

## FEDERAL POLICY LUNCHEON 6.30.10 - NOTES

**Elizabeth Gaines, the Forum**— Welcome to everyone who has just joined us, and re-welcome to the Children's Cabinet Network members that have been meeting this morning, want to recognize a couple of people/organizations in the room from the Ready by 21 National Partnership: United Way Worldwide, Rochelle Finzel @ National Conference of State Legislatures, Bryan Joffe @ American Association of School Administrators and Corporate Voices for Working Families. A lot of national organizations are connecting with leaders on the ground in communities to change the odds for children and youth . The Children's Cabinet Network has been a network for 5 years... We want to keep the panel very short to get into a dialogue. Minnesota State Senator Mee Moua and Lauren Sterling from the Maine Children's Cabinet will lead off the state responses to our panelists.

**Thad Ferber, the Forum**—We want to set this up as a dialogue. I think we've all been impressed in recent years about the increasing focus on collaboration and coordination for children and youth. We've seen a lot at the state level, workgroups, commissions, cabinets, etc. where leaders come together to develop an integrated strategy for children and youth. We've also see increasing interest at the national organization level, many folks here today that want to support that work. I want to recognize the Annie E. Casey Foundation who has supported many of these cross-coordination efforts. There has also been support for giving leaders the data they need to make good decisions. We have a wonderful panel of folks from the federal level , let's get started...

**Elizabeth Gaines, the Forum**— The states in the room today are: TX, IA, OR, KS, MD, PA, OH, MN, FL, ME and MA.

**Thad Ferber, the Forum**— Each of the topics discussed today warrant a day to themselves, so this will be just a brief introduction to these issues in the hopes that we will simply start the conversation on these critical topics. Order of speaking.... Dodd's office, Rockefeller's Office, Fattah's Office, Bruce Lesley (First Focus), and Roberto Rodriguez (Domestic Policy Council). I've asked them all to do just a minute of overview and then to setup questions or thoughts about parallel efforts at the state level

**Averi Pakulis, Senator Dodd's Office** – Thank you. Unlike everyone else who has a final product, we are not there yet. What Senator Dodd is up to in his last year here: He has started a series of hearings on the “state of the American child.” We've had one so far and will have three more. Still working on dates. The goal the Senator wants to accomplish is to look at where children and families are today and examine the challenges they are facing. He wanted to take a good hard look at where they are before he leaves office. He wants to create a National Council on Children – we would like to create a permanent national body to look at data and make recommendations about how to help support children and families. I would love to hear your thoughts about this – we had Elaine Zimmerman testify on this and she was wonderful.

**Barbara Pryor, Senator Rockefeller's Office** – I'm going to diverge...Rockefeller chaired the Commission on Children, and it gave me a decade work plan. Your work can give focus to the issue, and we need that kind of

focus to be successful at the state level. My boss tries hard to be a good state partner. Most good state policies are partnerships. When you think about the range of jurisdiction for Finance, it's all the big children's issues, social security, CSE, TANF, Child Care, Foster Care, Adoption, EITC, Child Tax Credits—that's what brought my boss into the children's debate as a young Senator on the Finance Committee. States were given many opportunities to diverge under welfare reform. In order to figure out what is going on we need state data—and if you have a small state it's not always picked up on federal data.

We are growing in support for children's' data, and we hope that TANF reauthorization will be the ideal time to move it forward. It's a great time for this because we have an administration that is focused on results-based.

**Elizabeth King, Representative Fattah's Office, (House co-sponsor of well being bill)**— We know that we've been funding programs for 40-80 years, and we don't know whether they are achieving their objectives. We also need to know more about replicating and scaling up state and local innovations. State Legislatures and Governors have shown a lot of leadership around these issues and we are looking to them for expertise around successful programs. The Congressman is always looking for data – and you need a data set that is designed to be disaggregated in effective ways.

**Bruce Lesley, First Focus**—First of all, these three bills are things that First Focus consider a real priority. One of the great things about the data bill is that it provides great state information that you can use. I'm going to talk about the children's budget act.... The bill is very simple – it's like a paragraph. It requires that the Administration reports to Congress on the aggregate children's spending in the federal budget. This has a whole child perspective for the first time. In trying to do this work ourselves, the share of spending on kids between 2005 and 2009 declined by 12% and the administration did not know or want to hear this. In the aggregate the share of spending on kids will decline and the budget will help us look at funding from a different perspective. When Congress was passing the ARRA bill, they proposed to cut 45% of the funds from children's' programs - and because of having that information, Members were able to push back and get much of that funding restored.

**Thad Ferber, the Forum** —Lauren, go ahead and kick off the questions.

**Lauren Sterling, Maine Children's Cabinet**—Specific question for Elizabeth King that gets to what the Children's Cabinet Network was discussing this morning. As federal players are setting out on this data work for kids, we ask that you take a look at and speak with those and check in with those of us who are doing this work at the state level. We all collect a lot of data.

What is the story the data tells us that can inform policy and practice? Federal partnership around data planning and thinking that proposes solutions/directions for action. Reach out to those that are already working across data collection at the state level. Though there are some brilliant changes at the federal level in terms of priorities (early childhood etc.) – how can we look at intentional partnership but federal agencies with state entities involved in that work? So RFPs are not distributed by agency but to the coordinating body so that states can put their strongest applicant forward.

**Elizabeth King, Representative Fattah's Office** –There has been a focus on moving things through Governor's office. House/Senate issue of state vs. localities. Data redundancy is a problem – one entity collecting data on those under 5, another on kids under 4. There is a movement toward greater interagency coordination, but it's a challenge.

**Barbara Pryor, Senator Rockefeller's Office**–The legislative challenge is that it has to be attached to something. There are 14 committees that look at various child programs. Not going to be able to streamline and organize congress. Not every state is organized the same way, MA has child support out of tax division, my state it in DHHS, etc.

**Lauren Sterling, Maine Children's Cabinet**–Could we direct Governors to use their coordinating body as a vetting process?

**Barbara Pryor, Senator Rockefeller's Office**– Some state legislators have an issue with the way ARRA has been spent.

**Roberto Rodriguez, Domestic Policy Council, White House**–Doing work around health, education, and well being of youth. Top priority at the Domestic Policy Council, strengthening healthcare, emphasis on college/workforce readiness. Need to invest more resources in this work, wanted to clearly prioritize this work as part of domestic policy agenda. \$140B in broader children and youth programming. Shoring up early childhood \$30B in higher education. Invest in WIA, new pathways to green jobs, job corps programs. Resource piece is critically important in FY11 budget request. Education key priority. Budget is a challenge, not as challenging as at the state level. New pathways/funding around youth. Workforce Investment Act.

Coordination and integration, looking at the right metrics across programs/agencies is critical. Important to approach this conversation (not new to DC), matters where you begin that conversation and your goals. Looking to harness integration/coordination to tackle some key challenges. Readiness gaps that begin to show up at 3 and persist through K – spend 12 years fighting that battle. Not providing enough quality supports to our youngest children. How do we raise quality of those supports? Brought HHS and others together, to align investments with DOE, HHS, and interagency working groups Agriculture – what does it mean to provide high quality environment for neediest kids from birth to school entry? Identifying best practices, overlaps, helping propel Pres. Early learning agenda. Transitions from K-12 to continuing educational opportunities (workforce training, CCs, HE). Workforce Development to manage CC funding to ease/strengthen that piece for young people and returning adults.

Fund for innovation for youth, would do better job supporting youth. More "on-ramps" for disconnected youth to get them back on track towards a future. Most of our lessons around coordination comes from the local level. Propose/provoke innovative ideas but learn from lessons/structures that states/communities have established to address these problems.

I think there is a great amount of interest in this at the local level. One of our foci has been the promise neighborhoods model that is not just about educational attainment but on supporting the whole child. We have

over 325 applicants around the country – so communities are ready for this kind of work and we are committed to helping them and to trying to forge ahead on the federal level as well.

**Thad Ferber, the Forum**—Introduces Minnesota State Senator Mee Moua.

Senator Mee Moua –Thank you all for being here. I feel in the minority as the only elected official. I'm very pleased to be able to share my perspective, in addition to the Children and Youth Caucus I also chair the Senate Judiciary Committee. From my perspective I want to share what drives state-level policymaking that inhibit our being able to take advantage of federal support.

I will focus on MN so as not to speak for everyone. Our current delivery infrastructure is very outdated and must be updated for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the state level we have financing and budgeting systems and are both technically and systemically outdated. It's very difficult for us to see what the return on investment is. Given where we are at, with limited resources, almost all 50 states are operating under extreme budgetary stress. When we need to cut we cut infrastructure – we no longer have high tech analysts, evaluators, etc. which means that we can't comply with new federal mandates. The one point that I'd like to present to you that I am very excited about all the things that are happening at the federal level.

In MN what is hampering my ability to have inter-agency conversation and to implement comprehensive surveys, and to collect meaningful valid data is the infrastructure. As you are putting forth the policies and allocating the dollars, please focus on supporting the infrastructure necessary for us to do that good work. This is no different from the capacity building dollars for electronic health records. Without the support to update our ability to implement and track changes, we can't move forward. Consider adding in incentives to meet the various challenges. Increasingly we've come to rely on the federal government to help us do that. Please help us to build the systems that we need rather than a specific program that you want implemented.

Therein lies the federal opportunity, because we will listen to you when you give us the money. So you can dictate uniformity and the outcomes that you want us to pursue. States may be re-thinking whether or not they become mere agents of federal implementation.

**Barbara Pryor, Senator Rockefeller's Office**– there is a big challenge in getting the necessary votes. My boss believes that we do need to invest in state infrastructure. We're still hoping for FMAP (Federal Medical Assistance Percentages). The climate of compromise is not so great right now. We've been working hard with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to help states use the federal data if we can get the bill through.

**Elizabeth King, Representative Fattah's Office**– we plan on paying for the data collection. Everyone is well aware of the opportunities presented by the state's budget crisis. Its challenging that no one wants to take program money away for evaluation.

**Roberto Rodriguez, Domestic Policy Council, White House**– My boss is a believer in more spending on state infrastructure. We thought we'd be able to get FMAP through the finish line by now. We are approaching the question of data-collection. We are trying to approach it strategically across the exec branch to do a better job of integrating and focusing on key indicators. Our goal is be able to provide some level of encouragement to the

states to approach data collection in a more comprehensive way. The more policy-makers are open to the potential of streamlining data collection the more it opens the possibility toward allocating more funding for that.

**Bruce Lesley, First Focus**—The people on this panel are EXACTLY the people who are advocating for infrastructure investment from the federal level to the states. Combined, the people on this panel are asking for 46 billion for investments at the state-level.

**United Way Worldwide**—Our work in Ready by 21 and the work at United Way Worldwide, one of things that I wonder about, are people thinking about linking local data to state and federal data. Both public system local data and non-profit, etc.

**Roberto Rodriguez, Domestic Policy Council, White House**—We are hoping that we have a state level data system that supports that. We have laws on the books that get in the way of sharing. It's tough at the federal level because we can only mandate collection where federal money goes.

**Elizabeth Gaines, the Forum**—Are FERPA guidelines coming out momentarily? The CCN has commentary on data sharing in this space.

**Roberto Rodriguez, Domestic Policy Council, White House**—FERPA guidance is coming, hopefully soon. I can't say too much about it because it's clearance. But we are also having HHS and Ed think collaboratively about that.

**Thad Ferber, the Forum**—The last thing I heard from the Children's Cabinet Network this morning... Since a lot of the federal funding streams, many create new mandated partnerships. As you are drafting legislation and RFPs? Please encourage people to use current collaborative rather than creating a new one.

**Bruce Lesley, First Focus**—One of the things I think that you all understand but that other state leaders don't, -- there has been 15 bills that have required better data and many states push back and don't get the data back to the federal level. If there's ways to work on that with you all that would be helpful to move things forward. We have huge holes for what happens for kids on federal policy. We know less today on how much we know on these ENORMOUS federal programs.

**Lauren Sterling, Maine Children's Cabinet**—That's a great example of when to reach out in advance of the policy so that we can try to work out the mandate at the state level.

**Thad Ferber, the Forum**—Closing thoughts. Outside of this room there aren't enough people focusing on coordination and data collection, which makes me all the more grateful for the people who ARE in this room. I want to encourage you to see one another as allies in this work. Want to encourage a two-way discussion between state and federal governments. Want to open the door and start the conversation in the hopes that it will continue for years to come.