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Policy Update: February 2018

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Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow

Francesca Longo, Ph.D., is a Congressional Fellow whose placement is in the office of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). Click here to learn more about her work in Congress, including how her background in developmental and educational psychology has helped her contribute on a wide range of policy issues.

Legislative Branch Updates

FY18 Appropriations Update: Government Funded Through March 23, Large Budget Agreement Passed

On February 9, a sweeping $320 billion budget agreement and continuing resolution to fund the government through March 23 was signed into law, ending what *Congressional Quarterly* referred to as a "short and inconsequential government shutdown." Although it only lasted a few hours, this marked the second government shutdown of the year. The bipartisan budget agreement includes large increases to both defense and nondefense discretionary spending caps for fiscal years 2018 and 2019. The bill also includes $89 billion in emergency aid for victims of recent hurricanes and wildfires. *Congressional Quarterly* reports that the bill "would also extend the Children's Health Insurance Program through fiscal 2027, eliminate an independent Medicare cost-control board, and make a number of other changes to health care payment programs and renew popular expired tax breaks such as a $4,000 deduction for college tuition and related costs."

The Senate passed the bill on a vote of 71-28, while the House followed with a vote of 240-186. Although this budget deal was bipartisan, there was pushback from both sides in the House, where some Republicans were concerned about the overall cost and some Democrats withheld support due to the lack of a legislative solution or promise from Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) to bring an immigration bill to protect "Dreamers" to the floor. Since spending caps have now been raised, Congress is expected to complete the remaining FY 2018 appropriations bills in the coming weeks.

House Passes Legislation Focused on STEM Research and Education

On February 13, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3397, the Building Blocks of STEM Act by voice vote. The bill instructs the National Science Foundation (NSF) to "consider age distribution in order to more equitably allocate funding for research studies with a focus on early childhood" when awarding grants under the Discovery Research PreK–12 program. In addition to seeking more equitable funding for STEM research studies focused on children aged 10 and younger, the bill also includes provisions on supporting computer science and STEM education for young girls in particular. The bill has not yet been considered by the Senate.

Senate Committee Hearing on the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act

On January 30, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a hearing entitled "One Year Later: The American Innovation and Competitiveness Act." Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO) opened the hearing by thanking Chairman John Thune (R-SD) and Ranking Member Bill Nelson (D-FL) for the opportunity to chair the hearing, as well as thanking Senators Thune, Nelson, and Gary Peters (D-MI) for their

partnership in getting the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (AICA) passed. He noted that the legislation is focused on three key components: maximizing basic research, improving STEM education, and encouraging greater commercialization and technology transfer opportunities. Senator Gardner also pointed out that there is "still much work to be done," as the United States is "falling out of the top 10 global innovators for the first time in history." Ranking Member Nelson echoed the importance of maintaining competitiveness, stating that we are "losing ground to overseas competition." Senator Nelson also expressed concern about the current administration's failure to fill key science positions as well as political interference in science, stating, "the bottom line is that science should be a nonpartisan issue." Senator Peters then gave brief remarks further emphasizing the bipartisan nature of AICA and noting the importance of properly implementing the legislation. He concluded his remarks by saying that "we hope this committee will continue to be a beacon of bipartisanship in the area of scientific endeavor."

Testimony on implementation of AICA so far was then provided by Dr. France Córdova, Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF), and Dr. Walter Copan, Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology and Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), U.S. Department of Commerce. Drs. Córdova and Copan discussed the ways in which their agencies are implementing a range of AICA provisions, including those related to transparency, accountability, facilities, and STEM education. Specific topics addressed in their testimonies included: NSF's recent appointment of its first Chief Officer for Research Facilities in the office of the Director; progress toward the formation of the STEM education advisory council outlined in the law, with over 400 nominations received; the success of the NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps) program, now being used as a model for other federal agencies and states to start their own I-Corps programs; NIST's work to codify continuing cybersecurity efforts; and NIST research that is leading to the development of standards for voting security. Both Dr. Córdova and Dr. Copan emphasized how proud they were of the improvements their agencies have made thus far in implementing the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act. For a webcast of the full hearing and to read witness testimony, click here.

Senate Committee Hearing on the Impact of the Opioid Crisis on Children and Families

On February 8, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions hosted a hearing entitled "The Opioid Crisis: Impact on Children and Families," the fourth in a series on the opioid crisis. Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) opened the hearing by providing statistics on the scope of the problem, noting first that babies born to mothers using opioids are at risk for neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), and indicating that the number of infants born in withdrawal from opioids has increased substantially in recent

years. Additionally, after steadily declining since 2000, there has been a 10% increase in children in foster care in the last three years. He pointed to several pieces of legislation that address the effects of opioids on children and families: The Protecting our Infants Act, The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), and The 21st Century Cures Act, stating that the purpose of the hearing was to hear from witnesses about whether these laws are helping states, if there are federal barriers to providing services, and how to better coordinate services for parents and children. Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) then provided her statement, adding that "Congress must continue bipartisan work to combat this crisis by addressing both the root causes and the ripple effects of the opioid epidemic," including addressing childhood trauma, training teachers in dealing with children affected by opioids, combating stigmas associated with drug abuse, and reorienting child welfare programs to address prevention.

Witnesses provided testimony on a variety of issues, including: the substantial increase in the number of infants diagnosed with NAS; that in 2015, 35% of foster care entries were due to parent substance abuse; that for every $7 the federal government spends on foster care, only $1 is spent on prevention; that there is a lack of funding for several provisions of CARA, including the requirement for states to develop "plans of safe care" and for family-centered treatment, along with a lack of clarity on state and provider level provisions; and that the Protecting Our Infants Act, which focuses on expanding prevention, treatment, and services, needs more clarification on how these strategies will be implemented. Recommendations for Congress centered around improving care for mothers and pursuing non-punitive approaches to care for pregnant women; improving infant outcomes through better identification and treatment of NAS; expanding research on outcomes by providing direct funding to the National Institute on Drug Abuse; and recommendations such as improved coordination across federal agencies and federal training and education requirements for opioid prescribers. Witnesses included: Becky Savage, R.N., M.S.N., Co-Founder, 525 Foundation; Stephen W. Patrick, M.D., M.P.H., M.S., F.A.A.P., Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Health Policy, Division of Neonatology, Vanderbilt University Medical Center; and William C. Bell, Ph.D., President and CEO, Casey Family Programs. For a webcast of the full hearing and to read witness testimony, click here.

House Committee Hearing on Evidence-Based Policymaking and the Future of Education

On January 30 the House Committee on Education and the Workforce held a hearing entitled "Protecting Privacy, Promoting Policy: Evidence-Based Policymaking and the Future of Education." Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (R-NC) opened the hearing by noting that "both Republicans and Democrats agree that the use of good research and evidence allows us to make good policy," and that there is "an added layer of

accountability to policy" when policymakers can point to data and evidence that has guided their decisions. However, she also discussed concerns about the privacy of student data and emphasized that this hearing was an important opportunity to discuss what is working, what could be improved, and what the major issues are that students, parents, and educators face when dealing with data and privacy. Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA) used his opening statement to discuss recent rapid expansion in the use of educational technology, stating that "as education technology use continues to expand we must take the necessary steps to protect the privacy and data of students and their families."

Witnesses then provided testimony on a variety of issues related to evidence-based policymaking and data privacy. Specific issues discussed included: the emphasis on privacy in the final report of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking; how statewide longitudinal data systems can be set up to allow stakeholders from the education, health, and workforce development sectors to each access only certain portions of the system; the use of data to drive instruction to improve student outcomes; evidence-based professional development for teachers and administrators; the role of Regional Education Laboratories (RELs) in understanding the unique evidence needs of each individual region, as well as their ability to create a bridge between research and practice; the need to make sure education research is contextualized and easy to both absorb and apply in practice; and that there is no silver bullet to challenges of privacy and data - there will always be difficult tradeoffs. Witnesses included: Paul Ohm, Professor, Georgetown University Law Center and Member of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking; Jane Robbins, American Principles Project Foundation; Dr. Carey Wright, State Superintendent of Education for Mississippi; and Dr. Neal Finkelstein, Senior Program Director, WestEd. For a webcast of the full hearing and to read witness testimony, click here.

Senate Committee Hearing on Higher Education Accountability and Risk to Taxpayers

On January 30, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions hosted a hearing entitled "Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: Accountability and Risk to Taxpayers," part of a series of hearings focusing on the upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) opened the hearing by stating the problem: that 54% of student loan borrowers are in default or not making payments on loans. He articulated the need for increased accountability in higher education to ensure that students are earning degrees worth their time and money and to better protect taxpayer dollars. He added that Congress should consider legislation so that all programs and institutions will be held accountable for their students' inability to pay back loans. Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) added three points on accountability in higher education: that there can't be one size fits all accountability for the entire

system; that schools need to be held accountable at all stages of students' education, not just if they can find a job after college; and that higher education needs to be more accessible and supportive for underrepresented students. She emphasized the need for evidence in determining which existing accountability measures produce good results and which need to be strengthened.

Witnesses provided testimony on a variety of issues, including that tuition and fees at public four-year institutions have been growing 19 times faster than the median family income since 1980; that low-income students and students of color are less likely than other students to enroll in institutions where most students graduate; redefining accountability standards so that "low performing" means unacceptable effort to enroll and graduate low-income students along with low graduation rates overall; the need for program level transparency and accountability to tighten the connection between "learning and earning" and to foster specialization; the importance of improving accountability policies and loan-based metrics, for example, adjusting the cohort default rate (the currently used measure of how many student loan borrowers default within three years of entering repayment) to capture longer term loan default rates; that the postsecondary data infrastructure is burdensome and inefficient, with data reported to multiple places that do not communicate, and in some cases very similar data reported to multiple places; and the need for more flexible consequences for low performing schools, such as incentives to boost performance.

Witnesses included Dr. Anthony P. Carnevale, Research Professor and Director, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce; Dr. José Luis Cruz, President, Herbert H. Lehman College, City University of New York; Jason D. Delisle, Resident Fellow, American Enterprise Institute; Ben Miller, Senior Director, Postsecondary Education, Center for American Progress; and Mamie Voight, Vice President of Policy Research, Institute for Higher Education Policy. Click here to watch the full hearing and read witness testimony.

Senate Committee Hearing on Improving College Affordability

On February 6, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions hosted a hearing entitled "Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: Improving College Affordability," part of a series of hearings focusing on the upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) opened the hearing by stating that as part of the reauthorization, Congress can improve college affordability without asking taxpayers to spend more money on student aid by "simplifying student aid, redirecting existing dollars for more Pell grants, helping students complete their degrees more rapidly,

making colleges more accountable for students repaying loans, simplifying programs and regulations to make colleges more affordable, and making it easier for students to apply for federal aid and pay back their loans." Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) added that colleges are not doing enough to recognize the burden of debt and the challenges students take on finding a job that pays well, that states are investing less in higher education, and that federal student aid (including Pell Grants) doesn't cover as much of the cost as it used to. She ended her statement by calling attention to the question at hand during this series, "will this reauthorization of the High Education Act leave students better off?"

Witnesses spoke on a variety of issues related to college affordability, including: that the cost of higher education has risen faster than the pace of inflation, potentially due to the Bennett Hypothesis, which posits that federal student aid encourages tuition inflation; a summary of the research on the hypothesis, with most of the 25 studies included providing evidence supporting it; that state investment in higher education declined by 26 percent per student between 2008 and 2012 and that in that same time period tuition increased by 35 percent; that the U.S. has focused on improving access and not quality in higher education, with limited support to help students make good choices about where to enroll or what to study to maximize program completion; that students would have to work 27 hours a week at minimum wage to pay public college tuition, not accounting for non-tuition expenses such as books, food, and rent; suggestions for solutions such as increasing the amount of Pell grants and tying awards to inflation, simplifying the FAFSA, and making workforce development training programs eligible for Pell Grants; and a recommendation to include creation of a federal-state partnership providing incentives for lowering tuition prices in the HEA reauthorization.

Witnesses included Dr. Sandy Baum, Senior Fellow, Urban Institute; Dr. Zakiya Smith, Strategy Director for Finance and Federal Policy, Lumina Foundation; Dr. Jenna Robinson, President, The James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal; Dr. Robert Anderson, President, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association; and Dr. DeRionne Pollard, President, Montgomery College. Click here to watch the full hearing and read witness testimony.

Executive Branch Updates

President's Budget Request Released for Fiscal Year 2019

On February 12, the White House released the FY 2019 President's Budget. The President's Budget lays out the administration's priorities for federal programs and suggested spending levels, and the release of the President's Budget request is the first step in the federal budget process. The budget request will be used as the starting point by Congress and Federal Agencies as they move forward with the appropriations process for fiscal year 2019. As noted above in the Legislative Branch Updates, Congress has not yet completed the appropriations process for fiscal year 2018, which began on October 1, 2017.

The President's Budget request includes $35.5 billion for the National Institutes of Health, $7.5 billion for the National Science Foundation, and $521.6 million for the Institute of Education Sciences. The request also proposes large cuts over the next ten years to various mandatory spending programs, including Medicare and Medicaid. The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) provides a full analysis of the President's Budget request, available here. COSSA notes that the President's Budget request "remains a political, largely symbolic document that outlines the Administration's priorities for the year ahead," so while the policy priorities contained in the budget request could shape legislation in the coming year, Congress is unlikely to move forward with most of the recommendations included in this request.

Friends of NICHD Meeting

On February 16, The Friends of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) held its annual meeting. Members heard from Dr. Diana Bianchi, NICHD's Director, who provided updates on activities at the institute, including a number of opportunities for participants to provide input. A major theme of her talk was the lead role NICHD is playing in working towards greater inclusion of people across the lifespan in clinical research at NIH. Following up on the 21st Century Cures Act, NIH has a new policy requiring the inclusion of people of all ages, including children and older people, when conducting clinical research unless there is a strong justification for exclusion based on ethical or scientific reasons. All grant applications submitted after January 25, 2019 will need to address issues of inclusion. The Cures Act also required the establishment of a Task Force aimed at addressing gaps in the research on safe and effective therapies for pregnant and lactating women, including effects on children prenatally and during the newborn period. The Task Force, assigned to NICHD, must have recommendations to the HHS Secretary and Congress by September 2018.

Dr. Bianchi then pointed to the *All of Us* Research Program, noting the report of a workgroup focusing on child enrollment in scientific studies. She also noted the high priority NICHD is placing on including people

with physical and intellectual disabilities in scientific research. Dr. Bianchi noted that a majority of the U.S. population (about 58%) is typically not included in research studies. Groups currently excluded from most major research studies include pregnant women, children, older people, and those with intellectual and physical disabilities. She urged a transition from "protecting people from research, to protecting people through research." Dr. Bianchi's updates also included a review of NICHD data on research project grant funding when physician scholars have received individual career development awards with or without an institutional training award that has informed a shift towards awards to individual investigators rather than institutional training awards. She also discussed PregSource, an initiative that uses crowdsourcing to get input about pregnant women's experiences in real time on such issues as sleep, nausea, exercise and weight gain, with the aim of informing strategies to improve care; and the focus at NICHD on research to improve obstetric and neonatal care when there has been opioid use in the mother. Dr. Bianchi concluded her presentation with a discussion of NICHD's strategic planning process, which will have the goal of determining scientific priorities for the institute to align resources with priorities. A Request for Information (RFI) coming in the summer of 2018 will provide an opportunity for input; and a 50 person Strategic Plan workgroup will be formed, with approximately half from NIH and half from external communities.

Federal Reports and Requests

Reports

New Reports and Briefs from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

Several new publications are available from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

(1) Progress on Pathways: Findings from Qualitative Interviews with PACE Participants This brief summarizes findings from interviews conducted with participants in the Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE) study, an evaluation of nine career pathways programs.

(2) School, Work, and Waiting: The Activities of PACE Control Group Participants This brief summarizes findings from interviews with 39 members of the control group in the Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE) study, an evaluation of nine career pathways programs.

(3) The CCDF Policies Database Book of Tables: Key Cross-State Variations in CCDF Policies as of October 1,

2016 This report describes variations of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) policies across states.

(4) Conceptual Frameworks for Intentional Approaches to Improving Economic Security and Child Well-being This brief describes two conceptual frameworks for programs that intentionally combine services for children and adults.

(5) Using Research and Evaluation to Support Programs that Promote Parents' Economic Security and Children's Well-being This brief describes research and evaluation approaches that could help program leaders and staff create more robust programs that intentionally combine services for children and adults.

(6) Promoting Prenatal Health and Positive Birth Outcomes: A Snapshot of State Efforts This report presents a snapshot of state efforts to promote prenatal health and improve birth outcomes, including but not limited to home visiting.

(7) Planning a Next-Generation Evaluation Agenda for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program This report supports plans for "next-generation" evaluation activities under the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, to support youth aging out of foster care.

(8) Steps to Success: Implementing a Home Visiting Program Designed to Prevent Rapid Repeat Pregnancies Among Adolescent Mothers This brief summarizes key findings from a study of the implementation of the Steps to Success program, a home visiting program for adolescent mothers.

(9) Learn, Innovate, Improve (LI2): Enhancing Programs and Improving Lives This brief provides an overview of The Learn, Innovate, Improve (LI2) process, a series of replicable, evidence-informed program improvement activities, supported by collaboration between practitioners and applied researchers.

(10) Using a "Road Test" to Improve Human Services Programs This brief explains the "road test" process for program improvement, provides practical guidance for using this approach in human services programs, and gives concrete examples of road tests.

(11) Validation of the Quality Ratings Used in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS): A Synthesis of State Studies This report presents findings from validation studies of early care and education programs participating in state Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS).

(12) Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County Health Careers for All Program: Implementation

and Early Impact Report This report describes implementation and early impacts of the Health Careers for All program to help low-income adults access and complete occupational training.

New Reports from the Institute of Education Sciences

Several new reports are available from the National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Department of Education:

(1) First-Generation Students: College Access, Persistence, and Postbachelor's Outcomes This Statistics in Brief describes educational and postbachelor's outcomes for students whose parents have not attended college.

(2) High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09) Second Follow-Up: A First Look at Fall 2009 Ninth-Graders in 2016 This First Look Report presents findings on young-adulthood outcomes from the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09) Second Follow-up.

(3) 2015–16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16): Student Financial Aid Estimates for 2015–16 This First Look Report provides the first results of the 2015–16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16), the most comprehensive nationally representative survey of student financing of postsecondary education in the United States.

(4) High School Students' Views on Who Influences Their Thinking about Education and Careers This Statistics in Brief describes who public high school students view as their main influences when considering education after high school and careers.

Federal Funding Opportunities

This month's FFO highlights an Institute of Education Sciences (IES) funding opportunity to fund the Lead of a CTE (Career and Technical Education) Network. This funding opportunity would establish a national research center to carry out scientifically based research on career and technical education programs as required by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. The CTE Network will conduct research on CTE through projects funded by other Institute grant competitions. The goal of the CTE Network is to support and expand the causal research base on CTE at the secondary and/or postsecondary level specifically through research on whether and how CTE practices, programs, and policies affect student education outcomes. Completed applications are due by April 5, 2018. Click here to read about this and other funding opportunities.