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MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: Jon Baron

RE: The Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy will close, as an exciting new chapter begins

I'm writing to update you on an important and exciting transition in our work.

As you know, since the launch of the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy as a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization nearly 14 years ago, we have played a critical role in the inception and growth of what has been called "[the golden age of evidence-based policy](#)" (Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM)), "[the coming of age of evidence-based policy making](#)" (*New York Times – Fixes*), or – from a slightly different perspective – the "[the quiet movement to make government fail less often](#)." (*New York Times – The Upshot*). The core concepts the Coalition has advanced since 2001 – (i) building the body of research-proven social programs through investment in rigorous, preferably randomized, impact evaluations, and (ii) incentivizing the adoption of those shown to produce sizable, sustained improvements in people's lives – have been incorporated into law and policy across a number of important areas. In just the past couple of weeks, for instance:

- The Senate gave final Congressional approval to legislation reauthorizing HHS's \$400 million/year evidence-based home visiting program, which incorporates key evidence approaches the Coalition helped develop with both the Bush and Obama Administrations;
- The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee unanimously adopted a bipartisan [amendment](#) establishing a new Social Spending Innovation Research (SSIR) program in K-12 education, based on a concept [proposed](#) by the Coalition and advanced in partnership with Knowledge Alliance, Results for America, and others; and
- Congressman Paul Ryan and Senator Patty Murray introduced [legislation](#) to create a bipartisan Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking, whose responsibilities include (among other things), "mak[ing] recommendations on how best to incorporate outcomes measurement [and] institutionalize randomized controlled trials and rigorous impact analysis into program design."

The Coalition's work, of course, was built on the history of important and influential randomized controlled trials in welfare policy, described in Judy Gueron and Howard Rolston's recent book, [Fighting for Reliable Evidence](#); and the earlier emergence of randomized clinical trials in [medicine](#) in the 1950s and 1960s as the gold-standard method for evaluating intervention effectiveness. Our work also drew on important concurrent developments, including the 2002 establishment of the U.S. Department of Education's

Institute of Education Sciences, which began funding large randomized controlled trials in education policy; and the 2003 launch of the [Jameel Poverty Action Lab \(J-PAL\)](#) at M.I.T., which helped transform the field of international development assistance through the use of randomized controlled methods to determine what works in poverty reduction.

Throughout the Coalition's existence, we were incredibly fortunate to find officials and staff from both the Bush and Obama Administrations, and from both parties in Congress, who shared our interest in evidence-based reforms, and to work with them on these important efforts. The efforts of many of these individuals to convert evidence-based concepts into actual law and policy, as well as the Coalition's key role, are detailed in Ron Haskins' recent book, [Show Me The Evidence](#). We are grateful for the support of the philanthropic funders who made our work possible, including Coalition Board member Jerry Lee (who made the founding contribution in 2001), the William T. Grant Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Overdeck Family Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

We are now entering a new and exciting phase. Over the next couple of weeks, the Coalition staff (including me) will join the [Laura and John Arnold Foundation](#), which is opening a Washington DC-based Evidence-Based Policy and Innovation division. I will be the Foundation's Vice President of Evidence-Based Policy, responsible for strategic investments in randomized controlled trials aimed at growing the body of research-proven social programs, and in the scale-up of those shown to produce meaningful improvements in people's lives. The Coalition's operations will be integrated into the Foundation, where our team will build on and expand our core activities, including working with policy officials to advance evidence-based reforms in government social spending, and conducting expert reviews of the evaluation literature to identify programs with credible evidence of effectiveness. The Coalition itself will cease to exist as an independent organization on or around April 30.

Kathy Stack – who as an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) senior official was a highly effective Executive Branch proponent of evidence-based reform – will also be joining the Foundation's DC office. Kathy will be the Foundation's Vice President for Evidence-Based Innovation, focused on bringing policymakers, researchers, and data experts from the public and private sectors together to strengthen the infrastructure and processes needed to support evidence-based decision making. Her efforts will expand access to data to answer important questions, while protecting privacy, and will promote the rigorous evaluation of public programs, new government and philanthropic funding models that emphasize the use of evidence, and strategic partnerships to accelerate progress. We have partnered with Kathy in many initiatives over the past 10 years and are excited about this new phase of collaboration.

The Foundation's [press release](#) on the launch of its new Evidence-Based Policy and Innovation division provides additional information.

I want to thank you for your guidance and support over the years, and look forward to working with you in our new role. We'll continue to keep you posted on our activities. Please let me know if you have questions or would like additional information – my new contact information is jbaron@arnoldfoundation.org, 202-683-8049.

Best regards,
Jon

Jon Baron
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