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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Board of Advisors of the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

FROM: Jon Baron

RE: Update – Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

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We're pleased to report important new progress in our work and in evidence-based policy more generally:

- The House and Senate Budget Committee Chairs – Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) – have introduced legislation to create a bipartisan Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking**, which they may seek to get enacted in the lame-duck Congress. The Commission's primary duties are (i) to conduct a study of how government administrative data can best be deployed for "program evaluation, policy-relevant research, and cost-benefit analyses;" and (ii) to make recommendations on "how best to incorporate outcomes measurement, institutionalize randomized controlled trials, and rigorous impact analysis into program design." We had encouraged such a focus on rigorous impact evaluations – particularly randomized controlled trials – in our [testimony](#) before the House Budget Committee last year and in follow-up discussions with Committee staff, and were pleased that the concept was included in the bill. Here is the bill's [text](#), and a nice [summary](#) by Patrick Lester at the Social Innovation Research Center.
- Brookings Senior Fellow (and Coalition Board member) Ron Haskins and Greg Margolis will release their new book about the Obama Administration's evidence-based initiatives at a Brookings Institution event on December 1 ([link](#))**, with *New York Times* senior writer Jason DeParle and former OMB Director Peter Orszag, among others. The book is entitled *Show Me the Evidence: Obama's Fight for Rigor and Results in Social Policy*. Haskins – as the lead author – is a respected Republican scholar and former Congressional and White House official. The book depicts the vision and commitment of both Administration and career staff to implement a new approach to social spending programs, in which rigorous scientific evidence about "what works" to improve people's lives plays a central role in determining which strategies get funded. The Coalition's role in the development of the Obama initiatives, as well as the Bush Administration efforts they built upon, is also discussed.
- The federal government has launched a "Performance Partnerships Pilots" [initiative](#), to enable up to 10 state/local sites to blend existing federal funds to implement new strategies to assist disconnected youth, coupled with a strong incentive for rigorous impact evaluations.** The initiative was authorized in the FY 2014 Appropriations Act; its purpose is to significantly improve education, employment, and other key outcomes for youth ages 14-24 who are "disconnected" (e.g., not in school, unemployed). Importantly, the 10 pilots will be selected competitively, with a competitive preference for projects proposing to rigorously evaluate the impact of their strategies in a randomized controlled trial (10 additional

points out of 100) or a strong quasi-experimental design (5 additional points). The initiative's use of funding flexibility and programmatic waivers as an incentive for state/local innovation and evidence-building is an approach we have strongly promoted with federal policy officials ([link](#)), based on its great success in building scientific evidence about what works in welfare reform in the 1980s and 90s.

#### 4. Other items that may be of interest:

- A new Coalition publication: [Which Study Designs Are Capable of Producing Valid Evidence About A Program's Effectiveness? A Brief Overview](#) – October 2014 (.pdf, 4 pages)
- A recent Coalition letter to Congress: [Importance of Congressional Funding for Welfare Research](#), 2014 (.pdf, 2 pages)
- A new book by our colleagues at Results for America – [Moneyball for Government](#) – that encourages government to change how it works so that data, evidence and evaluation drive policy and funding decisions.
- An article in last Friday's *New York Times* – [How to Arrive at the Best Health Policies](#) – that discusses the need for randomized controlled trials in health care delivery, and features our colleagues at J-PAL North America.

We hope this update is helpful. Any thoughts or suggestions you have on our work would be much appreciated.

Jon

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