide formative development in relationship skills. This group should provide promising results since these participants are younger and possibly easier to influence. We know that divorce is reduced by 30% for couples that receive skills-based relationship education classes prior to marriage.

Focus on relationship skills in the workplace to enhance participant's ability to maintain healthy relationships and therefore, maintain jobs. Eight out of 10 business leaders say that

oral communication skills, knowing how to be a team player, professionalism, a positive attitude and integrity are vitally important traits for success in the workplace. Many individuals across the socio-economic spectrum have not been taught the basic skills that will help them find and keep a job. This allowable activity is critical!

Allow educational classes for married couples to enhance their relationship and parenting skills, which in turn will enhance family stability. Research clearly indicates that as couples move through the life-span of their marriage, there are different milestones that tend to create additional stress – children, career changes, overbearing in-laws, moving, lack of a support system. Offering ongoing opportunities for couples to engage in educational skill-building classes to enhance their marriage and increase family stability is far less expensive than counseling or fragmented families.

Remove allowable activities that don't show results:

Remove the mentoring programs. These are typically done by volunteers and are difficult to recruit, train, and follow through without much overhead. The length of service delivery is an elongated cycle, therefore increasing cost per participant.

Conclusion

Scholars on the right and the left who have carefully examined the impact of healthy marriage on children agree that marriage, no matter where their parents fall on the socio-economic spectrum, is the best environment to raise a child who has access to the assets that will help them thrive and become a productive adult in society. The work of NARME partners and others in the healthy marriage and relationship arena helps form, strengthen, stabilize, and support families. These programs should continue, best practices should continue to be established, data about impacts to families and children should be disseminated, and thus contribute to positive outcomes to our most fragile families.

Fishbein/Wollman/Biglan, Statement

A Bipartisan Approach to Preventing Poverty's Impact and Persistence

Over the years, there has been a strong divide between conservatives and liberals on the origins of poverty and how to deal with it. Republican Representative Paul Ryan has recently held several hearings and just released a book proposing ways of addressing our persistent poverty. Though there has been warming to a few of his ideas by some liberals, most of their commentary has not been supportive.

We suggest herein one method of addressing the problem that is likely to elicit agreement among most of those concerned about this issue, regardless of their political stance. Namely, we propose the implementation of evidence-based programs and policies that have been repeatedly shown to ameliorate the negative outcomes of poverty, even if they do not immediately address the causal factors or focus directly on economic incentives. Importantly, though, there is an added advantage of such programs in that the skills and resiliency they instill make it less likely that future generations of those in poverty will suffer the same fate and continue to inflate the costs.

The value of an evidence-based prevention science approach is that it invests only in proven programs, so precious resources are not wasted and problems are prevented before they develop. This scenario is certainly preferable for all involved, from those directly impacted by poverty to those affected by the exorbitant costs of poverty, such as threats to public safety and the need for more specialized educational and mental health services. Along these lines, Rep. Ryan has suggested a Commission on Evidence-Based Policy Making which would serve to test the effectiveness of programs designed to address poverty and evaluate anti-poverty programs over the long term. Such a non-partisan, scientific body would further promote a needed bi-partisan approach to reducing poverty and its consequences. On the Democratic side, Rep. John Conyers, a Co-Chair of the Congressional Out of Poverty Caucus, fully supports an evidence-based prevention approach as an important component of an anti-poverty strategy. Over time, proven interventions save government money; e.g., there is no longer a need to institute programs to counteract problems that no longer exist. Plus, those no longer in poverty are more productive, leading to more money in government coffers. All can support the type of benefits espoused herein.

There is a solid body of evidence showing that community, family and school-based interventions can prevent the development of most of the problems cited above and thereby minimize the harm of poverty and assist many children in eventually escaping from it. The Institute of Medicine's 2009 report on prevention expounded on this evidence. From the prenatal period through adolescence, there are programs that can help families nurture their children's cognitive, social, and physical development. They teach parents how to reduce conflict in the home and how best their children learn. Such programs can serve to prevent impoverished children from failing in school and from developing aggressive behavior that leads to delinquency, substance abuse, and early pregnancy. Some such programs have been implemented in some local areas, but what is needed is wide-scale and faithful implementation.

A compelling recent analysis by Sawhill and Karpilow at the Brookings Institution found that if proven interventions were given at critical points from early years through adolescence, it would close the gap by 70% between more and less advantaged children in their ability to enter the middle class by mid-life. And in doing so, this approach would result in substantial savings to the taxpayer. If these programs can be successfully "scaled up," there is potential for transformative effects on poverty. One possible bipartisan means of large-scale implementation is via "social impact"/"pay-for success" bonds, which draw in private money to help implement programs. This mechanism is growing in popularity across the aisle in various states, and now in bills introduced into Congress.

The National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives (NPSC) stands by a scientifically sound strategy to advance a national mentality and governmental policies that prioritize the prevention of problems before they occur. The goal is to reduce government expenditures, while supporting conditions under which children, adolescents, families and communities can thrive. Perhaps now that time for intelligent, bipartisan discourse and action has come.

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Building a World-Class National Prevention System

By Tony Biglan March 30, 2014 Families, Nurturing Families, Prevention, Schools, Uncategorized

Prevention science has reached a point at which all U.S. communities can ensure that each young person reaches adulthood with the skills, interests, and health habits needed to lead a productive life in caring relationships with others.[1] The 2009 IOM[1] report identified several tested and effective programs, policies, and practices for the prenatal period through adolescence to prevent development of the most common and costly problems of youth, including academic failure, delinquency, depression, pregnancy, and alcohol and drug use. If a national initiative ensues that promotes acceptance and implementation of these effective interventions, virtually every citizen will benefit.

The Cost of Youth Problems

The cost of the psychological and behavioral problems of youth is substantial. Economist Ted Miller[2] estimated the cost of these common youth problems: antisocial behavior, binge drinking, cocaine/heroin abuse, high-risk sexual behavior, tobacco use, high school dropouts, and suicide attempts. He estimated the total cost in the U.S. due to youth with multiple problems to be about $340 billion yearly in 1999 dollars. To estimate the cost for just one state – Oregon – of the multiple problems we fail to prevent, we prorated the national figures for Oregon's population and adjusted for inflation: thus, the annual cost we incur comes to $5.74 billion.

Youth with Multiple Problems

A well-established fact about youth problems is that they are inter-related.[3] A study of a large representative sample of Oregon eighth graders showed, having any one problem makes it highly likely that a young person will have at least one other. [4] For example, a teen with substance use problems is 5.5 times more likely to engage in antisocial behavior, 8.5 times more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior, and 3.6 times more likely to be depressed.

Multiple Problems Stem From the Same Set of Common Conditions

These problems stem from the same conditions. In particular, if children counter high levels of conflict and criticism at home or in school, it becomes more likely that they will not develop adequate self-regulation and will become aggressive and uncooperative.[5] These behaviors lead to academic failure, peer rejection, and association with other troubled kids. By early adolescence, groups of troubled youth experiment with substance use, delinquency, and risky sexual behavior. Depression and suicide also become common.[6]

Building a Comprehensive National Prevention System

The U.S. can significantly improve its youth's success by ensuring that the nation puts in place tested and effective programs, policies, and practices. It is a significant undertaking that requires several years of concerted effort, but if we can unite everyone around a common understanding of what is needed, we can build a system to support child and adolescent development and prevent problems to a degree never before seen in human history.

A comprehensive and effective prevention system would have five facets: (a) An effective and nurturing system of family supports; (b) Effective positive behavioral supports in all schools; (c) A set of well-tested and proven prevention programs and policies; (d) Ongoing public education about prevention and accurate information about mental health, including substance abuse; and (e) A system for monitoring the wellbeing of children and adolescents. A realistic plan for this system can be created if all the agencies and organizations working on health and wellbeing coordinate their efforts.

A Workplan for the Development of a Comprehensive National Prevention System

There is a need for the States to identify government efforts relevant to treatment and prevention without restricting the focus to any one domain; e.g., substance abuse versus aggressive behavior. All aspects of mental and physical health are amenable to prevention since risky behaviors in general universally develop as the result of earlier developmental problems, such as aggressive behavior, academic failure and a number of other mental, emotional, behavioral problems. Effective prevention requires creating environments from the prenatal period onward that nurture child and adolescent successful development. Here then are a set of activities that we believe would move the nation forward.

1. **Increase the availability of evidence-based family interventions for families with children and adolescents of all ages.**
    a. The first task for each state is to identify the currently funded efforts of state government and county governments involving services to families that affect the quality of family interactions and the skill with which parents support their children's development.
    b. Having identified these, we would then make recommendations about how the state could move toward a system that reaches a growing number of families that need help, with effective *and efficient* support.
2. **Strengthen the system for supporting prosocial behavior in schools.** This effort is already underway in some states thanks to the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support movement and the growing adoption of the Good Behavior Game.

    a. We need to characterize the various activities states are engaged in to promote evidence-based support of prosociality in schools.
    b. We then need to propose how states could make this effort a formal goal and how activities could be enhanced through a unified budget.
3. **Implement policies with proven preventive benefit.** The Promise Neighborhoods Research Consortium (PNRC) identified more than fifty proven policies that would reduce a range of mental, emotional and behavioral problems and contribute to successful development.
4. **An effective system of data gathering/survey system.** The PNRC has developed a system for monitoring child and adolescent wellbeing. Improvements are needed, such as expansion to monitor the quality of family life, however this can be readily accomplished. Tracking should take place annually and provide data at the community level. And more resources are need for the collection, analysis, and feedback of the data to the public. The Commission needs to identify all the survey activities that are being performed by state governments and come up with a proposal for a unified, strengthened system.
5. **Public Education.** To generate support for prevention and provide the public and private sectors with the information required to ensure healthy, productive, and caring lifestyles, state governments need to know what they can do to inform citizens about these issues. Engage the media to be responsible reporters with attention to the long-term consequences of our actions for children's development and outcomes. We can then develop a comprehensive strategy for public education and policy.
6. **Law Enforcement as First Line of Defense.** Develop law enforcement policies that empower, and in fact obligate, officers to protect children's welfare.

This essay was written

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For the National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives

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My Brother's Keeper: The Vital Role of Prevention Science

By Tony Biglan March 26, 2014 Prevention, Public Health

We were pleased to hear about the "My Brother's Keeper" Initiative. It addresses a very significant need in society. As President Obama indicated, young men of color are particularly at risk for a wide variety of problems. There are many factors that influence the statistics, primary of which is their high rate of poverty, harsher living conditions, institutional racism, stressful family dynamics and lack of opportunities. The consequences for the nation are substantial. Economist Ted Miller estimated the cost of the most common problems for all youth, such as violence, drug abuse, high-risk sexual behavior, poor academic achievement, high school dropouts and suicide attempts, total about $462 billion annually.

The success of this Initiative would significantly increase the proportion of young people who arrive at adulthood with the skills, interests, and values they need to be successful. And in turn, we can expect to achieve a substantial reduction in both the human and financial burden to the nation.

However, many initiatives of this sort have failed because they did not make use of tested and effective strategies or the empirical tools for evaluating and improving those strategies. A successful effort will require the systematic application of well-established, evidence-based principles and practices generated by the prevention sciences. These lessons learned are applicable to all populations at risk for poor outcomes; however, given the focus of this initiative, we attest they should be followed for this effort as well to improve chances for success in young men of color.

It is important first to understand that these diverse problems are inter-related and stem from the same set of adverse conditions, all of which are more prevalent in high poverty neighborhoods. More than 20% of children are being raised in poverty in this country and the rates for African American children are higher (38.2%), as are those for Hispanic children (32.3%). Caregivers and their children in these communities experience a lack of resources ranging from low household wages and unemployment, to poorly equipped schools, to inaccessible health care services. Research indicates that poverty – and for people of color, also racism – increases stress, which contributes to increased risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and many other diseases. For families, the high levels of stress among caregivers often leads to increased experiences of conflict, threat, dysfunction and deprivation for their children, and less reserve to foster healthy childhood development. Indeed chronic exposure to stress rewires people's physiology in ways that make them hyper-vigilant to threat, more likely to perceive hostile intent in others, and more likely to react aggressively or to become depressed.

The result of experiencing these conditions early in life is that children are less likely to develop adequate self-regulation skills. The aggressive and off-task behavior that often emerges in these children as they enter adolescence is associated with academic failure, peer rejection, affiliation with other troubled kids and family problems. By adulthood, the skills for success are not in place.

While all of this is true for every child experiencing adversity, youth of color often also face daily incidents in which they are subtly and not-so subtly treated in demeaning, hostile, and even lethal ways. President Obama has spoken eloquently about this in his remarks about the Trayvon Martin murder. And the long history of racist acts that Isabel Wilkerson describes in *The Warmth of Other Suns* makes it clear the African American community, in particular, lives with a legacy of oppression.

As said above, a successful effort will require the application of evidence-based principles. Indeed, the 2009 Institute of Medicine report on prevention concluded that we know enough "to begin to create a society in which young people arrive at adulthood with the skills, interests, assets, and health habits needed to live healthy, happy, and productive lives in caring relationships with others." These programs work by rallying caregivers and teachers around their values and goals for their children and helping them to hone their skills to nurture their children's development. They learn to richly reinforce their children's developing skills, interests, and values.

There are a host of policies that can contribute directly to reducing poverty and we hope and expect that the Brother's Keeper Initiative will work to get them implemented. However, even given the current realities of poverty and racism, there is a wide range of programs that have proven beneficial in helping families ensure that their children develop successfully.

A few examples of evidence-based programs that have been provided to children and families of color include the Nurse Family Partnership, the Family Check Up, and the Good Behavior Game, a universal school-based program. There is strong documentation of their beneficial effects and cost-savings; they and others have promise to increase children's chances for success in school, their communities, and in life.

In the interest of young men of color and, in fact, all children and adolescents, we need to build a world class national prevention system. The IOM's report on prevention identified science-based interventions and policies that are capable of preventing the development of virtually the entire range of psychological problems that hamper the development of children and adolescents who are at risk due to poverty and other adverse social and environmental conditions. Some of these programs have been implemented already across the country, but only on a piecemeal basis; they need to be scaled up and systematically sustained.

A comprehensive and effective prevention system, which is described in a related blog post, would have five facets: (a) An effective and nurturing system of family supports; (b) Effective positive behavioral supports in all schools; (c) A set of well-tested and proven prevention programs and policies; (d) Ongoing public education about prevention and accurate information about mental and behavioral health, including violence and drug abuse; and (e) A system for monitoring the wellbeing of children and adolescents. Such a system should be built in stages with careful attention to the effective implementation of evidence-based interventions. It might begin by concentrating resources in a small number of high poverty communities, such as the Harlem Children's Zone and "Promise Neighborhoods" which are currently being supported by another Presidential initiative. The impact of the effort should be carefully evaluated—not because "more research is needed" (though it is) —but because rigorous evaluation should routinely be built into every social program for continuous improvement, to amass evidence of the program's effects, and for citizens to judge the benefits of these efforts.

The U.S. can significantly improve the success of young men of color through coordination between all child-serving and health agencies and organizations to make use of the strong science-base that decades of prevention research has produced. It is a significant undertaking that requires several years of concerted effort. But if we can unite everyone around a common understanding of what is needed, we can build a system that equalizes the playing field for all children to have the opportunity to lead happy, healthy and successful lives to a degree never before seen in human history.

The newly formed *Prevention Coalition for Promoting Healthy Child and Adolescent Development*strives to improve the health and wellbeing of children, adolescents, families and communities by (1) promoting a science-driven approach to preventing risks and disadvantages; (2) building links among researchers, child/adolescent-serving organizations, advocacy groups, policy makers, and the media; and (3) working with government to adopt a "prevention model" that would reduce costs while benefitting society. We stand with and are ready to work with My Brother's Keeper Task Force and partnering philanthropic and business sectors.

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Nurse-Family Partnership, Statement

STATEMENT OF
ROXANE WHITE, CEO
NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

MARCH 17, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony as a part of today's hearing on "Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families to Get Ahead." Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) appreciates the Subcommittee's interest in evidence-based policy-making and your commitment to evaluating programs that work. Every day, NFP is serving over 30,000 low-income moms in 43 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands and six Tribal communities. We have served 212, 289 moms since we began replicating our model in 1996.

NFP urges Congress to extend the MIECHV program with level funding so that we can continue to provide at-risk families with real solutions that work to bring themselves and their children out of poverty and leading healthy lives. We are encouraged to hear that the program is included in the Sustainable Growth Rate legislation being considered by members of Congress right now.

NFP also encourages this committee to continue to support a wide range of home visiting models that meet the highest level of evidentiary standards in order to ensure the largest possible economic return on investment. We believe that together these home visiting models have a collective impact on the families and communities that they serve, working within a continuum of care that has the greatest long term impact.

As you know, the NFP model partners first-time, low-income mothers with registered nurses beginning early in pregnancy and continuing until the child is age two. NFP nurses are invited into the homes of these new mothers for weekly and bi-weekly visits that focus on improving pregnancy outcomes, child health and development, and family economic self-sufficiency. Over 37 years of randomized controlled trial research and longitudinal follow-up studies have demonstrated that families served by NFP experience the following:

Improved pregnancy outcomes

- Reductions in high-risk pregnancies as a result of greater intervals between first and subsequent births, including a 28-month greater interval between the birth of first
    - 31% fewer closely spaced (<6 months) subsequent pregnancies,
    - 23% reduction in subsequent pregnancies by child age two, and
    - 32% reduction in subsequent pregnancies for the mother at child age 15 (among low-income, unmarried group)
- 79% reduction in preterm delivery among women who smoked
- 35% fewer hypertensive disorders during pregnancy

Improved child health and development

- 39% fewer injuries among children (among low-resource group)
- 56% reduction in emergency room visits for accidents and poisonings
- 48% reduction in child abuse and neglect
- 50% reduction in language delays of child age 21 months
- 67% reduction in behavioral and intellectual problems at child age 6
- 26% improvement in math and reading achievement test scores for grades 1-3
- 59% reduction in arrests at child age 15

- 90% reduction in adjudication as PINS (person in need of supervision) for incorrigible behavior

Increased self-sufficiency of the family

- 61% fewer arrests of mothers at child age 15
- 72% fewer convictions of mothers at child age 15
- 20% reduction in welfare use
- 46% increase in father presence in household
- 83% increase in labor force participation of mothers at child age 4

Independent evaluations have demonstrated that NFP outcomes for families also produce significant savings to Federal, State and local governments. A study by the RAND Corporation found that every dollar invested in NFP produces $5.70 of government savings, and Dr. Ted Miller of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation projects that state and federal government cost savings due to NFP's outcomes will average $18,406 per family served.

NFP is continuously exploring innovative ways to sustain services and expand to reach as many families as possible. We are very supportive of the Social Impact Partnership Act (H.R. 1336) authored by Rep. Todd Young of Indiana and Rep. John Delaney of Maryland. NFP is actively pursuing formal and informal opportunities to explore Social Impact Bonds and Pay for Success opportunities in multiple states, and the opportunity to capture federal savings out of social impact bond projects would help us move these forward.

NFP also applauds Congress for their bipartisan, bi-cameral support for the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program and in particular, this subcommittee for your collective commitment to funding programs proven to work through rigorous, scientific evidence and research.

A large part of NFP's growth has been fueled by the MIECHV Program. The outcomes achieved by MIECHV are saving state and federal government significant resources in reduced health, child welfare, foster care, remedial education and criminal justice expenditures. The MIECHV program is strong and cost-effective federal policy that is joining states and local agencies to support these valuable services to at-risk families. Initially authorized in the Affordable Care Act, and subsequently extended last year as a part of the Sustainable Growth Rate legislation, MIECHV is an innovative statute whose success is built around the use and evaluation of evidence based home visiting programs. MIECHV funding has expanded the number of moms and babies being reached by home visiting but it is also helping states build the necessary infrastructure to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their respective implementations. The Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation (MIHOPE) will report to Congress in 2017 on the outcomes of MIECHV. As one of the largest home visiting models, NFP is a participant in this study and is looking forward to its findings.

The Nurse-Family Partnership thanks the Subcommittee for your continued interest in this important issue. MIECHV is an accountable program that saves scarce taxpayer resources and produces tangible results. We hope that the subcommittee will continue to support the MIECHV Program which is changing the lives of thousands of vulnerable children and families nationwide. Thank you again, Chairman Reichert, Ranking Member Doggett, and Members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Robin Hood Foundation, Statement

Testimony to: Human Resources Subcommittee, House Ways and Means
From: Michael M. Weinstein, Chief Program Officer, Robin Hood Foundation
Date: March 16, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about "what works" to alleviate poverty or otherwise aid disadvantaged families.

My name is Michael Weinstein. I'm chief program officer at Robin Hood, a 501(c)(3) charity that raises and spends over $150 million a year in the pursuit of a single mission: to alleviate poverty in New York City. We were founded in 1988 and have since then granted more than $1.5 billion to community based non-profits throughout the five boroughs. We not only give substantial amounts of money to high performing grantees serving New York's poor, but we have also provided them extensive organizational assistance. Because Robin Hood's board covers 100 percent of evaluation costs, operating expenses, and overhead, every dollar donated to Robin Hood by outside donors goes out the door to fight poverty.

Because the vast majority of our donations come to us without restrictions, Robin Hood invests in a wide range of poverty-fighting activities: K-12 schools, job-training programs, criminal-justice initiatives, emergency housing (shelters), soup kitchens, food pantries, anti-obesity programs and other health initiatives, micro-loans, community colleges and much, much more. And because our donors allow us to invest in any program that works, we've had to develop a means by which to determine which investments do indeed work best. We've created a sophisticated system, outlined below, by which to compare the impact of any one grant against any other no matter how dissimilar those grants might be. Our system directs dollars where they do the very most good.

We at Robin Hood are the stewards of our donors' dollars. You are stewards of public dollars. I describe the key principles behind Robin Hood's grant-making system below to convince you that to spend money smartly requires smart measurement. And smart measurement is possible, as, I hope you will agree, Robin Hood's track record proves.

To get the story started, allow me to focus your attention on two adjectives.

> ***Doable***. Measuring the impact of anti-poverty programs is doable. Robin Hood measures the impact of every one of the $150 million that we invest each year. Don't take my (self-interested) word at face value. Go to our website (www.robinhood.org), where we post for public scrutiny the 160 or so equations that Robin Hood uses to track the impact of our grants. Judge for yourself.
>
> ***Unconscionable.*** Given that measurement is doable, a decision by public or private funders to skip measurement qualifies as unconscionable. The question is not which programs work. The question is which programs work ***best***. Only careful measurement can answer that question. To settle for second-best (or

worse) programs amounts to shoveling precious anti-poverty dollars into an open furnace. That would leave needy neighbors needlessly worse off.

Below, I set out the rudiments of Robin Hood's system of accountability, called Relentless Monetization. What I describe reflects actual practice, not wishful thinking.

To motivate what's to follow, consider private philanthropists or policymakers like you forced to choose among three options for fighting poverty. Each option costs the same amount of money and the funder can afford only one of the three.

i) Train 20 chronically unemployed women to be carpenters;
ii) Help a middle school prepare low performing, low income students with the goal that an additional 45 of them will eventually graduate from high school;
iii) Screen 200 adults for the Hepatitis C virus.

Which intervention should the public or private funder choose? Here's how we go about answering the question at Robin Hood. For each intervention:

Step 1: ***Identify*** every mission-relevant outcome (in this case, every way that the intervention improves the well-being of low income households).

Intervention (i), job training, raises current and future earnings – clearly an outcome relevant to fighting poverty. Intervention (ii), the middle school grant, raises future incomes of the students and, less obviously, improves their lifelong health; health is important to well-being, so Robin Hood includes health gains in its accounting of poverty alleviation. Intervention (iii), Hep C screening, provides for early diagnosis and treatment; it too improves health, therefore well-being.

Step 2: ***Monetize*** – assign a dollar value to each outcome.

For intervention (i), job training, estimate by how much the carpentry training will boost the future incomes of trainees.

For intervention (ii), the middle-school grant, estimate how much more high school graduates earn compared with otherwise equivalent students who fail to complete high school; and estimate how much longer high school graduates will live (in good health) compared with otherwise equivalent students who drop out. Here's where we hit an obstacle. The middle-school grant boosts income, measured in dollars. The grant also boosts health, measured by gains in longevity and morbidity. To capture the full extent of a grant, we need to combine income gains and health gains, presumably by converting health gains into dollars. Robin Hood assigns a value of $50,000 to helping individuals live an additional year in good health (akin to the number that the British health service implicitly uses).

For intervention (iii), Hep C screening, individuals who get screened early live longer, healthier lives. We convert health gains into dollars via the $50,000 conversion factor.

Counterfactual Success

Relentless Monetization takes explicit account of counterfactual successes – successes that would occur even in the absence of the funder's intervention. Because interventions do take place, counterfactual successes cannot be observed. They must be estimated, a demanding process.

Take carpentry training (intervention (i)). The training program churns out trainees who secure jobs as carpenters. But even if Robin Hood had failed to fund the program, some – perhaps many – of the trainees would have found some other way to secure employment. The proper measure of a program's impact estimates the difference between the number of trainees who secure employment after graduating from the training program (a number which can be observed) and the number of trainees who would have succeeded even without help (which cannot be observed but can be estimated).

Similar issues apply to the other two interventions. At-risk students graduate high school without Robin Hood's help; at-risk patients get timely screening without Robin Hood's recruitment efforts. Correct measures of programmatic success make sure not to take credit for successes that would happen under any circumstance.

To get a feel for the magnitudes involved in dealing up front with counterfactuals, here are actual numbers from a program funded by Robin Hood. We pay tax preparers to fill out tax forms for 60,000 low paid workers, applying on their behalf for refunds under the Earned Income Tax Credit. Here are the key numbers:

Refunds claimed on behalf of 60,000 filers: $125 million.
Refunds that would have been claimed without Robin Hood's help: $85 million
True impact of Robin Hood's sites: $125 million - $85 million = $40 million.

Note the world of difference between claiming that the program generated $125 million, as most such programs claim, and the true figure of $40 million. The problem is that the $85-million figure cannot be observed: Robin Hood did help, so what would have happened in the absence of Robin Hood's help cannot be observed and all-too-often gets ignored. But to take no account of counterfactual successes is to assume that no one who came to Robin Hood for help would, in the absence of Robin Hood's sites, gone instead to H&R Block or to family or friends for tax-prep help. That ridiculous assumption serves only to exaggerate -- indeed, wildly so -- the impact of tax-preparation sites.

Robin Hood's best guess: $85 million of the $125 million in refunds (two-thirds) would occur without our help. Properly measured, then, the tax-preparation program looks only a third as powerful it did on the basis of raw data alone.

Policy makers take note: pay scant attention to advocates who fail to account for counterfactual success.

Displacement

Displacement constitutes another reason that unsophisticated measures of success exaggerate programmatic impact. To see the problem, consider a funder who fights poverty by extending a low-interest loan to Mary so she can set up a hair-styling business in her basement. Assume Mary's business succeeds. Poverty-fighting at its best? Perhaps. But what if I tell you that Mary's customers came from Todd, a nearby hair stylist who is just as poor as Mary? In that case, the microloan did nothing to reduce poverty. All it did was to change the names on the poverty rolls (from Mary to Todd).

Displacement infects most social-service interventions. Some of the graduates of Robin Hood's job-training programs would have found work even without Robin Hood's help. Some Hepatitis C carriers would seek medical help even without Robin Hood's help. And so on. To ignore the concept serves, but again, to exaggerate the impact of interventions. Congress, beware.

Step 3: ***Estimate*** Rates of Return

Let's return to the middle-school grant. Assume:

- Robin Hood and other funders combine forces to improve a middle school so that an extra 45 students graduate from high school;
- Assume, based on research, that high school graduates earn $6,500 more per year than do otherwise equivalent students who drop out of high school;
- Assume, based on research, that students who graduate high school live an additional 1.8 years (in good health) than do dropouts;
- Set the value of an extra year of life in good health at $50,000;
- Assume that were Robin Hood to drop out of the partnership, 60 percent of the benefits would disappear. [We label the 60% figure the "Robin Hood factor."]

Here's the arithmetic by which to estimate the impact of the middle-school grant:

45 (extra high school graduates)] * [[present discounted value of ($6,500/year extra earnings for 20 years)] + [1.8 extra years in good health * $50,000/extra year] * [0.6 Robin Hood factor]]

Benefit of Robin Hood's grant = $5.2 million.
Cost of Robin Hood's grant: $0.8 million.
Benefit/Cost estimate = $5.2 million / $0.8 million = 7:1.

What, exactly, does the 7:1 figure mean?

FOR EVERY DOLLAR THAT ROBIN HOOD SPENDS ON THIS MIDDLE-SCHOOL INTERVENTION, THE COLLECTIVE LIVING STANDARDS OF

LOW INCOME FAMILIES IN NEW YORK CITY (MEASURED IN TERMS OF HIGHER EARNNGS AND A MONETIZED VALUE OF IMPROVED HEALTH) RISE BY AN AGGREGATE TOTAL OF $7.

With this ratio, and similarly estimated ratios for other grants, Robin Hood can shift dollars from low return grants to high return grants. That way, Robin Hood operates conscionably – wasting none of its donors' dollars.

There is, I hope you see, nothing special about education-focused grants. The same calculations would apply to any other mission-driven intervention.

Using Relentless Monetization

Robin Hood does not make grants on the basis of arithmetic alone.

Let me repeat. Robin Hood does not make grants on the basis of arithmetic alone. Just as selective colleges do not admit students solely on the arithmetic of SAT scores, Robin Hood bases grant decisions on far more than a single ratio. First, the ratio is imprecise. Second, like college admissions offices, Robin Hood collects a lot of other information about applicants.

Robin Hood has found that the most powerful use of its arithmetic is not to rank applicants but to diagnose performance. If staff estimates a sky-high return, we first determine if we are measuring incorrectly; if not, we search for what's surprisingly powerful about the grantee's intervention. If staff estimates a surprisingly low return, we first determine if we are measuring incorrectly (are we missing an important outcome); if not, have we discovered that a seemingly terrific intervention is in fact ineffectual?

Here's another virtue of Relentless Monetization: transparency. The system forces everything – counterfactuals, displacement, costs, and research references – into the open. On its website, Robin Hood posts every equation in its metrics toolbox, inviting the public to criticize and suggest improvements.

A Final Thought:
The upshot of rigorous evaluation? Sophisticated funders won't necessarily embrace programs that sound poetic. But if funders do measurement right, their grants will generate outcomes worthy of the poet's pen.

[To follow up on any part of this memo, please see Weinstein, Michael M. and Ralph Bradburd, *The Robin Hood Rules for Smart Giving*, Columbia University Press, 2013.]

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, Statement

March 31, 2015

Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1101 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Statement for the record on March 17, 2015 hearing: "Expanding Opportunity by Funding What Works: Using Evidence to Help Low-Income Individuals and Families Get Ahead"

To Whom It May Concern:

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy applauds the subcommittee's commitment to bringing increased attention to evidence-based policymaking in order to help low income families get ahead. The nation has made remarkable progress in preventing teen pregnancy and parenthood. However, teen pregnancy rates in the United States remain far higher than our trading partners and competitors and rates of unplanned pregnancy, particularly among unmarried women in their 20s, remain at high levels. Reducing teen and unplanned pregnancy helps reduce poverty, increase educational achievement and workforce competitiveness, and improve health and social outcomes for children and families.[1] In this letter, we offer additional information about evidence-based programs to reduce teen and unplanned pregnancy that we hope will be helpful as the subcommittee goes about its important work.

The National Campaign is a research-based, nonpartisan and nonprofit group that was founded in 1996. Our mission is to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families and, in particular, to help ensure that children are born into stable families who are committed to and ready for the demanding task of raising the next generation. Our specific strategy is to prevent teen pregnancy as well as unplanned pregnancy, especially among single, young adults. We support a combination of responsible values and behavior by both men and women, and responsible policies in both the public and private sectors. If we are successful, child and family well-being will improve, there will be less poverty, more opportunities for young men and women to complete their education or achieve other life goals, fewer abortions, and a stronger nation.

Our organization has had a long standing commitment to identifying and supporting evidence-based programs in the specific area of reducing teen and unplanned pregnancy. In fact, we published one of the first reviews of effective teen pregnancy prevention programs in 1997 by Dr. Doug Kirby entitled *No Easy Answers*[2] that found very few effective programs. By 2001, when we published Dr. Kirby's next research

review, called *Emerging Answers,*[3] there were several rigorous studies of programs that showed sustained positive effects on behavior. These offered the field a handful of programs from which to choose, but trying to find funding for such programs was a struggle. When we published Dr. Kirby's updated literature review called *Emerging Answers 2007*,[4] the quantity and quality of evaluation research had grown dramatically and there were now 15 programs with strong evidence of positive impact on sexual behavior or pregnancy or STD rates.[5] The growing research base had come primarily though private investments and the ability to replicate these programs was limited in large measure by lack of public funding.

As of 2008, there was $163 million in federal funding dedicated for teen pregnancy prevention programs, and none of that was tied to evidence-based programs (this consisted of $113 million for Community Based Abstinence Education grants and $50 million for State Abstinence Education grants). In FY 2010 this changed significantly with the appropriation of $110 million for the evidence-based Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP) and $75 million annually for the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP).[6] As of FY 2015, there is $231 million dedicated to teen pregnancy prevention programs, of which $176 million is devoted to evidence-based programs ($55 million currently remains for abstinence education without any evidence requirements).[7] An additional $6.8 million is appropriated for evaluating teen pregnancy prevention programs. This is a dramatic and welcome shift towards evidence-based policymaking. Together, multi-year TPPP and PREP grants have served approximately one million youth.

Currently funded at $101 million for FY 2015, TPPP supports a full spectrum of programs with proven results—from programs that address both abstinence and contraception, to youth development programs, to abstinence programs. The focus is on results rather than content or ideology. The key criteria is whether programs have been rigorously evaluated and found to change teens' behavior related to teen pregnancy. TPPP is a model of the tiered approach to evidence-based policymaking that has been recommended by a bipartisan group of experts.[8] Fully 75 percent of the funding for TPPP requires that grantees replicate evidence-based programs (Tier 1) and 25 percent of the funding is used to invest in rigorously evaluating promising programs or adapting proven programs in new settings or with new populations (Tier 2).

Since 2009 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has sponsored an ongoing systematic review of the teen pregnancy prevention research literature to help identify programs with evidence of effectiveness in reducing teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and associated sexual risk behaviors. The review, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research and Child Trends, looked at hundreds of evaluations and initially identified 28 programs that met Tier 1 criteria. The evidence review is updated periodically to capture the latest evaluation studies, and the most recent list includes 35 effective programs.[9] The evidence reviews and searchable database of effective programs available on the OAH website is similar to the "what works clearinghouse" called for in *Moneyball for Government* and in John Bridgeland's March 17th testimony before this subcommittee.[10]

PREP, administered by the Administration on Children Youth and Families, provides $75 million annually in mandatory funding for states, communities, and tribes to educate adolescents on both abstinence and contraception to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, and on other adulthood preparation topics such as healthy relationships, communication with parents, and financial literacy. Grants to states and tribes emphasize the use of evidence-based programs, with most PREP grantees using evidence-based programs from the HHS list.[11] An additional $10 million is reserved for innovative strategies subject to rigorous evaluation.

These programs have been lauded by independent experts as strong examples of evidence-based policymaking. For example, the Bridgespan group cited the TPPP as a model for how to expand evidence-based practices.[12] Ron Haskins, a former Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee Staff Director, described TPPP and PREP as case studies of evidence-based policymaking in his recent book *Show Me The Evidence* and highlighted one of the most widely replicated evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs in a recent op-ed.[13] Moreover, the federal list of evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs has become a resource for people around the country looking for effective programs, and the evidence-based approach to teen pregnancy prevention programs has now inspired legislation in at least one state.[14]

A number of experts, including Ron Haskins, have referenced the importance of continual evaluation as a hallmark of evidence-based policymaking. Both TPPP and PREP have made a serious commitment to evaluation, with a combination of national and grantee level evaluations.[15] This includes rigorously evaluating models that have already proven effective in past studies to see how they perform in additional sites and settings, rigorously evaluating promising programs to determine if they can demonstrate positive results, and collecting a host of grantee-level performance measures. Ongoing commitment to evidence-based approaches to reducing teen pregnancy will not only improve outcomes for low income children and families, but are also a cost-effective investment.[16]

In order to make progress in improving outcomes for low income families it is essential to go beyond teen pregnancy prevention to consider unplanned pregnancy more generally. Half of all children born to women under the age of 30 are born outside of marriage, and 70 percent of all pregnancies to single women in this age group are unintended.[17] As Richard Reeves of Brookings recently noted, there are widening class gaps in rates of unintended childbearing.[18]

There is extensive evidence showing the benefits of helping women delay or space their pregnancies and the benefits of birth control in allowing them to do so.[19] Together, Medicaid, the Title X Family Planning Program, and Community Health Centers play a key role in providing low income women with access to contraception that helps them avoid unintended pregnancies. While it is difficult to conduct randomized controlled trials of such programs, there is ample evidence that publicly-funded contraception has led to reduced unintended pregnancy and public sector costs.[20] Multiple studies have shown that for every dollar invested in contraception, the nation saves at least $6 in public sector medical costs. [21]

In addition, a growing body of research shows that helping women access the most effective methods of contraception (namely long acting reversible contraceptives) leads to less unintended pregnancy, less abortion, and reduced public sector costs. Research from Missouri,[22] Colorado,[23] and Iowa[24] found that when cost is removed as a barrier and women receive high quality contraceptive care and education, there were dramatic declines in unplanned pregnancy, abortion, and public sector costs.

In closing, thank you for your commitment to evidence-based policymaking and improving the lives of low income families. If you have any questions or need additional information about these comments, please contact me at 202-478-8554 or akane@thenc.org.

Sincerely,

Andrea Kane
Senior Director for Policy

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[1] See http://thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/teen-pregnancy; http://thenationalcampaign.org/resource/benefits-birth-control; and http://educationnext.org/purposeful-parenthood/

[2] Kirby, D. (1997). No Easy Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

[3] Kirby, D. (2001). Emerging Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

[4] Kirby, D. (2007). Emerging Answers 2007: New Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy —Full Report. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Retrieved March 30, 2015 from http://thenationalcampaign.org/sites/default/files/resource-primary-download/EA2007_full_0.pdf

[6] Congressional Research Service (May 2014). *Teenage Pregnancy Prevention: Statistics and Programs.*

[7] For an overview of these programs, see National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (April 2014). *Federal Funding Streams for Teen Pregnancy Prevention***.** Retrieved March 30, 2015 from http://thenationalcampaign.org/sites/default/files/resource-primary-download/overview_of_federal_tpp_funding_streams_april_2014.pdf

[8] http://moneyballforgov.com/content/uploads/2014/10/FAQs.pdf

[9] http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/db/

[10] http://moneyballforgov.com/moneyball-principles/

[11] http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/prep_dis_brief_032814_edited.pdf

[12] http://www.bridgespan.org/About/Media/The-Bridgespan-Group-Highlights-Federal-Teen-Pregn.aspx#.VRh10jTD86w

[13] http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/01/opinion/social-programs-that-work.html?_r=0

[14] http://www.brookings.edu/research/testimony/2015/03/16-maryland-teenage-pregnancy-haskins

[15] http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/evaluation.html and http://www.prepeval.com/

[16] http://futureofchildren.org/publications/docs/20_02_07.pdf

[17] http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/social-mobility-memos/posts/2014/01/21-3-policies-to-close-family-formation-class-divide-sawhill

[18] http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/02/26-class-gaps-in-unintended-childbearing-reeves

[19] http://thenationalcampaign.org/resource/benefits-birth-control

[20] http://thenationalcampaign.org/sites/default/files/resource-supporting-download/getting-the-facts-straight-chapter-6-savings-to-society.pdf

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