APPAM | ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS & MANAGEMENT

Opening Plenary: ***Toward Fair and Effective Child Policy: Evidence Meets Politics***
Moderator: Ron Haskins, The Brookings Institution
Panelists: Laura Berntsen, Senate Committee on Finance
JooYeun Chang, Casey Family Programs
Ken Dodge, Duke University
Becky Shipp, Health and Human Services Policy Advisor, Social Security, Pensions and Family Policy
Session Summary: Megan Troy, Northwestern University

In the 2016 APPAM Spring Conference Opening Plenary, Ron Haskins was joined by experts to discuss policies regarding child welfare, their funding, and possibilities for future changes. This panel discussed the implication of changes to how funding streams are used and how we can best prevent long-term foster care placements in congregate care by keeping family units intact and safe by utilizing prevention services. The discussion centered around Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act, both funding sources used for child welfare services. IV-B has a much smaller budget, less than one billion dollars, which is used for prevention services intended to keep children who are at-risk of out-of-home placement together with their family. Title IV-E is funding for out-of-home placement, with a budget eight times larger than IV-B with an uncapped match.

With waivers being utilized in 31 jurisdictions across the country in 2019, now is the best time to look at how the funding can be changed and how preventative services can be increased to avoid costly foster care, which ultimately has poor outcomes for children, families, and the federal budget. Becky Shipp and Laura Berntsen from the Senate Finance Committee discussed the Family First Act, a proposal by Wyden and Hatch to keep children safe and supported at home or in the most family-like setting (kinship care). This would change the funding structure and promote prevention and community resources rather than unnecessary child removals and placements in foster care and congregate care.

JooYeun Chang of the Casey Family Programs stated that there is an urgency about the need to reform how we pay for child welfare services, and that we need to focus on research, evidence, and justice. She noted that policies need to innovate and change to give children the best possible outcomes, and not continue the trend of waiting until it is too late to provide prevention services. With the current research and evidence we have, she feels that we know better so we need to do better and that our policies must reflect this.

Ken Dodge of Duke University cited promising, innovative research being done in Durham, NC, with early screening practices. According to his research, there is an enormous cost associated with child maltreatment and neglect (estimated at $210,000 per child/year). To combat this, early parenting intervention programs can be put in place to screen for risk factors within families and offer support services (like mental health or parental skill building) to stabilize both child and family. In the *Durham Connects* model, they have screened each child born in Durham and have provided home visiting services to families in need. This has led to a large reduction in child protective services investigations for the families involved.

Though the panelists represented many different views, from both sides of the aisle, there was agreement that bipartisan support is needed to pass meaningful legislation and policies to advance family safety and stability. By providing prevention services early on, we can prevent unnecessary foster care situations that come with high costs and poor outcomes for the most vulnerable population - our children.

Session: Minimum Wage Effects on Employment, Prices, and Public Subsidies
Chair/Discussant: Mark Long, University of Washington
Paper Presenters: Sylvia Allegretto, University of California Berkeley
Ben Zipperer, Washington Center for Equitable Growth
Rachel West, Center for American Progress

This session presented research findings from different, and new, perspectives on the effects of increasing the minimum wage. While traditional studies have focused on the employment effects, these researchers have thought outside of the box to look at how costs are absorbed by firms, how SNAP enrollment would be affected, and how to best research these effects in innovative ways.

A recent study spearheaded by Sylvia Allegretto looked at how an increase in minimum wage in the city of San Jose affected restaurant pricing, as compared to the surrounding areas in Santa Clara County. She found that there was a relatively small increase in prices (0.5%) with the increase in minimum wage. She did note that this study generally excluded fast-food restaurants like McDonalds because the study only included those with online menu availability. While it has limitations, this research does show that minimum wage can be increased (which can pull people out of poverty) while not significantly affecting employment rates.

Ben Zipperer presented research that challenged the traditional research on minimum wage effects by Neumark, Salas, and Wascher. His findings found that when comparing effects of minimum wage increases, we have to look at similar areas (generally nearby counties) and the employment paths in those areas. The existing studies, he finds, are very sensitive to controls- calling for further research. His work has been used as the basis for larger-scale studies, such as the effect of raising the minimum wage on SNAP enrollment and expenditures. Rachel West of the Center for American Progress presented research from 2014 on the causal effect of minimum wage on public assistance spending (specifically, SNAP). The CAP research posits: with a high level of poverty among working families, would raising the minimum wage change enrollment in a means-tested benefit program?

The CAP study noted that working a full-time minimum wage job (at the federal minimum wage level) would only life a single adult out of poverty, but not a family. This study looked at both the Harking-Miller bill, which would raise the federal minimum wage to $10.10/hour and the newer Murray-Scott bill, which would raise the minimum wage to $12.00/hour by 2020. At $10.10/hour, SNAP enrollment would decrease by 8% and would cut expenditures by $4.6 billion/year. The increase to $12.00 hour would decrease expenditures by $5.3 billion. What this shows is that families who are able to make more via an increase in the minimum wage are better off, and we see an overall savings in expenditures. The common thread throughout these studies is that regardless of how minimum wage is studied, there seem to be positive effects for both the economy and workers with some level of increase in the minimum wage.