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# THE STATE OF THE AMERICAN CHILD

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HEARING  
OF THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION  
ON  
EXAMINING THE STATE OF THE AMERICAN CHILD

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JUNE 8, 2010

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# THE STATE OF THE AMERICAN CHILD

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TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 2010

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES,  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m. in Room SD-430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Christopher J. Dodd, Chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Dodd, Sanders, Casey, and Alexander.

## OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR DODD

Senator DODD. Well, good morning, all. I see we've got quite a crowd here this morning. Sorry we don't have more seats for all of you.

Let me welcome you all to our committee hearing this morning of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions full committee, our Subcommittee on Children and Families, and on our hearing this morning—good morning, Bernie—the first of a series of hearings we intend to hold on the condition and status of the American child. This is the first such hearing.

I want to thank my good friend and colleague Lamar Alexander, who's the ranking member of this committee and with whom I've worked closely on a number of issues over the last years involving children and their families. And there are other members of the committee, both Democrats and Republicans, who have a strong interest in the subject matter, as well.

This morning we're going to generally discuss that condition and status, and steps we might take in moving forward, and then, over the next few months, a series of hearings on more specific subject matters as they affect the American child.

I was saying to my staff, earlier this morning, we have a wonderful committee, here, on Aging, in the U.S. Senate. It's been a very good committee, and have done a tremendous job, over the years, of highlighting the problems that older Americans face. But, I've often thought that, while we don't have—this is really the only committee of the Senate that focuses specifically on children. A lot of committees deal with it, obviously—the Finance Committee and others, the Agriculture Committee, with food and so forth—but, we don't have a specific committee that deals with one out of four Americans who are under the age of 18.

This Committee on Children and Families, over the years, has focused a lot of attention on this subject matter. But, candidly, we're seeing a condition that's not getting better, too often; getting worse.

In fact, Lamar pointed out a study to me, I think, done in Tennessee a while back, that indicated that things were not going well for that American child; in fact, they may be the first generation of Americans that does less well than their parents. A stunning comment that my friend made to me a couple of years ago, from Tennessee.

Anyway, let me share some opening comments. I'll turn to Senator Alexander for any opening thoughts he has, and then we'll turn to our witnesses this morning. I'm delighted you're here with us to spend some time. Thank you for joining us.

As many of you know, this is my last year in the U.S. Senate. And, although I've only been a parent for 8 of those 30 years that I've been here, the most rewarding work I've done in the Senate has been the issues affecting children and their families. You don't have to be a parent to know how much goes into determining whether a child is able to reach his or her full potential. But, if you are one, you certainly can appreciate it.

Some of it is instinctual. Jackie, my wife, and I try to teach our children the difference between right and wrong, just like most parents do across our Nation. We tell them to keep away from strangers, look both ways when they cross the street. We try to get them to eat broccoli once in a while, as well. But, during my time here, we've learned more and more about what kids need in order to succeed. We're coming to redefine what is a children's issue, and we've come to realize that the government has a role to play in providing the resources that families need, to thrive.

For instance, we've learned that a child's development begins well before his or her first day of kindergarten or preschool. And so, I've worked to build an effective Head Start Program so that every American child can be prepared to excel in school.

We've learned that, while a child's development begins at birth, it doesn't start and stop with the ring of the school bell. And so, I've worked to establish safe and stimulating childcare facilities, as well as quality after-school programming.

We've learned that a child's family life is every bit as important as his or her development as in what happens in the classroom. And so, I've fought, along with many others, for the Family Medical Leave Act, so that parents don't have to choose between being the caring mom or dad a sick child needs and being the breadwinner that every family also needs.

We've learned that keeping our kids healthy is about more than just winning the broccoli wars. And so, I've fought to help every family afford pediatric checkups, through the CHIP program, to keep kids away from the influence of Big Tobacco, and to spread awareness of effective safeguards against food allergies, and to reduce the number of babies born prematurely.

I'm proud of that work, but I'm well aware that there's more work to be done. And that's why I've called these hearings, because our work to empower every American child is not, and will never be, done, in a sense. For instance, while I'm proud that the Family and Medical Leave Act has allowed millions of workers to take job-protected leave, less than 8 percent have access to paid leave. And, while Head Start has proven to be effective in preparing children

for kindergarten, it serves less than half the eligible children; and Early Head Start serves only 6 percent of eligible children.

An achievement gap persists in our schools, where poor kids and minorities lag behind their classmates; money to fix our crumbling facilities, to alleviate our crowded classrooms, and provide quality after-school programs is scarce.

One in a hundred children are victims of substance abuse, a number that doubles for those under 1 year of age. And nearly three-quarters of a million children were abused or neglected last year alone. And every 101 minutes, a child in the United States dies from an unintentional injury, such as a vehicle crash or a fire, making it the leading cause of death and disability for children ages 1 to 14 in our Nation.

In addition, we can't ignore the fact that this discussion is taking place in the wake of a brutal recession that'll have a tragic impact on American families long after the economic indicators have turned around. One in seven children in our Nation have an unemployed parent; one in five live in poverty; and an additional 5 million children will be driven into poverty before this recession is over. One in four children currently use food stamps. And half of all children will use them at some point during their childhood. This recession will end, but its impact will endure long after.

You can make up for a bad quarter in the stock market, but it's not so easy to recoup what this recession has cost the children and their families who have felt its sting. I'm not a pessimist. As a parent, I know that my generation is equipped with more awareness, more resources, and more support than our parents were when they were faced with the challenge of raising us. But, we know that we have more work to do, and we know that the challenges we face are mounting. That's why I'm announcing, today, that I plan to introduce legislation to create a national commission on children in order to regularly and closely examine the needs of American families, and identify solutions.

There's a reason our children get report cards in school; they help us clearly identify how they're doing. Only by assessing, honestly, our progress—celebrating our successes when they occur, and acknowledging our failures when they happen, as well—can we improve on the status of our children.

Today, we have a distinguished panel of experts who can help us answer these critical questions: What do kids and families need in order to thrive? How are we doing when it comes to making those resources available to them? What can we do better to see that our children are going to be better served?

One thing that Jackie and I teach our daughters is that it's never a bad thing to ask questions. It's the best way to learn. And I hope that these hearings, over the next several weeks and months, can be a learning experience for all of us, those who sit on this side of the dais and those who are gathered here today. And I hope that these hearings will highlight the critical need for a national commission on children so that, even after I've left this institution, policymakers who are at this very table will continue to turn what we learn into action.

I thank you all for being here today, and I hope we can get started.

With that, let me turn to my good friend and colleague, Senator Lamar Alexander.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ALEXANDER

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Chris.

And welcome, to the witnesses and all who are here.

Chris Dodd has been a Senator for 30 years. As he said, he's been a Senator much longer than he's been a parent. But, all of that time, his focus has been on children and families. And because of that work, history will record Chris Dodd as a consequential U.S. Senator.

It's been my privilege to work with him, the last 8 years, and he's not only an effective member of his own party, he works hard to work across party lines because, in the U.S. Senate, most of the time, that's the way you get a result.

As he said on the school-based health clinics, we worked together on that. I think we're both particularly pleased with what we call the PREEMIE Act. We worked with the March of Dimes there to understand, better, the causes of premature birth. We really don't know what all the reasons are.

Nor do we know all the reasons for the food allergies that beset so many parents. And Chris has a special interest in that, and we've worked together to develop legislation to help schools do a better job of focusing on that. Head Start reauthorization for 2007 was a really superior legislative response to one of our most popular and effective programs.

And Chris showed, following Katrina, that he's not trapped in ideology, as sometimes happens around here. We had the problem of trying to figure out, What do we do with all these kids from New Orleans who suddenly find themselves in Baton Rouge, and the public schools may be filled, or they may be staying with a family whose children all go to Catholic schools? And so, for a year we worked out a situation that defied a lot of the conventional thinking around here and put the children first, and created what I think was a model response to disasters, in terms of dealing with dislocated children.

Chris, thank you for your work, and I look forward to this series of hearings and the work of the commission that you proposed.

I look forward to the witnesses, today. I've always been struck by the comment of Professor Coleman, of the University of Chicago. He said that schools were for the purpose of doing what parents don't do as well. And so, the conclusion I've come to, in and out of education and dealing with children and families for a long time, is that parents and teachers and principals are 95 percent of it, and anything we can do to create an environment in which they can succeed is probably the most important thing we can do for children.

I can remember, once, my mother was interviewed by a newspaper reporter, who wrote that I grew up in a "lower-middle-class family in the mountains of Tennessee." And she was so incensed by that, that she was reading Thessalonians, when I called her, to deal with the slur on the family. And she said to me at the time,



“We never thought of ourselves that way. You had a library card from the day you were 3, and a music lesson from the day you were 4. You had everything you needed that was important.”

What was unsaid about that was, I had a mother and a father who were very busy creating an environment in which I could succeed.

We sometimes have differences of opinion about the role of government in creating that environment. But, sometimes, from the left and from the right, we see criticisms of a society that seems to be at war with parents, making it harder for them to succeed.

We’ll have different solutions sometimes, but our goal is the same: to create an environment in which America’s children can succeed. And I, for one, hope that the way to do that is by focusing on better parents, better teachers, better principals, and giving them support and nourishment so they can do that for children.

Chris, thank you very much for your leadership.

Senator DODD. Well, my friend Lamar, thank you so much for your very kind and generous comments this morning, as well.

And let me turn to a couple of my colleagues, see if they have an opening comment or two they want to make.

Senator Sanders.

#### STATEMENT OF SENATOR SANDERS

Senator SANDERS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for all that you’ve done over the years for children.

I just wanted, before we hear testimony from our panelists, to hope, in their remarks, maybe they will address some of the issues that popped up literally this morning.

*USA Today* reports that more than one in five kids live in poverty. And I quote,

“The rate of children living in poverty this year will climb to nearly 22 percent, the highest rate in two decades, according to an analysis by the nonprofit Foundation for Childhood Development.”

Also, I think, Mr. Chairman, we need an international perspective. I get very angry about the way we treat children. I think, frankly, it is a national disgrace.

I am looking, now, at a report—it’s the latest that we were able to find; I’m sure there are later ones—from UNICEF, 2007. They list 24 countries in the world, in terms of poverty level. And guess what, Mr. Chairman? The good news is that—well, no, there is no good news. We are in 24th place. And as part of this discussion—and it does become a little ideological and a little bit political—here are the countries that are in first place: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium. What are they doing in those countries that we are not doing in our countries? Are we satisfied that over one in five kids lives in poverty, one in four kids gets their nutrition from food stamps?

And what we understand—and you made this point—is that when these kids start off at the bottom—there will be exceptions, to be sure—but, it is not an accident that we end up having more

people in jail than any other country on Earth. Is there a connection?

And then, some of my conservatives say, “Well, government is not the solution.” Well, I don’t think government is the solution. We all know a strong economy is the solution. But, what is Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden doing that the United States is not doing? What about the fact that, while poverty for children increases, the top 1 percent have also, in this country—the very richest people have also seen a huge increase in their income? Is that an issue that we should be concerned about? Poorest become poorer, children become poor; more and more millionaires, more and more billionaires.

I would hope that, in their discussion today, as we talk about why we have the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world, why more and more kids are getting poorer, why the gap between the very, very rich and the poor is growing wider, whether that is an issue that is worth discussing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator DODD. Thank you very much.

Senator Casey, any quick comments you want to make?

Senator CASEY. I’ll be brief.

#### STATEMENT OF SENATOR CASEY

Senator CASEY. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the hearing, and to our witnesses, and for the spotlight that you’re providing on this challenge.

I’ve always thought that we should look at the challenges we face with regard to children in a very fundamental way, that every child in the country, no matter where they are, no matter where they’re born, and no matter what circumstances, is born with a light inside them. And I’ve always believed it’s the responsibility of every public official, whatever level of government you’re elected to, to do everything you can to make sure that that light inside that child reaches its full potential.

We’ve made tremendous strides in the course—the recent American history, and certainly over the last couple of years. I think it’s at least four things. A child should be provided with the opportunity to make sure they have enough to eat and basic nutrition. And not necessarily in this order, but certainly healthcare is fundamental to that. The Children’s Health Insurance Program is a tremendous stride in that direction, enacted in a bipartisan way.

Third, we’ve got to protect our kids. And we’re a long way from doing that. Horrific, horrific data on that about the failure of our country to really protect our kids.

And fourth, early learning opportunities. The record there is, at best, spotty. Some States do it well, some States don’t. We still don’t have a national commitment to early learning for kids.

If we make progress in the next couple of weeks and months on these hearings, I think we will spotlight and focus more on at least those four areas.

This is, I think, a task worthy of a great Nation. We’re a long way from achieving it, but we do have some success to point to, and that’s, in large measure, to leadership like that demonstrated by Senator Dodd over those 30 years. We’re grateful for his leadership.

We're also grateful for the bipartisan approach that I think this committee has taken. Senator Alexander spoke to that. And he, as well, can claim some credit for the success we've achieved.

We're looking forward to this hearing and the series that you're undertaking.

Senator DODD. Thank you very much, Senator.

And I thank my colleagues, and we'll leave the record open.

I'm now going to turn—let me introduce our witnesses, and, in the order I introduce them, we'll ask them to share some comments with us.

First of all, welcome, to Alma Powell, who's here with us this morning, who's the chair of the board of America's Promise Alliance, whose mission it is to mobilize people in every sector of our country to build the character and competence of youth. For decades, Mrs. Powell has been a champion and advocate for America's young people. She chairs the advisory board for Civic Change, Inc., serves on the YouthBuild U.S.A. advisory board, as well. For 11 years, she served as the chair of the National Council of the Best Friends Foundation, an organization dedicated to improving the lives of young girls. And she's been affiliated with the Red Cross, the Associates for the American Foreign Service Worldwide, and several other very impressive organizations. She has numerous academic honors that she's received, is the author of two children's books—and I'm the owner of both those, by the way—and which were launched with much success.

We're proud to have you join us here today as you share thoughts with us.

Next to Alma Powell is Elaine Zimmerman, who's been a friend of mine for those 30 years we've been talking about here this morning. She's the executive director of the Connecticut Commission on Children; and hence, the idea. What we've done in our State is what we've talked about here this morning. In fact, Mrs. Powell will talk about it, as well. And having read her testimony—I've read all your testimony. In this position, Elaine Zimmerman reviews children's policy and reports to the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of our State with recommendations for children's legislation and initiatives.

She has established a reputation, in my State and elsewhere, for her understanding of public-policy acumen, commitment to addressing children's needs, and bringing together unexpected stakeholders in child policy discussions. In Connecticut, she's worked on a variety of issues, including preschool, school readiness, after-school programs, summer reading programs, and a long, long list. She's been a great champion of children in our State. And much of what I've done here started with this woman, here—so, I thank you, as well—over the years.

Jack Lund is the president and CEO of the YMCA for Greater New York, the largest YMCA in North America. Jack has been a part of the YMCA for the past 30 years, including a program director. As New York City's largest private youth-serving organization, the YMCA of Greater New York is still growing, under Mr. Lund's leadership, with a career track record that includes several local Y initiatives that have blossomed into national Y programs.

Mr. Lund is adding new programs to tackle the challenges our young people face, not the least of which is childhood obesity, that include the YMCA Strong Kids Card, Teens Take the City, and the Second-Grade Swim, which is developing vital skills and sowing the seeds of a lifetime of fun in the water.

I congratulate you for that, as well.

His background and his current positions brings to this hearing a valuable community-service perspective.

We thank you for joining us today, Mr. Lund.

And last is Dr. Harry Holzer. Dr. Holzer is a professor at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute, and an institute fellow with the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute, here in Washington, DC. He joined Georgetown Public Policy Institute as professor of public policy in the fall of 2000. He's served as the associate dean, and was the acting dean in the fall of 2006.

He's currently the senior affiliate of the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan, a national fellow of the Program on Inequality and Social Policy at Harvard University, a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, and a research affiliate of the Institute for Research and Poverty at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He's also a member of the World Economic Forum Global Diversity Council.

And I suspect some of the things that Senator Sanders had to say this morning would ring to you on that subject matter you've been involved in.

Prior to joining Georgetown, Professor Holzer served as the chief economist for the U.S. Department of Labor, professor of economics at Michigan State University. He teaches a course on poverty at Georgetown Public Policy Institute, and his qualification for today's hearing is his three daughters—16, 9, and 9. Mine are 5 and 8.

In fact, yesterday I was telling my colleagues, coming in—I returned, after 7 days of going down to Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, and got back very late Sunday night. I've been trying to get my daughters' classes to come and visit the Senate. Well, as my luck would have it, both decided to come yesterday.

[Laughter.]

And so, I had 50 children, 5-year-olds, and their parents, for 4 hours in the Capitol after returning from a late night coming back from Latin America.

[Laughter.]

Anyway, those are the joys of fatherhood, I guess; you get to do that.

Mrs. Powell, thank you for joining us. Delighted to have you here with us today. And the floor is yours.

And, by the way, any statements or comments and material that you think would be valuable for us as we set the stage for these hearings, we would welcome.

So, we'll listen to your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF ALMA J. POWELL, CHAIR, AMERICA'S  
PROMISE ALLIANCE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mrs. POWELL. Well, thank you very much for your invitation. And, Senator Alexander, I thank you, both of you, for your long history of involvement with the issues of children.

Today, our Nation faces some very urgent priorities: the economy, healthcare, national security, global competitiveness. But, I would say that one of the most important issues that we face as a nation is one that impacts all of these priorities, and that is the well-being of our children. Meeting the needs of our most vulnerable youth means building a stronger, safer, healthier, and more equitable country.

To put it very bluntly, gentlemen, we are addressing the future of our Nation. Our children will be the inheritors of our lives, and they are not prepared, at present, as you quoted—where they are in standing with the other children.

The America's Promise Alliance grew out of the President's Summit for America's Future, in 1997. And my husband served as the first chairman, as you know.

Out of that Summit came the knowledge that—of discussion with people who were active in working with children—that there are five basic things that young people need: a caring adult in every child's life, a safe place to grow and learn after school, a healthy start, a marketable skill through an effective education, and an opportunity to give back. That is the basis of the work of America's Promise, with its 414 partners across America.

On March 1, my husband and I, with President Obama and Secretary Duncan, announced the next phase of our work, which is called Grad Nation. There's a terrible statistic that exists in this country. Only 70 percent of young people graduate from high school, 50 percent of African-American and Hispanic students do not graduate from high school. In 2020 and the years beyond, we will be a majority-minority country. And if they are not educated, what is our future? One-third of the young people who go to college do not graduate.

This is a crucial issue, and it really determines the fate of this Nation.

I applaud you in your support of a commission to study the children and the needs of children in the country. We heartily support that.

One of the problems that exists is that we have ADD. We've talked about these problems for over 25 years, and they still exist. And so, we, at America's Promise, say it is time to address these head-on and start making progress in direct impact on the young people in this country.

We know that most of these high-school dropout statistics come from just 2,000 schools. And so, across the country we will be mobilizing people in communities, and especially in those target communities, to work on perfecting the high-school dropout rate. This is crucial.

There is a Masai saying that—when they greet each other, they say, "And how are the children?" I charge all of us that, each day, we have to wake up and say, "And how are the children?" Today,

we would have to answer that the state of the children in America is abysmal.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Powell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ALMA J. POWELL

SUMMARY

Today our Nation faces many urgent priorities: the economy, healthcare, national security, global competitiveness. But one of the most important issues we face as a nation is one that impacts *all* of these priorities—the well-being of our children.

On March 1, I joined President Obama, Secretary Duncan and my husband at an event at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to officially embark on the most ambitious initiative America's Promise Alliance has ever undertaken. The Grad Nation campaign will mobilize Americans and our more than 400 national partners to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare our young people for the 21st century workforce.

The magnitude of this crisis is tragic. One of every three students fails to graduate from high school in this country—over 1 million students a year. And only about one-third of our high school graduates have enough of the skills required for success in college and the 21st-century workforce. Our children and our economy are in jeopardy.

But this is a crisis we can solve. We have seen what success looks like when sound policies and best practices are paired with strong community support. It starts with better schools but we must also recognize that many of the roots of the dropout crisis lie in a shortage of fundamental supports in the lives of our children. We must couple education reform with efforts to ensure that children not only have a good education, but also caring adults in their lives, safe neighborhoods, after-school programs, access to health care and opportunities to help others.

We must also look at this problem with more focus. We know that just 2,000 high schools (12 percent) produce over half of the high school dropouts in this country. With our business and non-profit partners, we are building powerful, cross-sector collaborations to focus needed resources in these low-performing schools and surrounding neighborhoods.

In order to raise the visibility of children in Federal policy and solidify our commitment to the Nation's future, we need a coordinated, national action plan. A critical first step is for Congress to create a National Council on Children focused on re-establishing America as a global frontrunner in child well-being.

I ask that you challenge Congress to work with us to build a strong and sustained movement. Individual by individual, community by community, we can create a Grad Nation and show our most vulnerable young people that America is indeed the land of opportunity.

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Chairman Dodd, Ranking Member Alexander, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this very important issue.

Today our Nation faces many urgent priorities: the economy, healthcare, national security, global competitiveness. But I would say that one of the most important issues we face as a nation is one that impacts *all* of these priorities—and that is the well-being of our children.

Sadly, our children are often overlooked when addressing many urgent issues of the time. But let there be no doubt—*meeting the needs of our most vulnerable youth means building a stronger, safer, healthier, and more equitable country.*

AMERICA'S PROMISE ALLIANCE

As you may know, my husband General Colin Powell was founding chair of America's Promise Alliance, the organization I now chair. The Alliance grew out of the President's Summit for America's Future in 1997, where all the living presidents and Nancy Reagan signed a declaration stating that: "As Americans and as Presidents, we ask every caring citizen to pledge individual commitments of citizen service, voluntary action, the efforts of their organizations, or commitments to individual children in need. By doing so, this Nation pledges the fulfillment of America's promise for every American child."

Today, we fulfill that promise through more than 400 national partner organizations and their local affiliates—aggressively addressing the high school dropout and

college readiness crisis that plagues this country. The dropout crisis is a dramatic symbol of how we as a nation are failing our young people.

#### CREATING A GRAD NATION

On March 1, I joined President Obama, Secretary Duncan and my husband at an event at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to officially embark on the most ambitious campaign the Alliance has ever undertaken—the Grad Nation Campaign.

Through Grad Nation we will mobilize Americans of all ages, income levels and ethnicities—in all 50 States and in communities large and small—to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare our young people for the 21st century workforce. We will also mobilize our national partners and their local affiliates to create powerful, cross-sector solutions, especially in communities and neighborhoods that are home to our most vulnerable children.

*This is a critical moment in time. And it's time to turn a moment into a movement.*

#### THE MAGNITUDE OF THE CRISIS

The statistics are tragic. One of every three students fails to graduate from high school in this country. That's over 1 million students a year. Among minority students, the problem is even more severe, with barely half of African-American and Hispanic students graduating from high school.

Lack of readiness for college and the 21st-century workforce is an equally serious threat. As we all know, a high school diploma is no longer enough in our global economy. Yet only about one-third of our high school graduates have enough of the skills required for success in college and the workforce. And only 10 percent of minority students who enroll in college will graduate. *Just 1 in 10.*

#### THE COST TO OUR COUNTRY

The high school dropout crisis not only takes a toll on our children, but it also takes an enormous and unsustainable toll on our country. Consider the students from the class of 2009. Had all of them stayed in school and graduated, our economy would gain more than \$320 billion over their working lives. That's \$320 billion in higher wages, greater consumer buying power, and increased tax contributions.

And this is only part of the cost. It does not count the cost of remedial education. It does not count the cost of social programs and prisons. It does not count the cost to our healthcare system. Because high school dropouts on average have more health problems than graduates, it has been estimated that our Nation would save \$174 billion in healthcare costs had all of the Class of 2009 graduated.

*Mr. Chairman, this is an economic as well as a moral crisis.*

#### A SOLVABLE PROBLEM

But I want to make it very clear: *this is a crisis we can solve.* We have seen what success looks like when sound policies and best practices are paired with strong community support.

It starts with better schools. But we must also recognize that many of the roots of the dropout crisis lie in a shortage of the fundamental supports—or what we call the Five Promises—in the lives of our children. In fact, the dropout crisis exemplifies our failure to ensure that our children have the building blocks that make for success.

We support education reform as a keystone to improving graduation rates and readiness for college and work. But too many children come to school not able to learn. We must couple reform with efforts to transform young lives by ensuring that children not only have a good education, but also caring adults in their lives, safe neighborhoods, after-school programs, access to health care and opportunities to help others.

Over the past 2 years, America's Promise Alliance has been steadily building awareness and momentum on the dropout issue—and today the Silent Epidemic is no longer silent. We have convened Dropout Prevention Summits in all 50 States and 55 additional cities, bringing together leaders from all sectors of the community.

*Now we must turn awareness into sustained, results-driven action.*

#### FOCUS ON LOWEST PERFORMING HIGH SCHOOLS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

How can we achieve success? We know that just 2,000 high schools (12 percent) produce over half of the high school dropouts in this country. For that reason, we are focusing special effort on these low-performing schools and their surrounding neighborhoods.

With our business and non-profit partners, we are building powerful cross-sector collaborations to focus needed resources in these 2,000 neighborhoods, to strengthen these lowest performing schools, and to help our most vulnerable children receive the Five Promises.

What does it mean to strengthen low-performing schools and low-resource neighborhoods? It means increasing the presence of caring adults who are involved in everything from reading to young children to after-school tutoring and mentoring to service-learning opportunities. It means empowering and encouraging parents to fulfill their indispensable role as active partners in their children's learning. It means making sure more young people have consistent access to healthcare. It means quality pre-school available to every child.

It means providing more places after school and during the summer where children can be safe and use their time productively. 21st Century Community Learning Centers need to be protected and expanded because they keep children safe, inspire learning and are a lifeline for working families.

And the focus must go beyond high school students. Half of all young people who drop out of high school do so by the 10th grade. The majority of those who drop out say they began disengaging from school during their middle-school years. And one of the most reliable predictors of future dropouts is third-grade reading scores. We have to support at-risk children from an early age. And we must stay involved every step of the way.

#### NATIONAL COUNCIL ON CHILDREN

We must also look at this problem with more focus. I mentioned that the needs of our children are often overlooked as this Nation addresses urgent priorities. In order to raise the visibility of children in Federal policy and solidify our commitment to the Nation's future, we need a coordinated, national action plan.

A critical first step toward reversing this downward trend is for Congress to create a National Council on Children, focusing on reestablishing America as a global frontrunner in child well-being.

A National Council on Children would serve as a forum on behalf of children and function as a permanent independent entity within the Federal Government. It would conduct a comprehensive study to assess the needs of children, submit a report to the President and Congress, and make recommendations on how to best address the needs of our youngest citizens. Upon completion of the study and issuance of recommendations, the Council would annually assess the Nation's performance in meeting its goals, and propose additional improvements.

In 1997, a similar panel proved to be a remarkable success story for America's young people, spawning the enactment of the Child Tax Credit, improvements to the Earned Income Tax Credit, the creation of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, and other initiatives that have drastically improved child health and well-being. But today a new generation of children once again faces serious problems that threaten this progress. The creation of a permanent Council tasked with annually assessing the status of children will ensure continuous, measurable benefits for our Nation's most precious resource.

#### THE CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE OF OUR TIME

Mr. Chairman, many say education is the Civil Rights crisis of our time, and they are right. Our values are at risk when students' chances of graduating from high school are heavily affected by where they live and the resources available to them.

Education is the passport to full participation in the American Dream. But right now that dream is being dashed by a harsh reality. Millions of our young people have little chance of being part of an opportunity society simply because they lack access to the resources that would enable them to succeed.

#### CONCLUSION

The state of our children is not simply a failure of government or of schools; it is a failure of all of us. Each and every one of us must be part of the solution.

Today, I ask that you challenge Congress to work with us to build a strong and sustained movement. Individual by individual, community by community, we CAN create a Grad Nation and show our most vulnerable young people that America is indeed the land of opportunity.

We know what to do. We need focus and commitment. Today it is more a matter of summoning the will than finding the way. And we have no option but to summon the will—for ourselves, for our children, and for our Nation.



Senator DODD. Well, thank you very much, Mrs. Powell. I was reading your testimony, the longer set of remarks which you gave to the committee, and that that statistic—of all the schools, there are 2,000—represents only about 10 percent of all the schools. While the number seems large, if you didn't mention the fact that it represents only a relatively small percentage where most of those problems persist—and your data and statistics regarding the condition of children—ones in poverty, the ones graduating from school—

I've often said, if I only could fix one problem in America—I often get asked by people, "What's the single most important issue that you wrestle with?" And I've answered the same way for 30 years. It's education. I mean, I really believe, while everything else is not unimportant, if you get that piece right, then everything else begins to have a reasonable prospect of a good solution. Get that one wrong, and nothing else ever turns out terribly well. You may get lucky occasionally on something, but, without the focus on that—

I thank you immensely for your focus on that.

Mrs. POWELL. Well, we also need to understand that, when we talk about school reform, that's only one part of the equation.

Senator DODD. That's correct.

Mrs. POWELL. We have to be sure that we're providing all the supports that young people need, so that they come to school ready to learn. This is our focus.

Senator DODD. Yes, totally. And that's what—parents and so forth who have that—so, the educational issue carries through all the way along.

Elaine, good to have you with us.

**STATEMENT OF ELAINE ZIMMERMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON CHILDREN, HAMDEN, CT**

Ms. ZIMMERMAN. Very good to be here.

Senator Dodd, Senator Alexander, members of the committee, it's an honor.

I've been asked to speak, in particular, to the issue of children and the recession. As the Senator knows, we have tried to understand the uncharted territory, when it arrives, for children. We studied, deeply, the impact of September 11 and homeland security issues on children. We studied Katrina. And when the recession began, before people were captioning it, we began to look at what it meant.

There were very little articles, very little information out there, but two that we used. One was from First Focus, and one was from Ken Land, at Duke. We invited the studies—the authors and economists—to join us in Connecticut. And we learned, from First Focus, that, though the economy will turn—it's pretty much what Senator Sanders was beginning to talk about—the economy will turn. Those children who fall into the rabbit hole of poverty right now will not recover. In fact, we will see, from them, lost wages and poor health into their adult years. What we do now, in this decade, has a profound impact on a generation.

And sadly, Don Peck, in The Atlantic, calls this generation, now, the "sinking generation," which is part of what I'm going to speak to.

In our country, this is going to cost \$1.7 trillion. We're going to see 3 million children fall into poverty. Ken Land, at Duke, found that the progress made in children's economic well-being since 1975 is likely to be totally wiped out by this downturn. He projects a decline in safety, which we are already seeing, and is historic, based on recessionary trends; a rise in poverty; education decline; a decline in social connectedness—and a report just came out that's showing that this generation is notably lacking in empathy; a decline in family income; and a significant toll on communities of color. We are already seeing black middle-class neighborhoods hollowed out; and, though the unemployment gap between blacks and whites was narrowing, it has now widened, and we're thrown back to the 1990s.

Harvard sociologist William Julius Wilson says, "We should brace ourselves for what is happening now."

In our State, the data is pretty staggering. More children are hungry, homeless, and living in families under tremendous stress. There's been a 30-percent increase in homelessness, a 33-percent increase in homelessness in the suburbs and in the rural sector. This is not poverty as we know it, this is a middle-class agenda, crashing. We are seeing one out of five children, in our State, under 12, hungry. In the past 2 years, there's been a significant increase in infant mortality and low-birth weight, which is costing our little teeny State \$159 million a year in unnecessary hospitalizations.

Speaker Donovan established the first task force on children and the recession, and we took this research, and we wanted to see, Well, is this really true in our State? We held hearings—urban, rural, suburban—throughout the State, for 2 years. We invited families to come. And they did. Homeless, middle class, whatever, they came, and they told their stories.

The stories are—well, they are staggering. The line that did it for me, that led me to travel the State, nonstop, was one young man who came to the microphone and said, "I concentrate, each day, on not eating." That's our education system. On not eating. That's what this child's concentrating on. He said, "In my refrigerator now, there's a half bottle of juice and a box of eggs." This is what his family has. Teachers are observing children steal food off desks.

We're seeing children say that they need to leave their families—the young adults—because they feel the burden on the family. We are seeing an increase in runaways, an increase in youth leaving families and going to the streets. And the children are as young as 13 years old. There's beginning to be a spike.

There's an increase in domestic violence. In our State, there's been an increase in murders in households. There's an increase of children being left alone because families are now juggling three jobs, but making half the wage.

We're seeing, not only what is becoming almost a national experiment in family stress because of this recession, but youth floundering for opportunity. The unemployment rate right now for youth is as bad as it was right after World War II. Young children, youth, are competing with their parents now for similar jobs.

More runaways, more homelessness, and family healthcare floundering.

What we did in our State after 2 years, was passed legislation—and actually, the Senate was unanimous, the House was overwhelmingly positive—that said when the unemployment rate is 8 percent for a duration—for a certain amount of time, a few months, this is going to be considered a State emergency for children, and we are going to do things differently, because a recession is a crisis for children, the same way September 11 was.

And so, we say, when it's 8 percent unemployment, we must have a single point of entry for all families, we must have coordinated leadership, because we cannot let youth disconnect. We cannot have a generation of disconnected youth, so we need to make sure there's plenty of leadership opportunities for youth, we need to make sure every child is fed, year round; that there's enough childcare, because what we learned again and again was that homeless families cannot get out of that problem until they have childcare; and that unemployed cannot find jobs unless they have childcare. And it needs to be of quality; it can't be a neighbor or a boyfriend.

We also said that we needed to make sure that we paid attention to competitiveness, and that if there are no jobs right now, then let's build up education, and let's do that even for welfare recipients so that the people can become more competitive instead of throwing them off the cliff when there are no jobs at all; that we needed to work across funding streams and silos; that whatever needs to be waived right now, we should just waive it to allow for a more unified approach; and that we needed to maximize Federal opportunities, such as the TANF Emergency Fund, which is so helpful for youth employment and for service-sector jobs.

What, interestingly, occurred from all of this was, we realized we have some very good policies, as do many States, for children, but, frankly, we don't have good systems. We haven't worked well enough on creating systems for children. You can have a good preschool law, but, if you don't have a good early-care and education system, it's actually full of holes, eventually, when the economy turns, or whatever. Actually, this crisis has led us to say we must focus on systems, but we must understand that children come first and that this is an economic crisis.

There were a few other things we learned. One was that it was key to focus on prevention, that we had to prevent problems as much as we could, rather than enduring just a constant state of crisis, that we needed to go much more forward in civics, bringing parents in as leaders, because they're going to notice the fissures in the system, over anyone else; and once again, to make sure youth feel engaged; and that we have to get rid of the programs that are not working; that this is no time for lackluster programming; that we need results-based accountability in all that we do. We're very proud that we've moved this legislation.

This is an interesting generation. This generation is a generation that saw itself—it's global, it understands technology; it's a generation of the world. It simultaneously observed the World Trade Center be bombed. This is the generation that saw children jump out of windows. After things calmed down—several years—they then

watched a city become a flood, and they watched children, that looked like them, on roofs, with signs saying, "Help me." They then began to think that their government wouldn't help them. Then they watched the banking industry cheat its own customers. Then they watched people begin to question government. And now they're in a recession.

These are children who learned, unlike any other generation, to think in a worldly way and a global way. They are global children in a sinking boat.

We need to take the potential leadership and genius of this generation and make sure they don't sink.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Zimmerman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELAINE ZIMMERMAN <sup>1</sup>

SUMMARY

This testimony describes one State's findings regarding children and the recession. It evaluates the impact of the recession on children and youth and reveals outcomes across class and geographic regions of the State.

The Connecticut Legislature brought in scholars and economists who could inform the policy leadership about implications for the family. The research is summarized.

Seven hearings were held throughout the State to learn from families and youth how the recession was touching them. Urban, rural, and suburban families spoke to us. Their topics included food, housing, violence, child care, safety, education, and dreams for the future. The findings are summarized.

Legislation was crafted after 2 years of research and public input. The legislation, which passed overwhelmingly, is discussed. Additional policy efforts are also presented including:

1. A major strategy to reduce child poverty by 50 percent within a decade;
2. A Parent Trust to bring families in as partners in public policy related to children;
3. A focus on prevention for children, rather than crisis; and
4. A statewide strategy of results-based accountability to ensure methods of transparency and high-level strategic planning for best outcomes in population trends.

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Chairman Dodd, Ranking Member Alexander and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the honor to testify before you. My name is Elaine Zimmerman and I am the executive director of the Connecticut Commission on Children. Today I will speak to the current situation facing children. I will use Connecticut as an example, but these issues face the Nation.

Connecticut sought to learn what the impact of the recession was on children. As we did after 9/11 and then again after Katrina, we reached out to families to learn how the current and uncharted context, both sociological and economic, is impacting the child. We researched the recession and family life. Little on children was emerging at the time. There were two core studies: one by First Focus in Washington, DC and one by Ken Land at Duke University. We brought them both to our State.

Michael Linden and Bruce Lesley, from First Focus, shared that the recession will send between 2.6 million and 3.3 million children into poverty, costing American taxpayers \$1.7 trillion. They estimated conservatively that the economic impact on Connecticut would be \$800 million annually, with 35,000 children falling into poverty.

Their research shows that children will not recover when the economy recovers. The last two recessions reveal that children who fall into poverty during a recession fare far worse, even well into adulthood, than their peers who avoided poverty despite the downturn in the economy. These children will live in households with lower overall incomes, they will earn less themselves, and they will have a greater

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<sup>1</sup>The presenter, Elaine Zimmerman is the executive director of the Connecticut Commission on Children which is a strategic policy arm and coordinating entity for children in State government. She has worked for both the California and Connecticut Legislatures and serves as staff vice-chair for Human Services and Welfare for the National Conference of State Legislators.

chance at living in or near poverty. They will achieve lower levels of education and will be less likely to be gainfully employed.

Children who experience recession-induced poverty will report poorer health than their peers who did not fall in poverty during the recession. This difference will persist into their adult lives. What we do now will influence a near decade for children.

Dr. Kenneth Land from Duke University, working in concert with the Foundation for Child Development, reported that virtually all the progress made in children's economic well-being since 1975 is likely to be wiped out by the downturn. Specifically, findings revealed:

**A decline in safety**—Children are expected to fare worse due to higher rates of violent crime where youth are both victims and perpetrators. This is based on historic recessionary trends.

**A rise in poverty**—The percentage of children in poverty is expected to peak at 21 percent, comparable to that of previous economic recessions.

**Education decline**—Fewer children will be able to participate in pre-kindergarten programs.

**Decline in social connectedness**—More low- and middle-income families will move or become homeless. Children will experience substantial negative impacts on their peer and other neighborhood social relations due to the severity of the housing crisis.

**Decline in family income**—For all families, median annual family income is expected to decline from \$59,200 in 2007 to about \$55,700 in 2010.

**Significant toll on communities of color**—The child well-being indicators show that African-American and Latino children are generally more susceptible to the consequences of economic fluctuations. When the economy is doing well, their well-being gains are more dramatic. When the economy slumps, they are harder hit than their white counterparts.

This is now validated in *The State of Working America* by the Economic Policy Institute, showing black middle-class neighborhoods hollowed out. Black unemployment has risen with job loss, savings are drained and retirement accounts are being used to make do now, rather than for the later years. The gap between black and white unemployment had been shrinking for decades. But the latest recession has thrown it back to the early 1990s.

#### ONE STATE STORY

Already, the evidence in Connecticut is staggering. More children are hungry, homeless, and living in families under tremendous stress. Fully 28 percent of the State's children have parents with no full-time, year-round employment. Home foreclosures have pushed many families into the rental market, which in turn is driving up rents—despite falling incomes and rising unemployment. As a result, many families won't find housing at all.

In just 1 year, Connecticut homeless shelters reported a 30 percent increase in the number of families they had to turn away due to lack of space. Few things hurt children more than housing instability and homelessness. Just in terms of academic performance, they increase the chances of repeating a grade or dropping out of high school.

One out of five Connecticut children under the age of 12—102,000 youngsters—is hungry or at risk of hunger. Food insecurity affects child development. The increased odds for cognitive, behavioral, and other development delays have implications for educational achievement.

In the past 2 years, increasing rates of infant mortality and low birth-weight infants, along with dropping rates of mothers receiving timely prenatal care during the first trimester, suggest that a once-positive Connecticut trend may be reversing direction, erasing three decades of improvement. Low birth-weight costs our State \$195 million per year in preventable hospitalizations.

The Commission on Children suggested the Speaker of the House make this a legislative priority. Connecticut Speaker Christopher Donovan (D-Meriden) established a legislative Task Force on Children and the Recession, to be chaired by State Representatives Diana Urban and Karen Jarmoc. The bipartisan Task Force includes legislators, economists, business, families, philanthropy, health-care, State agencies, and child experts.

Specifically, the Task Force on Children and the Recession:

- Identifies trends and research resulting from the recession related to housing, employment, homelessness, child care, unemployment and makes recommendations to the Speaker on appropriate budget and policy action;
- Recommends efficiencies and offers ways to streamline services and access points for families;

- Reports quarterly to the Speaker and leadership of the Legislature on key findings; and
- Identifies appropriate Federal opportunities.

After the Task Force learned the research findings from Ken Land and Bruce Lesley, we went to the community. Did the community echo what the research said? We aligned our hearings with our congressional districts so that our congressional leaders could partner and help with policy and State response. They all attended.

We looked at topics that included streamlining services, employment, family strengthening during a time of stress, food and nutrition, housing and homelessness, youth, and planning for college. We asked how communities can help. What should be waived during this 2-year crisis to help families and children? Can we keep the American dream?

Hearings were held in seven sites—rural, urban, and suburban. The recession is a cross-class crisis impacting children in every geographic area of our State. The first hearing was led by Congressman John Larson’s Youth Cabinet.

The hearings revealed:

- **Increasing job loss, homelessness, and hunger are part of our State’s portfolio.**

Latasha Fitzwilliams, 20 years of age, said, “I concentrate each day on not eating . . . in our refrigerator right now there are two things: a half-bottle of juice and a box of eggs.”

Teachers are observing children steal food off desks, out of hunger. One community college president described strangers coming to her staff meetings to take food from the back table.

- **A generation of tired young adults.**

Bulaong Ramize of Wesleyan University said,

“Along with being a student, I have four jobs on campus. Most of the students at my school work at least two jobs to help pay their way through college. I have friends who’ve taken semesters off to go back home to help their families . . . it does affect our grades. Are we really going to be the driving force if by the time we graduate, we’re already tired of working?”

- **New obligations to take care of siblings and parents alike.**

High school junior Kara Googins said,

“I come from a middle class family. We bought a house before the recession started and both of my parents had jobs. My mom lost her job almost 3 months ago. Now my main concern is finding a job. I’ve applied for jobs, but there aren’t any for students after school. I’m worried that one day, I’ll come home from school and my dad won’t have a job either. It’s just difficult because high school students shouldn’t have to deal with supporting their families.”

- **Scattered services and workers not aware of what is available.**

Families reported again and again having to go one place for one service and another place for another. They had to wait and return up to 3 days just to sign up for services. Some gave up.

State employees did not know the services for families in other sectors. In some instances they sent families to Federal offices when the State provided the services.

- **Homelessness and a housing crisis for the middle class.**

Sixty percent of the adults in homeless families have 12th-grade educations or higher. Homeless shelters in our State are above capacity. Many middle class families are just a step away from falling into foreclosure or losing a job. Others have already fallen into a loss of home or job.

- **Families trying to cope without resorting to illegal activity.**

Rhonda, a Bridgeport mother of three, testified before us about having to tell one of her daughters that she could not go to college because the family could not afford the \$40 application fee. She went to describe how, faced with eviction from her apartment because she could no longer afford the rent, she pleaded with government agencies for assistance. One said she’d qualify—if she had a drug, alcohol, or mental problem. Rhonda had none of those. “Right now,” she tearfully told the Task Force, “you do not know how bad I want to use drugs just to help my family.”

- **Family stressors up with more neglect and violence.**

Families are working more and seeing their children less. Children are stressed, but their parents are more stressed. So they do not know who to talk to.

We are seeing more children left alone while parents work or hunt for jobs. There is an increase in domestic violence. Connecticut has seen an influx of murders in the home. There is an increase in teen dating violence.

- **Youth floundering for opportunity.**

Youth unemployment rate is the highest since just after World War II. Youth are competing with adults for the same jobs. This is disheartening to both generations. Joblessness for 16- to 24-year-old black male youth and young adults has reached “Great Depression proportions.” Nationally, it was 34.5 percent—more than three times the rate for the general U.S. population.

- **More runaways. More homeless youth.**

Youth told us again and again how they were feeling they should leave home. They sought to be one less burden on a struggling family. More youth are saying they cannot see their way to college. Some are leaving home to relieve parents of the extra costs. *The New York Times* reports government officials seeing an increasing number of children leaving home for life on the streets, including children under 13 years of age.

- **Growing demand for lower-cost higher education.**

The President of the Connecticut State University system and the State’s Commissioner of Higher Education describe more and more middle class students leaving the private higher-education system for the public system. And many in the public system, who are lower-income, are leaving to care for family. The loans are just not enough and the family financial burdens are too great.

- **Family health care faltering.**

The number of low birth-weight babies is on the rise. From 2006 to 2008, our State averaged 255 infant deaths per year. Of those, three quarters occurred before the 28th day of life, and half of those were linked to low birth-weight, which is strongly connected to lack of food and stressors.

This is not a poverty issue as we have known it. Twenty-five percent of those going to food pantries are working. There is simply not enough cash to buy food throughout the week. People are working more and making less. (Many are working three different jobs, all at a lower wage than what they had been making previously.) Fathers, mothers, and grandparents need all the support they can get to access additional food for the children, find child care, and learn about employment.

The recession is like any sudden emergency—you need leadership fast and resilient to work across agency and boundary to put out the fire, wherever the flame is. We cannot stop the recession from its course. But we can make sure we understand its impact on children and buffer the impact fast and capably.

After approximately a year of inquiry, the Task Force reported its findings and worked with the Legislature to create a policy response. Public Act No. 10–133, passed overwhelmingly in the Connecticut House and unanimously in the Connecticut Senate. It declares a recession an emergency for children. When the unemployment rate is 8 percent, an emergency response will kick in. The legislation calls for:

- streamlined services, with a single point of entry.
- a coordinated leadership team from key departments, so no child receives fragmented services.
- ensuring all children are fed, year-round.
- making child care be available for families so they can look for work and train for jobs.
- stopping the trend towards low birth-weight babies by using proven interventions.
- giving youth opportunities for leadership and connection in community.
- providing more education. If there are no jobs, help people go to school, including welfare recipients.
- work across funding streams and silos. Allow whatever needs to be waived to help operations smoothly help families.
- maximize Federal opportunities in employment and training, such as the TANF Emergency Fund.
- ensure accountability and efficiency. This is not a time for lackluster programs or bureaucracy.
- improve coordination and integration of services for families.
- deter homelessness through rental assistance programs.

Other key lessons:

*Bolster leadership and civics in such hard times.* We need to bring parents in and give them the leadership tools they need so they can tell us what is and is not working. With so many cuts and fissures in the system, we need those who care the most about children to inform public policy. Parent engagement and family civics are key.

*Create systems for children, not just single policies.* Our systems do not work well—we have single policies, one silo after another. For example, if we have a good pre-

school law, but no coordinated system of early care and education, our system is pecked with holes.

*Prevent the problems from happening in the first place.* Know what works. Know what is proven and cost-effective. Complete cost-benefit analysis. Get rid of what is not working for what is proven. And then bring to scale.

*Federal funds to support families in this recession are key.* The Federal Government is key in bolstering policies proven to help families in times of fiscal uncertainty. Again and again families stressed the need for help from government. The TANF Emergency Fund is just one example of a Federal initiative to States that helps with jobs, building employment partnerships with industry, the State, and workers. We have used the funds to create new job training opportunities in both manufacturing and the service sector.

Connecticut has endeavored to address a few additional policy areas pertinent to the family and the recession.

1. Our child poverty legislation sets a goal to reduce poverty by 50 percent within a decade. National experts were brought together, across party and interest area, to tell us what was proven in reducing child poverty, what could be replicated and what was most efficient. They recommended the policy focus on (a) family income and earnings potential, (b) education, (c) income safety nets and (d) family structure and support.

We took their recommendations and created an economic model analysis. The Urban Institute found that we could reduce child poverty by 35 percent if we: (1) provided child care subsidies to families with incomes of less than 50 percent of the State median; (2) provided education and training programs to result in associates degrees for half the adults with high school diplomas; (3) helped high school dropouts get their GEDs; (4) increased employment by 6 percent for the unemployed; (5) increased participation in safety net programs by 85 percent such as food stamps, subsidized housing and LIHEAP; (6) ensured child support payments.

2. Prevention policy—Connecticut now requires an annual prevention budget, a shift in expenditures from crisis to prevention for children. The Governor reports out in her state of the State on our prevention budget. She writes up an annual report on what programs work best in prevention for children and which programs are properly coordinated across sector and funding stream. Connecticut released a children's stock portfolio that details a return on investment specific to our State. We treat prevention as a cost savings strategy, with proven outcomes, for children and youth.

3. Parent Leadership Training Institute and Parent Trust—Connecticut offers parents a toolkit in leadership for children. Parents want to partner for the next generation, but lack the civic skills to do so. Once they have the skills, it's amazing what one parent can do. We now have over 2,000 graduates who are on school boards, city councils, advisory committees. After about 7 years of this, parents shifted in our State to assets at the policy table—both State and local. They have contributed 1.5 million volunteer hours.

4. Results-based accountability—State leaders in all three branches of government are trained in an accountability paradigm. The Appropriations Committee does not entertain a request without a presentation based on population trends, indicators and impact. If there is not a context, analysis, or clear strategy to reverse or bolster trends, the work and proposal will not be received.

Connecticut is the only State in the Nation to report to the public on its social state and quality of life. Annually, the public is objectively apprised through data analysis on how we are faring in key subject areas that cross age and region. From wages to health care to housing, we can observe the social State of Connecticut. Eleven indicators are offered separately, as well as integrated into a single digit number, so that we can trace our overall direction and success as a State. We look only at indicators that have a trend line of two decades.

#### SUMMARY

This generation of youth and young adults is complex. They were born into a broadening world democracy. They learned their numbers and letters as we became a true global economy. There was a sea change in technology and communications with the Internet. They are ahead of us on diversity and integration in how they think and live. Their landscape is naturally vast—much vaster than the scope and range we grew up with.

Then they witnessed those threatened by a democratic world, blow up our World Trade Centers. They watched people jump out windows and felt a nation in shock.



Then just as the Nation seemed to calm, a city became a flood. They saw children and youth on rooftops with signs pleading for help. They then began to think that their country could not protect them from disaster.

Just when that crisis calmed down a bit, they watched our financial leaders rob its own customers and tip our financial boat over. They have watched the public believe and then give up on government. They have seen a recession dim the last 2 years and all that they promised and international fiscal crisis scrape away their sense of future.

This is an exceptional generation—complex, deep, exposed, not naïve. What they will do with all this information—who they will be as adults will be ripe for historians. But now we must make sure to lead for them—promise what is possible and to help them join us in leadership. They are a generation of leaders. Their skill set is beyond ours. A sea change has occurred and it is part of their every day psyche.

But the resources and programs necessary for them must remain intact so they can be all they can be. You may have read Don Peck’s disturbing article in the March issue of *The Atlantic*, entitled “How a New Jobless Era will Transform America.”

Peck writes,

“The great recession may be over, but this era of high joblessness is probably just beginning. Before it ends, it will likely change the life course and character of a generation of young adults. It may already be plunging many inner cities in to a despair not seen for decades. Ultimately, it is likely to warp our policies, our culture and the character of our society for years to come.”

If only one-third of what he says is accurate, we need to prepare now for this generation. Make sure they stay connected. Invest in their future. Fund only what works. Create coherent policies and a coordinated system. Reduce child poverty. As children and youth are often forgotten in national crisis, make sure they are not a second thought—too late, too fleeting.

Thank you.

Senator DODD. Thanks very much, Elaine.

With that, Mr. Lund.

**STATEMENT OF JACK LUND, PRESIDENT AND CEO, YMCA OF GREATER NEW YORK, NEW YORK, NY**

Mr. LUND. Good morning, Chairman Dodd, Ranking Member Alexander, members of the subcommittee. I’d like to express appreciation, on behalf of the Nation’s 2,687 YMCAs, for your work to ensure the health and security of the Nation’s children and families.

The YMCA is the Nation’s leading not-for-profit committed to youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. And at the Y, strengthening community is our fundamental mission.

About 35 million children in the United States live within 3 miles of a Y, and every day we work side by side with our neighbors in more than 10,000 communities to make sure that everyone—everyone, regardless of age, income, or background—has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

Last year, YMCAs across the United States had a direct impact on the lives of more than 20 million Americans of all ages and backgrounds. About half of them were kids under the age of 18. In New York City, we serve nearly 400,000, half of whom are youth and teens.

By design, YMCAs are diverse as the communities we serve, and we strive to meet the unique needs of our neighbors. But, at the heart of almost every Y is a belief that kids deserve the opportunity to discover who they are and discover what they can achieve.

In each of the five boroughs in New York City, and in every congressional district in this country, we have at least one, if not sev-

eral, YMCAs, where kids are encouraged to learn, make smarter life choices, develop the values, skills, and relationships that lead to positive behaviors, better health, and the pursuit of higher education and personal achievement.

I've been around a YMCA movement more than 35 years. And thank you, Senator, for suggesting that it was only 30. But, as a Y professional in cities from coast to coast, I can attest to the YMCA's transformative impact on the lives of kids. Not only kids, but also adults, families, and, for that matter, the entire community.

Today's kids are facing challenges unimagined a generation or two ago, and the culprits are not new, and you've been hearing about them this morning; they are disturbingly real. Unsafe streets, or the perception of unsafe streets, leads parents to keep their kids indoors and plugged into video games and the Internet. Budget cuts and increased emphasis on standardized testing has led to the disappearance of physical education from the school day. A lack of sidewalks in some neighborhoods mean fewer kids can walk or bike to school. A lack of supermarkets and the relative high price of some foods has made junk food from the corner store and fast-food outlets the only choice for low-income families living in so-called "food deserts."

The statistics are shocking, almost unimaginable. One in three American children are overweight or obese. One in three Americans born in the year 2000 will develop type II diabetes, which some of our experts call "the scourge of the 21st century." And black, Latino, and Native American kids face the greatest risk.

American kids' screen time in front of the television or computer exceeds the hours that they are in school. And so, for so many kids, the support system has disappeared. In an era when the parents of 28 million school-aged children work outside the home, only 8.4 million kids, or 15 percent, participate in after-school programs. As the After School Alliance reported in a recent study, 18.5 million additional children would participate if a quality after-school program were available in their community. Instead, so many of these children are left to fend for themselves, alone at home. They need to have access to after-school programs that offer a safe, nurturing space for them to learn, grow, and to realize their potential.

At the Y, we offer a range of programs, or perhaps a better word would be "experiences," that contribute to closing the gap identified in the study that we did, along with Dartmouth and the Institute of American values, called *Hardwired to Connect*. It's been entered into the record today. We provide the necessary tools to help youth and teens reach their potential and develop the values and skills they need to carry them into adulthood. Core offerings include childcare, before- and after-school care, tutoring, summer camp, civic engagement, and leadership development programs.

**[Editor's Note: Due to the high cost of printing, previously published materials are not reprinted in the hearing record. You may go to: [www.Americanvalues.org](http://www.Americanvalues.org) or [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com), to order the above referenced study.]**

But, these Y experiences are so much more than meet the eye. Consider: childcare and after-school provide safe, nurturing environments for children to learn, grow, develop social skills, and en-

gage in physical activity; sports and structured play not only builds healthy bodies, but also builds social and leadership skills; swim instruction reduces the risk of drowning, a leading cause of accidental death in children, and also instills confidence and a valuable skill that can never be taken away.

Y camps provide a safe, thriving community for young people to explore personal interests, build self-esteem, learn values, develop interpersonal skills, discover the wonders of nature, and develop independence away from their parents, often for the first time.

Civic engagement and leadership programs, like Youth and Government and Teens Take the City, which is a model city government program we began in New York 5 years ago, they enhance knowledge, build character, and give young people the opportunity to discover that they can make a positive change in their communities and in the world. As we all know, democracy must be learned by each generation, and the YMCA shares in that responsibility.

We believe all these opportunities are not just nice things to do, but very essential to the healthy development of our communities—a community's children—in spirit, mind, and body—and access to these experiences should be considered an American birthright.

We can't talk about the State of American kids without talking about childhood obesity. Nearly one-third of our Nation's children are overweight or obese, putting them at risk for a host of chronic conditions, including type II diabetes, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, and others.

Along with access to affordable healthcare, it is the most pressing health issue facing our children today. As I mentioned previously, the Y offers a range of experiences that keeps kids moving and educates them about making healthy choices. But, we believe we have a responsibility to support individuals of all ages to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles. It extends to the entire community. That's why we're committed to working with community leaders to influence policy, to increase physical activity opportunities, and to improve access to healthy foods.

In New York City, our YMCA has been an active partner with Columbia University and neighborhood residents in the East Harlem Food and Fitness Consortium. Our collaboration has led to the opening of supermarkets in one of the country's most underserved neighborhoods, and we're proud to be there.

Simply put, we need to make healthy choices the easy choice by ensuring that our communities have adequate opportunities for children, families, and adults to engage in healthy behaviors, wherever they live, learn, and play.

As you move forward in your efforts to improve the health of the Nation's children, please know that, with the Y, you have a partner with a 160-year track record of building healthy spirit, mind, and body, and an on-the-ground presence in 10,000 American communities to address those pressing social issues.

Despite the challenges facing our Nation's children and youth, we see bright spots every day at the Y, and we're proud of our long history in helping children, and individuals of all ages, learn, grow, and thrive.

Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lund follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JACK LUND

Good Morning Chairman Dodd, Ranking Member Alexander and members of the subcommittee. I'd like to express appreciation on behalf of the Nation's 2,687 YMCAs for your work to ensure the health and security of the Nation's children and families.

The YMCA is the Nation's leading nonprofit committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. At the Y, strengthening community is our cause. About 35 million children in the United States live within 3 miles of a Y and every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors in more than 10,000 communities to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

Last year, YMCAs across the United States had a direct impact on the lives of more than 20 million people of all ages and backgrounds; about 9 million of those were children and youth under the age of 18. In New York City, we serve nearly 400,000, half of whom are youth and teens.

By design, YMCAs are as diverse as the communities we serve and we strive to meet the unique needs of our neighbors. But at the heart of almost every Y is a belief that all kids deserve the opportunity to discover who they are and what they can achieve. In each of the five boroughs of New York City and in every congressional district in this country, we have at least one if not many YMCAs where kids are getting more interested in learning, making smarter life choices and cultivating the values, skills and relationships that lead to positive behaviors, better health, and the pursuit of higher education and achievement of their goals.

CHALLENGES FACING CHILDREN AND YOUTH

With more than 35 years as a YMCA professional in cities from coast to coast, I can attest to the YMCA's transformative impact on the lives of individual children, adults and families, but also to the surrounding community as a whole.

However, today's children are facing challenges unimagined a generation or two ago. The culprits are not new, but they are disturbingly real:

- Unsafe streets or the perception of unsafe streets leads parents to keep their children indoors and plugged into video games and the Internet.
- Budget cuts and increased emphasis on standardized testing has led to the disappearance of physical education from the school day.
- A lack of sidewalks in newer neighborhoods means fewer kids can walk or bike to school.
- The lack of supermarkets and the relative high price of fresh fruits and vegetables has made junk food from the corner store and fast food outlets the only choice for low-income families living in so-called "food deserts."

The results are read in the shocking statistics: one in three American children are overweight or obese; one in three Americans born in the year 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes some time in their lifetime—with black, Hispanic and Native American children facing the greatest risk; American kids' "screen time" in front of the TV or computer exceeds the hours they are in school.

For many children, support systems have disappeared. In an era where the parents of 28 million school-age children work outside the home, only 8.4 million K–12 children—or 15 percent—participate in afterschool programs. As the Afterschool Alliance reported in a recent study, 18.5 million additional children would participate if a quality afterschool program were available in their community. Instead, so many of these children are left to fend for themselves alone at home and need to have access to an afterschool program that offers a safe, nurturing space for them to learn, grow and realize their potential.

In 2003, in response to LARGE AND GROWING numbers of American children and young people suffering from depression, anxiety, attention deficit and behavior disorders, thoughts of suicide, and other serious mental and behavioral problems, YMCA of the USA, Dartmouth Medical School, and the Institute of American Values conducted research entitled, *Hardwired to Connect, The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*. The research presented evidence that indicated children are naturally predisposed to connect with others outside their nuclear families, for moral meaning and for openness. Meeting this basic, universal need for interpersonal "connectedness" is essential to health and to flourishing as an individual. But surprisingly, our society has fallen short in meeting these essential needs for all children, and large and growing numbers of our children are failing to thrive, academically, socially, and emotionally.

The research concluded that such community-based organizations as the Y, along with other neighborhood and faith organizations, are key to creating the environments and providing the support to improve the lives of American children and adolescents. The report also had recommendations for what all levels of government, employers, philanthropists, foundations, religious and civic organizations, scholars, families and individuals could do. A full copy of this report and a list of the recommendations is being included for the record.

At the Y, we offer a range of programs—or perhaps a better word would be experiences—that contribute to closing the gap identified in the *Hardwired to Connect* research and building the necessary tools to help youth and teens reach their potential and develop values and skills that they carry into adulthood. Core offerings include childcare; before and afterschool care; tutoring; summer camp; civic engagement and leadership development programs such as arts programs and Youth and Government; and youth sports and aquatics instruction.

But these Y experiences are really more than meet the eye. Consider:

- Child care and afterschool care provide safe, nurturing environments for children to learn, grow, develop social skills, and engage in physical activity in which they might not otherwise participate.
- Sports and structured play not only builds healthy bodies, but also builds social and leadership skills.
- Swim instruction reduces the risk of drowning—a leading cause of accidental death in children—and also instills confidence and a valuable skill that can never be taken away.
- Camps provide a safe, thriving community for young people to explore personal interests, build self-esteem, develop interpersonal skills, discover the creativity and health benefits of the outdoors, and develop independence away from their parents.
- Civic engagement leadership programs like Youth and Government and Teens Take the City, a model city program we began in New York 5 years ago, enhance knowledge, build character and give youth and teens the opportunity to discover that they can make a positive change in the world around them, and realize the individual talents and potential they possess.

We believe that all of these opportunities are not just nice things to have, but rather essential to the healthy development of all our communities' children, in spirit, mind and body. Access to this experience should be considered a universal American birthright.

#### CHILDCARE AND AFTERSCHOOL

Two key areas where Ys lead the way in engaging children and youth are childcare and afterschool care. Chairman Dodd, I do not need to tell you that these programs are a lifeline for single parents and working families, and provide children with a safe place to go after school. Your leadership over so many years has proven your great understanding and support of our Nation's children and families. With TEN THOUSAND sites across the country, the YMCA is one of the Nation's largest non-profit providers of childcare and afterschool programs. In New York City alone, we serve over 15,000 children in 140 sites during the critical 3 p.m.–6 p.m. time period, not simply bridging the gap between school and home, but creating an enriching and supportive environment for kids to continue to grow in their academic abilities, social interaction and physical health and well-being. Our focus on each individual's unique assets and talents takes shape in elements that promote artistry, emotional development, nutrition and physical activity, character development, sports, service-learning, as well as critical literacy, math and hands-on science activities.

We see first-hand the difference an afterschool program makes in the life of a child, contributing to their healthy development, and we hear it from parents and teachers alike.

Many afterschool programs—at the Y and in other organizations—are made possible through the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding and we know that many more would participate if funding were available. Of the more than 1,200 applicants in 2006 to the Department of Education, only 325 were able to be funded. And fiscal year 2010 funding will mostly go to support current grantees. Currently, 207 21st Century Community Learning Centers sites are in YMCAs.

At the New York City YMCA we have six 21st Century programs currently operating for a total of \$1,478,149. As you might imagine, these are not only a very important program to hundreds of kids, but they enable hundreds of their parents to continue to work, knowing that their child is well cared for.

We look forward to working with the committee to protect and greatly expand 21st Century Community Learning Centers now and in the future.

Early child care provides millions of young children with the early learning experiences they need to be successful in their later school years. Finding affordable and quality child care remains a daily struggle for working families across the country. Given the current state of the Nation's economy, parents are losing their jobs, waiting lists for access into child care providers are increasing and child care providers' salaries are decreasing. Child care needs are growing and funds allocated to address those needs are insufficient. We encourage Congress to increase funding for Child Care Development Block Grants over the current \$2.1 billion.

#### HEALTH CARE NEEDS

In early child care sites and our afterschool sites, we witness daily that children have a broad range of health care needs. According to researchers at the Georgetown University Health Policy Institute and the Kaiser Family Foundation, children need regular preventive care, including dental, hearing, and vision care, for their healthy development.

Through the Children's Health Insurance Program or CHIP, Congress has made great progress toward increasing access to quality health care for children. Since it was first introduced in 1997, CHIP has served a vital role in providing our Nation's children with a safety net of health coverage that has reduced the rate of uninsured children over time. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of uninsured children in this Nation dropped to 7.3 million in 2008, less than 10 percent of our Nation's children—the lowest rate in 20 years. YMCAs often work with the social service network in our communities to ensure families are on the register—but the system remains complicated for families.

#### CHILDHOOD OBESITY

And we cannot talk about the state of the American child without talking about childhood obesity. Nearly one-third of our Nation's children are overweight or obese, putting them at risk for a whole host of chronic conditions that they shouldn't have to worry about until adulthood—type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol to name a few. Along with access to affordable health care, it is likely the most pressing health issue facing our children today. So what can we do about it?

As I mentioned previously, the Y offers a range of experiences that help kids move more and educate them about making healthy choices. But we also believe that our responsibility to support individuals of all ages to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles reaches beyond our walls and our programs. It extends to the entire community. That's why we are also committed to working with community leaders to influence policy and systems changes to increase physical activity and improve access to healthy foods.

The YMCAs Healthier Communities Initiatives, supported by the CDC and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, focus on collaborative engagement with community leaders, how environments influence health and well-being, and the role public policy plays in sustaining change.

There are nearly 150 communities participating in these initiatives—as well as six statewide projects including Connecticut and Tennessee. These communities and States are finding that:

**1. Families need access to healthy and affordable foods—we encourage Congressional action that gives families access to high quality nutritious fruits and vegetables.** Several YMCAs have created virtual farmers markets that procure healthy foods directly from farmers and distribute it to low-income families at a vastly reduced cost. Allowing families to use food stamps for programs like these would make them significantly more appealing. Increasing the reimbursement rates and streamlining the administrative process for the USDA's Child and Adult Food Care Programs would encourage more nonprofits to take advantage of these great resources.

**2. Second, families need safe neighborhoods for their children to play outside and programs** that can help children explore nature in meaningful ways, both structured and unstructured. Research from the Children & Nature Network tells us that green space supports children's quality of life and improves their physical, mental and social health. Additionally research conducted by YMCA of the USA and funded by the National Park Service gives insights into the barriers confronting low-income minority children and youth to reaching the great outdoors. For some urban youth, nature is seen as somewhere "other than here" and a place that is hard to get to, expensive, and not perceived as relevant. Fear, time and not knowing what to do also presented significant barriers.

3. **Third, families need to be able to walk their children to school safely** if the school is nearby—this means safe routes to schools in the broadest sense. Communities need to be better connected through trails and paths so parents can travel with their kids to various destinations (parks, restaurants, libraries, etc.) and get physical activity along the way.

4. **Fourth, families need to be connected to community-based organizations**—like the Y—that provide a safe, healthy and physically active environment.

5. **Fifth, families, especially working families, need schools and after-school programs** to provide adequate physical activity and healthy foods.

Our Healthier Communities Initiatives have had success in improving community walkability and pedestrian safety by changing zoning laws that ensure the inclusion of sidewalks in new developments, increasing access points to fresh fruits and vegetables by bringing farmers markets to communities where healthy foods are not available, and influencing policy to re-institute physical education requirements in schools and afterschool programs. In New York City, our YMCA has been an active partner with Columbia University and neighborhood residents in the East Harlem Food & Fitness Consortium, whose work has led to the opening of supermarkets in one of the country's most underserved neighborhoods.

Simply put, we need to make the healthy choice the easy choice by ensuring that our communities have adequate opportunities for children, families and adults to engage in healthy behaviors in all of the places where they live, work, learn and play.

#### FEDERAL SOLUTIONS TO OBESITY

At the Federal level, YMCA of the USA has supported a comprehensive childhood obesity bill introduced by Representatives Kind of Wisconsin and Bono Mack of California, the Healthy CHOICES Act, which includes the Play Every Day Act, an increase in funding authority for the Physical Education for Progress (PÉP) program, the Moving Outdoors in Nature Act and new authority for virtual farmers markets, farmers markets and community gardens. We have also supported the Complete Streets Act and efforts through the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act to innovate afterschool environments to enhance healthy living opportunities.

#### HELP FOR FAMILIES

We also helped advance, and were very pleased with the inclusion of the Community Transformation Grants in health care reform as they are modeled after our healthy communities work. In fact the prevention provisions in the bill will go a long way toward improving the health of children and families and it is essential that community-based organizations are engaged at all levels in the delivery of these programs.

We also know that healthy habits start at home. The YMCA's Healthy Family Home program sends healthy messages home and provides resources and tools for families to take simple steps toward a healthier lifestyle. Healthy Family Home focuses on three key areas—Play Every Day, Eat Healthy and Family Time. Many YMCAs are incorporating Healthy Family Home into their existing programming, but it is also available to everyone in every community through the Web at [www.healthyfamilyhome.org](http://www.healthyfamilyhome.org). We launched a PSA campaign with these messages in the New York City market earlier this year, and First Lady Michelle Obama has even included the Healthy Family Home toolkit on her *Let's Move!* Web site as a resource for parents.

While American children are certainly facing challenges on the road to a healthy, active and productive adolescence and adulthood, organizations like the Y are there to support and nurture them. But so much more can be done.

We would very much like to thank this subcommittee, along with Chairman Harkin and the entire Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee for the many opportunities you've given the YMCA to address these issues.

As you move forward in your efforts to improve the health of the Nation's children, please know that in the Y, you have a partner with a nearly 160-year track record of building healthy spirit, mind and body, and an on-the-ground presence in 10,000 American communities to address these pressing social issues. Despite the challenges facing our Nation's children and youth, we see bright spots every day at the Y, and we are proud of our long history in helping children—in fact individuals of all ages—learn, grow and thrive.

Thank you for your time.

Senator DODD. Thank you very, very much.

Before I turn to Dr. Holzer, some of those, standing in the back of the room, there's a bench back here. If some of you want to sit down, you're more than welcome to do so. And if members come in, you'll have to get up and leave, but in the meantime, come on and sit down. If any you back there would like to do that, just walk up here.

Dr. Holzer.

**STATEMENT OF HARRY J. HOLZER, Ph.D., ECONOMIST,  
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY AND URBAN INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. HOLZER. Thank you, and good morning, Senator Dodd, Senator Alexander, and Senators Sanders and Casey.

I'd like to make four main points today about the economics and the research evidence on child well-being in America and how they will be impacted by the great recession.

My first point. Even in the best of times, child poverty rates in the United States are very high, and many millions of children live with unemployed parents, and growing up in poor households or with unemployed parents has negative long-term consequences for these children which often lasts for the rest of their lives.

Now, in 2007, before the recession began, the child poverty rate was 18 percent; and over 30 percent, in minority communities. Nearly 8 percent of all children, in that year, lived in severe poverty, with income no more than half the poverty line; and again, much higher rates in minority communities.

Now, when these children grow up poor, and then they become adults, they will have lower levels of education, lower levels of earnings and employment, higher rates of poverty and single-parent hood, higher rates of crime and incarceration, and poorer health than their middle-class counterparts. This will impose costs, not only on those individuals and their families, but it creates large negative outcomes and large economic losses for the U.S. economy as a whole. I've done some work estimating those costs, in an average year, as being worth \$500 billion of lost GDP, in terms of lower productivity, as well as lost expenditures on crime and poor health.

But, even short-term increases in poverty or parental unemployment can have negative long-term effects on children. For instance, those whose parents suffer a permanent job loss often have more difficulty progressing in school, and have lower earnings, themselves, as adults, because of the lower resources they have, the stress in their lives, and the weaker perceptions of rewards for those who strive for success.

My second point. This recession, the most severe since the 1930s, will substantially raise child poverty and the numbers living with parents who are permanently unemployed. Researchers project that child poverty will rise to nearly 25 percent by the year 2012; and in single-parent families, those rates are expected to rise to roughly 45 percent. And this recession is expected to be not only severe, but persistent. Economists project high unemployment rates at least through the year 2015. Accordingly, child poverty will also remain high through those years, perhaps in the range of 22 to 23 percent, through 2015, and declining mildly thereafter. And even among those not poor, the fraction of children living with involuntarily un-



employed parents is now very high, as well, and will continue to be high for several years.

Point No. 3. These high and persisting rates of unemployment and poverty will likely scar children and youth in many ways, causing them significant long-term damage. And Ms. Zimmerman has already alluded to some of this. But, based on clear empirical research, we believe that this recession will damage educational attainment and earnings for many children who grew up in families with high poverty or unemployment. And because so many young people themselves will suffer long periods of unemployment, their own future rates of employment and earnings will also be reduced, because the lost periods of work experience during their formative years of career-building will not be easily replaced.

Finally, point No. 4. To limit the damage to children, policy responses should focus, first, on bolstering employment and income support among their parents, but also on providing direct services to children, teenagers, and youth over the short run, and indeed over the long run, as well.

Now, among parents, we first need to ensure access to an adequate safety net during this continuing period of poverty and unemployment. The American Recovery and Reconstruction Act, ARRA, generated important extensions in several safety-net programs. Unfortunately, many of these efforts will begin to expire by the end of 2010. So, it's important that at least some of these programmatic exchanges be extended for the next few years, while unemployment and poverty remain high.

I believe Congress and the Obama administration should do more to stimulate job creation in the private sector, through targeted tax credits, and also in the public sector, through direct public-service employment.

But, children and teenagers and youth, in school and out of school, need direct assistance also. Programs that provide important services, such as preschool and after-school care, should receive extra funding during this period of high unemployment, as should programs focusing on education, employment, and training for in-school and out-of-school teenagers and young adults. And where we have good evidence of successful and cost-effective interventions for low-income children and youth, these increases should be permanent, and not limited to the period of the recession.

Now, of course, we all understand the terrible long-term fiscal situation that the United States currently faces, and our need to address these long-term problems very soon, both through enhanced revenues and reducing entitlement spending. But, important investments to relieve the serious negative effects of poverty on children should not be sacrificed for the sake of fiscal balance, because those actions would be penny-wise, but pound-foolish.

Sensible investments would add very small amounts to the national debt and would at least partially pay for themselves over time through higher output and higher tax revenues. I, therefore, urge Congress and the administration to take these ameliorative steps, in a very urgent environment, to invest more in these children, and in teenagers and youth, as well.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Holzer follows:]

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF HARRY J. HOLZER, PH.D.

## SUMMARY

I would like to make four main points today about the well-being of children in America and how that will be impacted by the “Great Recession.”

1. Even in the best of times, child poverty rates in the United States are very high, and many millions of children live with unemployed parents. Growing up in poor households or with unemployed parents has negative long-term consequences for these children, which often last for the rest of their lives.

2. This recession, the most severe since the 1930s, will substantially raise child poverty rates as well as the numbers living with parents who are involuntarily unemployed. The recession will also likely persist for many years, as will the elevated rates of poverty among children.

3. These high and persisting rates of unemployment and poverty will likely “scar” children and youth in many ways, causing them significant long-term damage.

4. To limit the damage to children, policy responses should focus on bolstering employment and income support among parents and on providing direct ameliorative services to children, both over the short- and long-terms.

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I would like to make four main points today about the well-being of children in America and how that will be impacted by the “Great Recession.”

1. *Even in the best of times, child poverty rates in the United States are very high, and many millions of children live with unemployed parents. Growing up in poor households or with unemployed parents has negative long-term consequences for these children, which often last for the rest of their lives.* Even before this recession began, children had much higher rates of poverty than adults in the United States. In 2007, the rate of child poverty was 18 percent, while for the overall population it was 12.5 percent.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 8 percent of children (and just over 5 percent of adults) lived in “severe poverty,” with incomes no more than half the poverty line.<sup>2</sup> In that same year, as many as a third of all children lived with nonworking adults for part or all of the year, and many millions lived with parents who had experienced involuntary job loss.<sup>3</sup>

While we have seen some significant progress during the past few decades in raising academic achievement and in reducing exposure to violence among poor children, many serious problems remain.<sup>4</sup> When they become adults, children who grew up poor still tend to have lower levels of education, lower levels of employment and earnings, higher rates of poverty and single parenthood, higher rates of participation in crime, and poorer health than their middle-class counterparts. While social scientists continue to debate whether it is low income *per se* that drives these results as opposed to the behaviors and characteristics of parents who happen to be poor, there is no doubt that children growing up in such families have less opportunity to succeed in life than those born and raised in the middle class or higher. And these negative outcomes create large economic losses for the U.S. economy as

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<sup>1</sup>In this discussion, we will use the traditional definition and measure of the poverty rate in the United States, rather than a variety of alternative measures that are currently under discussion. While these alternatives are, in many ways, preferable and more informative than the traditional measure, previous research mostly uses the traditional measures when calculating the effects of poverty on children. The use of one or the other would likely not dramatically change our overall findings here.

<sup>2</sup>See *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007*. U.S. Census Bureau, 2008.

<sup>3</sup>See “Increasing the Number of Children Whose Parents Have Stable Employment.” KIDS COUNT Indicator Brief, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009. Regarding rates of involuntary unemployment, we find 3-year involuntary job termination rates (excluding discharges for cause) of about 7 percent for all adults and about 10 percent for high school dropouts in the period 2005–07. See Henry Farber, “Job Loss and the Decline in Job Security in the United States,” Working Paper, Industrial Relations Section, Princeton University, 2009. Since younger workers tend to have both more children and higher rates of job loss than other workers, the fractions of children living with involuntarily unemployed parents in each group is no doubt higher.

<sup>4</sup>For evidence on improving test scores over time among different categories of children see Thomas Dee and Brian Jacob, “The Impact of No Child Left Behind on Student Achievement,” National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper, 2009. The evidence on declining violent crime rates in the United States appears in Steven Levitt, “Understanding Why Crime Fell in the 1990s: Four Facts that Explain the Decline and Six That Do Not.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 18(1), 2004.

a whole, due to lower productivity of workers and high rates of crime and poor health, as well as the poor individuals themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Even short-term increases in poverty or parental unemployment can have negative long-term effects on children.<sup>6</sup> For instance, those whose parents suffer a permanent job loss often have more difficulty progressing in school and have lower earnings themselves as adults. These effects are likely attributable to the lower resources, higher emotional stress and weaker perceptions of rewards for those who strive for success among children whose parents are poor or suffer joblessness.<sup>7</sup>

2. *This recession, the most severe since the 1930s, will substantially raise child poverty rates as well as the numbers living with parents who are involuntarily unemployed. The recession will also likely persist for many years, as will the elevated rates of poverty among children.* Unemployment rates have more than doubled since 2007, and now hover near 10 percent. Among the unemployed, 46 percent have been out of work for 6 months or longer, while rates of job loss among the unemployed are very high. Joblessness among some disadvantaged groups, like teens and adult high school dropouts, is extremely high as well.<sup>8</sup>

Though we only have poverty data available through 2008 at the present time, these data already show rising rates of poverty (19 percent) and severe poverty (8.5 percent) among children as the economy began to tumble.<sup>9</sup>

But these outcomes will almost certainly grow worse as data become available for 2009 and beyond. Brookings Institution researchers project that child poverty will rise to nearly 25 percent by the year 2012. In single-parent families, these rates are expected to rise to roughly 45 percent.<sup>10</sup>

This recession is expected to be not only severe but persistent. The President's Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) projects annual unemployment rates of 9.2, 8.2, 7.3, 6.5 and 5.9 percent over the period 2011–15.<sup>11</sup> At least the first two of these rates would usually be associated with serious recessions, and the others with milder ones. Accordingly, child poverty rates will likely remain very high as well—perhaps in the range of 22–23 percent through 2015 and declining fairly mildly thereafter.<sup>12</sup> Even among those not poor, the fraction of children living with unemployed parents is now very high as well, and will continue to be over the next several years.<sup>13</sup>

3. *These high and persisting rates of unemployment and poverty will likely “scar” children and youth in many ways, causing them significant long-term damage.* As noted earlier, even short spells of poverty or parental joblessness can lead to serious negative consequences for children; and, if these effects are as persistent as current projections suggest, these consequences might be even more negative.

It is therefore likely that this recession will damage educational attainment and earnings as adults for the children who grew up in families with high poverty or

<sup>5</sup>See Harry Holzer, Diane Schanzenbach, Greg J. Duncan and Jens Ludwig. “The Economic Costs of Poverty: Subsequent Effects of Children Growing Up Poor.” Center for American Progress, 2007.

<sup>6</sup>See Greg J. Duncan. “Income and the Well-being of Children.” Geary Lecture, Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin Ireland, 2005. For a more skeptical view on the role of money per se in the lives of children and families see Susan Mayer, *What Money Can't Buy*, Harvard University Press, 1997.

<sup>7</sup>See Ariel Kalil, “Unemployment and Job Displacement: The Impact on Families and Children,” *Ivey Business Journal*, July/August 2005; Philip Oreopoulos, Marianne Page, and Ann Huff Stevens, “The Intergenerational Effects of Worker Displacement,” *Journal of Labor Economics*, vol. 26(3), 2008; and Marianne Page, Ann Huff Stevens, and Michael Lindo, “Parental Income Shocks and the Outcomes of Disadvantaged Youth in the United States,” in J. Gruber ed. *The Economics of Disadvantaged Youth*. University of Chicago Press, 2008.

<sup>8</sup>See “The Employment Situation—April 2010,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. Among teens, the unemployment rate in April was 25.4 percent while the rate of employment in the population was 26.8 percent. Among high school dropouts, unemployment was 14.7 percent but employment in the population was just 39.5 percent. High rates of job loss in this recession, and the tendency for the long-term unemployed to have high rates of poverty, appear in Wayne Vroman, “The Great Recession, Unemployment Insurance, and Poverty.” The Urban Institute, 2010.

<sup>9</sup>See *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2008*. U.S. Census Bureau, 2009.

<sup>10</sup>See Emily Monea and Isabel Sawhill. “Simulating the Effects of the ‘Great Recession’ on Poverty,” Brookings Institution, September 2009.

<sup>11</sup>See Council of Economic Advisers, *Economic Report of the President*, 2010.

<sup>12</sup>See Monea and Sawhill, *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup>See Julia Isaacs, “Families of the Recession: Unemployed Parents and their Children.” Brookings Institution, 2010. She reports that 10.5 million children, or 14 percent of the total, are now living with unemployed parents at any moment in time. This implies that much larger fractions will experience some time with an unemployed parent over the next 5 years, and some of these spells will be quite lengthy.

unemployment.<sup>14</sup> Given that so many young people will themselves suffer periods of unemployment, their future rates of employment and earnings will also be reduced, as the lost periods of work experience during their formative years of career-building are lost and not replaced.<sup>15</sup>

And, in this recession, large numbers of children have already or will soon suffer homelessness as well, due to the high rates of home foreclosure among the unemployed. Homelessness is particularly harmful to children and can have lasting negative effects on them.<sup>16</sup>

4. *To limit the damage to children, policy responses should focus on bolstering employment and income support among parents and on providing direct ameliorative services to children, over both the short- and longer-terms.*

For a severe recession that will likely persist as long as this one, it is important to directly address the income and employment deficits experienced by parents as well as the associated need for enhanced services among children and youth.

Among parents, we first need to ensure access to an adequate income safety net during periods of poverty and/or unemployment. The American Recovery and Reconstruction Act (ARRA) generated important extensions and improvements in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Unemployment Insurance (UI), Medicaid and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) programs that raised both their coverage and generosity. Unfortunately, most of these efforts will expire at the end of 2010. It is important that these programmatic changes be extended for at least the next 3 years or more, if unemployment rates remain as high as currently projected.

Congress and the Obama administration should also do more to stimulate job creation in both the private and public sectors. The payroll tax cuts designed to spur private job creation that have so far been enacted are too small to have much real effect; and public sector job creation efforts, including public service employment jobs for the poor, are not widely planned. These efforts would help reduce the enormous unemployment rates for these populations.<sup>17</sup>

But children need direct assistance too. Programs that provide important services, such as preschool and aftercare programs, should receive extra funding during this period of high unemployment. Given the terrible long-term effects of homelessness on children, direct efforts to prevent homelessness among families with children need attention as well.<sup>18</sup> And, where we have good evidence of successful and cost-effective interventions for low-income children and youth, these increases in funding should be permanent, and not limited to the period of recession.<sup>19</sup>

Of course, we all understand the terrible long-term fiscal outlook that the United States currently faces, and our need to address these problems very soon (through both enhanced revenues and reduced entitlement spending, in my view). *But important short-term investments to relieve the serious negative effects of poverty and unemployment on children should not be sacrificed* for the sake of fiscal balance. Such sensible investments would add only miniscule amounts to the national debt (and its ratio to Gross Domestic Product) and would at least partially pay for themselves over time through higher output and tax revenues.<sup>20</sup>

Senator DODD. Thank you very, very much, Dr. Holzer.

<sup>14</sup> See Oreopoulos et al., 2008; and Page et al., 2008. Some strong suggestive evidence on how children may suffer permanent education and earnings losses when their families are pushed into poverty during a serious recession also appears in Michael Linden, "Turning Point: The Long-Term Effects of Recession-Induced Poverty," *First Focus*, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> The terribly high rates of joblessness among all youth, and especially minority or less-educated youth, are best documented by Andrew Sum et al., "Dire Straits for Many American Workers: The Case for New Job-Creation Strategies in 2010 for Teens and Young Adults," Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, 2009. The long-term effects of such unemployment on the later earnings of these workers are documented for young college graduates by Lisa Kahn, "The Long-Term Labor Market Consequences of Graduating from College in a Bad Economy," Yale University, 2009; and, for young workers more broadly, in Rosella Gardecki and David Neumark, "Order from Chaos? The Effects of Early Labor Market Experience on Adult Labor Market Outcomes," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 51 (2), 1998.

<sup>16</sup> See Julia Isaacs, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> See Timothy Bartik, "Not All Job Creation Tax Credits are Created Equal," Economic Policy Institute, 2010; and Harry Holzer and Robert Lerman, "Time for a Federal Jobs Program," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 23 2009.

<sup>18</sup> See Julia Isaacs, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> See Lawrence Aber and Ajay Chaudry, "Low-Income Children, Their Families and the Great Recession: What's Next in Policy," Urban Institute, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> For instance, additional Federal expenditures of \$150B would add just 1 percentage point to already high ratios of debt to GDP that are forecast for this decade, but would largely or fully offset over the longer term by higher earnings and income among the poor and by the higher tax revenues these generate.

I'm going to do something a little out of the ordinary, because I'm going to be here for the entire time, but I'm so pleased that Senator Sanders and Senator Casey have spent as much time with us this morning, and knowing they have additional schedules, I'm going to turn to my colleagues first for any questions they may have and then I'll finish up, in the end, with some additional questions.

Senator Sanders.

Senator SANDERS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And let me thank all of the panelists for their excellent testimony.

Unlike Chris Dodd, I'm not a nice guy, so I'm going to ask you some really hard questions. Let me start off with a pretty simple one.

As a nation—I agree with Mrs. Powell, who described the situation regarding our kids as abysmal. I think it's an international disgrace, that we have the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world. Why is it that countries, like Denmark, Sweden, Norway, have less than 5 percent of their kids living in poverty and we have 22 percent of our kids living in poverty? That's a pretty simple question. That's my first question. Why don't we just start with Mrs. Powell.

Mrs. POWELL. Part of it is the social structure of those countries. In a country like Denmark, for example, where it provides services for all of their citizens, in a socialistic kind of way, this allows them to provide the supports that children need. They are mandated by the State, and they are carried out that way. And I think it's probably true in the other countries that you mentioned. In a democracy, it's not so easy to do that.

Senator SANDERS. You're not suggesting Denmark and Sweden are not democracies.

Mrs. POWELL. No. No. No. But, in our form of government, it is not so easy to do that.

Senator SANDERS. In a more conservative form of—

Mrs. POWELL. Yes. Yes. But, I would say that their success is because of their form of government and their supply of social services to the population.

Senator SANDERS. Mrs. Zimmerman.

Ms. ZIMMERMAN. I had the opportunity to actually live in Sweden, and my children went to school in Sweden. And I agree with Mrs. Powell, the services were—children received healthcare, education was not only a constitutional right, but, interestingly, safety was a constitutional right. So, in the country's constitution, children have a right to an education, with safety. Every school had a bully-reduction team. The first thing you signed, as a parent, the second day of school, was a sheet saying that you understood what safety meant for your child, both in the neighborhood and at the school, what you would do if you saw anything unsafe, etc.

One interesting thing that happened. We, here, talk a lot about family structure and family decline as being a core factor for children. In Sweden, interestingly, the divorce rate is higher than it is here. Women actually, there, are in employment opportunities that men are not. There's more female physicists, etc. But, in spite of the divorce rate, children do better there than they do in this country.

Senator SANDERS. Mr. Lund.

Mr. LUND. I think those countries have exceptionally low rates of immigration. And in New York City, 40 percent of our citizens are new Americans. They're new Americans who were born somewhere else. That's an American tradition. That's what makes America such a special place. But, it's important to understand that arriving immigrants find themselves on the lower rungs of the economic ladder, and, of course—what we hope—

Senator SANDERS. But, African-Americans are not immigrants.

Mr. LUND. I don't disagree.

Senator SANDERS. But, they are the lower end, and we're hearing the situation—

Mr. LUND. I'm not suggesting that that's not the case. I am saying that—

Senator SANDERS. Immigration is—

Mr. LUND [continuing]. Because of the high rate of immigration here in the United States, that I think that does present a challenge.

Senator SANDERS. That is a factor, but you're not suggesting that is the whole issue, are you?

Mr. LUND. I am not.

Senator SANDERS. Yes.

Mr. LUND. I am not. But, the American tradition is that immigrants move up the ladder, as they have for many hundreds of years, and it's our job to make sure that that happens.

Senator SANDERS. Dr. Holzer.

Mr. HOLZER. Senator, I would stress two things.

First of all, there's a much higher level of government spending, as a percent of GDP, in those countries. And, of course, Scandinavians are willing to live with a much higher rate of taxation than American citizens are, and they spend a lot of that money on direct services for families.

But, I would also emphasize the structure of the economy, and especially the structure of the labor markets in those countries, tolerates much less inequality than we tolerate in ours, and a range of institutions and government interventions in those labor markets protect them from the massive range of inequality that we have in the United States.

Now, as an economist, I don't believe we can necessarily import all of those institutions and regulations into the U.S. economy. And, like every economist, I worry sometimes about whether institutions and government intervention create inefficiencies.

But, I would say that, even here in the United States, there's a whole range of institutions and legislation and regulation—higher minimum wages, more collective bargaining, government assistance, and subsidies for higher-wage employers—all of which I think we could have at a greater level in the United States, that would start to reduce some of the extremes of inequality that we tolerate in America.

Senator SANDERS. Dr. Holzer, you made a point about being penny-wise and dollar-foolish. If we ignore kids—if, as Mrs. Powell said, 70 percent of our—if we lose—30 percent of our kids graduate high school; many of these kids are going to end up in jail, and many of these kids are going to end up in government assistance.

Isn't one of the differences between other countries and our own is that they invest in their kids with strong childcare, with strong healthcare. And, at the end of the day, they have more productive, taxpaying citizens, rather than 3 million people, as we have, ending up in jail, at \$50,000 a shot. I think it costs more money to keep somebody in jail than send them to Harvard University. Is that sensible?

Mr. HOLZER. Yes, Senator, I agree with that. We pay much higher costs down the road, dealing with the effects of incarceration, poor health—

Senator SANDERS. Poor health, right.

Mr. HOLZER [continuing]. Poor health is enormously expensive. Low productivity.

Senator SANDERS. Now, when we talk about obesity, is it—and Mr. Lund made a very important point about that—is it also fair to say that you're going to see a disproportionate amount of that among lower-income people?

Mr. HOLZER. There's no question about that.

Senator SANDERS. So, it becomes a class issue, and not just an abstract health issue.

Mr. HOLZER. That's right. Now, the one thing all four of us, I think, agree on is that, when we make those investments, we want to make sure that they're cost-effective. We want to make sure that there's been good evaluation research, because a lot of things don't work. And, of course, I also agree that the role of parents to teach responsibility has to go hand in hand with public support. Those are not mutually exclusive.

Senator SANDERS. Right.

Mr. HOLZER. It shouldn't be one or the other; it should be both.

Senator SANDERS. OK.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator DODD. Very good.

Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Mr.—

Senator DODD. By the way, let me just say that—about both Bernie Sanders and Bob Casey. While I'm kind of winding down a career here, both of these individuals have expressed a strong interest in this subject matter, and I'm pleased, as I leave, knowing there'll be a couple of people around here who care as much about these issues as they do—and both Senator Sanders and Bob Casey, particularly, have shown a strong interest in the matter.

I thank you immensely for that.

Senator CASEY. I want to thank the Chairman for his leadership on these issues all these years. And when he leaves, we're going to figure out a way to keep calling him back for help, over time, because we'll need his help, because these challenges are enormous. And we're going to keep calling upon you, no matter what you do next.

I do want to note, for the record, something, in a lighthearted way, but it's significant—the chairman of a committee allowing lower-echelon members to ask questions first, that never happens around here.

[Laughter.]

Providing seating for members of the audience, that doesn't happen too much around here. But, we're grateful.

And I wanted to make two points before asking a broad question. Not an easy question to answer, but, I think, one that should be on the table.

The two points I want to make first, though, are the point, made earlier by Dr. Holzer, about the recession, joblessness, the economy, or lack of enough jobs, to put it simply, having an impact on children—long-term, short-term. We sometimes forget that. But, those of us who are advocating for programs, programmatic increases, new strategies as it relates to early learning or child poverty or nutrition or childcare, a whole range of issues that relate to kids—we sometimes forget that the best—sometimes the best strategy is just job creation, and especially now. I think we learned, in the 1990s, as a country—and I think a lot of Democrats learned this—that making the pie bigger is actually better than trying to fight for ever-dwindling slices of the pie.

So, economic growth and job creation have to be central to what we're doing. And I think there's some good news there, by the way, not often emphasized here. But, the Recovery Act—the two words, “recovery” and “reinvestment”—we're going to be seeing the benefits of that over time.

Just a year ago, in January, February and March of last year, we're losing at least 600-, and, in several of those months, 700,000 jobs every single month. That has reversed, so we're actually in positive territory, even though the unemployment rate is still unbearably high.

That strategy has paid dividends. The Recovery Act is not real popular now. In 15 years, it's going to be wildly popular. But, it'll take a while for people to see the full effects of it.

Creating economic growth is central to this whole strategy.

Second, we have to recognize—I could stand here and—and a lot of us could—and say, “We ought to increase this program or that program by X amount of dollars, and increase taxes on the wealthy, to do it.” I think a lot of us think the wealthy in this country have not paid their fair share, especially in a time of economic hurt. But, we have to assume that, for the near term, that the reality of extra revenue won't be there—or at least we have to have varying scenarios. We want to have a strategy where we have more revenue to make these investments. We might want to have an intermediate strategy.

But, let's assume, for purposes of this broad question, that we have limited revenue, or at least a lack of political will in Washington, to make the investments that a lot of us want to make. In that scenario, in that bare-bones scenario, how do we prioritize, here? Literally in the next year or two, how do we prioritize? If the patient is on the table, with multiple injuries, how do we prioritize on these issues? Do we say, “We can't invest in this strategy now, we have to wait on that, but we have to attack hunger and homelessness,” for example? Or do we say, “No, we can't afford to wait on investments in early learning, we've got to do that now”?

I want to get the sense—in a very limited time, I know—but the sense of how we prioritize, with the realization that we shouldn't



just limit ourselves to that bare-bones budget. But, I think it's a reality we have to confront.

Mrs. Powell, do you have—

Mrs. POWELL. Well, it's hard to know how you pick out one thing first and say, "This is"—

Senator CASEY. Right.

Mrs. POWELL [continuing]. "What we have to do." My thought on the subject is that, as we approach each one of these problems that we have, fiscally and otherwise in the country, we have to keep uppermost in our mind the impact that it has on children. Too often the programs that support children are the first ones that are cut. And this goes a long way to producing the situation that we have.

So that, in thinking about what you're doing, money is not the complete answer. We have to energize the will of the American people, with the support of our congressional leaders, to address the needs of young people.

As far as children are concerned, all of those issues are important. There's no one place to start. Just be conscious, as you are making appropriations, etc., that we do not cut the programs that support children, or do not cut them as deeply, as they are cut.

Senator CASEY. Mrs. Zimmerman.

Ms. ZIMMERMAN. Senator Casey, our State passed a law saying that we needed to reduce child poverty by 50 percent within 10 years. Once that law was passed, the challenge was, What do we do first? What's cost-effective? What do we do, with limited dollars?

Some of the findings are germane to your question—we brought together the right, left, and center best experts in the country on poverty reduction. And I had the privilege of staffing this process. And we said to right, left, and center, very famous people, "We're only going to do what you agree on. Anything you disagree on, we're not bothering with." They were to meet for X number of times. They got so engaged, they met by phone continuously. They recommended that we focus on family income and earnings potential, education, income safety nets, and family structure and support. Those were the five areas.

Then we brought in the Urban Institute and said, it's part of your question,

"Given limited funds, and given time constraints and our law, that we're trying to reduce poverty by 50 percent in 10 years, can you do an economic model analysis for us and tell us what we should do first, or what we should combine so the ingredients combust in the best way?"

And they said the following: Provide childcare subsidies to families with incomes of less than 50 percent of the State median income; provide education and training programs to result in associates degrees for half the adults with high school diplomas; help high school dropouts get their GEDs; increase employment by 6 percent for the unemployed; increase participation in safety-net programs by 85 percent, such as food stamps—so, feed people—and LIHEAP and subsidized housing; and last, ensure child support payments.

Now, some of those are costers, but many are not; many are really making sure that we pay attention to education.

Senator CASEY. So, you had a strategy and you had goals.

Ms. ZIMMERMAN. There is a peer strategy here, a clear report. Sometimes, for example, we know now that preschool is a good thing—quality preschool—and home visitation is a good thing. But, the truth is, when you've had a child who's had both home visitation and preschool, that child does much better. So, we need to be asking, not just which policies, but which do we combine.

Senator CASEY. I'm on borrowed time, by the way, so I will be—

Mr. LUND. Senator Casey, I think you hit the bull's-eye when you said "jobs." And, you know, one of the things those of us who have spent a career in social services have realized along the way is, if, at the end of the day, a family is as impoverished as they were at the beginning of the day, then we're not doing enough. And so, our strategy, in addition to providing services, also includes an economic development strategy. We're building YMCAs in poor neighborhoods. And when we do that, we provide employment, we tend to be a community anchor, we provide a lot of services, and we attract additional investment. And we're doing that over and over again in places like the Rockaways and Coney Island, and it's a strategy that seems to work for us.

Senator CASEY. Thank you.

Mr. HOLZER. Senator, I'd like to start by answering your question, by actually focusing on the budget situation, because I think it is widely misunderstood in this city and across the country.

We have serious budget problems in the United States, but we don't have a severe budget crisis in the short run; we have a long-run budget crisis. As every student who's ever taken a macroeconomics class knows, it's not only inevitable that you'll have deficits during a recession, it's a good thing; it helps stimulate the economy. Our problem is the long run projections.

Similarly, nondefense discretionary spending is only one-eighth of total Federal spending in the United States, and it's been declining as a share of GDP for decades. The problem is on the entitlement side, especially the costs of the retirement programs, and on defense and homeland security spending.

I think we should, first, find where the real problem is, and start to make progress addressing those long-term budget—and not squeeze nondefense discretionary spending, especially those parts that are important investments.

Now, in terms of what I would invest in, direct job creation, both in the private and the public sector; for children: education, healthcare, and nutrition; and for teenagers and youth: higher education, employment, and training. I think those are very, very high priorities. We shouldn't cut corners on those programs. Again, wherever there's evidence of clear cost-effectiveness, we should make those investments, and make the appropriate budgetary savings, where they belong, where the problems really exist.

Senator CASEY. Thank you.

Senator DODD. Thank you very much, to my colleagues. Those were very, very good questions.

I want to go back to Mrs. Powell, in your testimony, you talked about a national council on children and youth. I think you're hearing how benefited we have been in Connecticut because, a number of years ago, we established a permanent Commission on the Sta-

tus of Children. And so, rather than—20 years ago was the last time we really looked, nationally, at the condition of children. It was a commission formed in 1987, began to do its work in 1989, made a report 1991. And as a result of that, there were quite a few initiatives that actually were adopted at the national level—tax credits for children—so there were a whole lot of things that came out of that commission, which I think helped and benefited. Whether it did enough or not is obviously a legitimate question. But, nonetheless, they produced some results. But, it was a temporary commission, and we've had these commissions.

And the fact is—I even hesitated to make this suggestion, because too often I can almost hear the collective yawn of the country, “My lord, another commission. Just what we need in the country, another commission to form. We have commissions on everything. Rather than address a problem, we form a commission.”

But, I think the idea of doing exactly what we did in Connecticut—and I think your response to Senator Casey's question about, “How did Connecticut begin to address this?” is a good example of how this can work, where, instead of just sort of collecting data and information that sits on a shelf somewhere, what we did in the State is actually, then, in a vibrant and robust way, invite very disparate people, ideologically across the spectrum, to begin to look at these issues, to sort of strip out the ideology from the debate.

This really ought not to be an ideological debate. It's a ludicrous commentary on our times that we're unable to come to some decent conclusions about what needs to be done to get this right. We're so blessed with intelligent, thoughtful people in this country, on an awful lot of issues, that this is one that really deserves that kind of consistent attention.

And so, I wonder if you might just comment, beginning with you, Dr. Holzer, on this idea of having—I think we've got to start someplace. And not that it's going to necessarily provide the answers, but if you start asking the right questions, and, in an informative way, begin to think about these matters on a regular basis, a seamless way, year in and year out, it seems to me you raise the possibility of getting better results.

What is your attitude about a national council, as Mrs. Powell has suggested—or commission, whatever you want to call it?

Mr. HOLZER. Senator, I would strongly support the creation of such a commission. I think, first of all, gathering ongoing research, not only on the effects of child poverty on children, but also on what works and what doesn't, on cost-effectiveness, I think, remains an ongoing challenge. And I think a commission like that could collect the information and disseminate it to the public in a way that could really matter.

I'll cite one precedent for that, actually, in the last few years. The Center for American Progress had a Commission on Reducing Poverty that issued what I thought was an outstanding report, in the year 2007, which then led them to create a campaign called Half in Ten, reducing the rate of child poverty in half over the next 10 years. Of course, unfortunately, because of the economy, it's going to go the other way. But, I think that's an example of how a good report and research can be used effectively to create a policy

agenda that makes a lot of sense. And I would certainly support other efforts in an ongoing commission to make those efforts.

Senator DODD. Mr. Lund, any quick comments on that?

Mr. LUND. Well, Senator, you answered the question with your question. And that is, if we have so many commissions—and I'll suggest everything from artichokes to xylophones—how could we not have a commission that focuses exclusively on children?

Senator DODD. Well, let me ask—I'm going to go back, because I think there's a tendency to think that things have just gotten in a clear trajectory, in terms of child poverty. But, Dr. Holzer, you've done some research, and—I don't know if you know the answer to this, or not—but, when was the lowest level of child poverty? And why did that occur? At least in recent times.

Mr. HOLZER. Senator, I don't have the exact numbers here, but in recent decades, the lowest rates were likely at the end of the last decade, in the period of 1999 to 2000, because child poverty tends to track adult poverty, and adult poverty tracks the strength of the economy. And so, overall poverty—given all the limitations of how we measure poverty, which itself is controversial—but, overall poverty fell to the rate of about 10 or 11 percent at the end of that decade, because of the booming economy, and also because efforts were made for the economic growth and productivity to be widely shared at all parts of the spectrum. I think, actually, welfare reform played some positive role in getting more parents work, but it was welfare reform, accompanied by a range of supports for low-income workers, like extensions of childcare, your income tax credit, etc.

Now, even in the best of times, child poverty remained too high. And in those years, I believe child poverty was still 15, 16 percent. Nevertheless, the economy is a very important determinant of those trends over time, as well as policy changes.

Senator DODD. Well, the poverty was around 15 percent in the late 1960s and early 1970s, rose in the 1980s, to around 20, and then declined again in the 1990s. But, it's been interesting, how it's moved. And again, you can begin to track where—again, going back to the early days—in fact, Head Start, with Ed Zigler, and so forth, when that—1960s and so forth, the efforts that were made—begin to involve people in some of these areas. So, it's actually had—there's a direct correlation, it seems to me, at various times; not that it's a perfect correlation. But, where the Congresses and administrations and the country as a whole has focused some of its time and attention and resource allocation on children and their families, we've actually made impacts on this thing. I think there's an assumption that, despite the investments at various times, everything just increased in a straight line. And, in fact, it's quite the opposite.

There's a direct correlation. When we made investments, we actually had an impact on all of this. When we failed to do it, it moves again.

There's a history, here, that we can look at, that begins to demonstrate that well-thought-out ideas involving both public/private nonprofit sectors can make a difference. And sort of getting back to that notion again, tapping into all of this talent and ability that is out there, we can make that kind of a difference.

I'm very interested in that.

Mrs. Powell, the statistic that jumped out at me in your prepared remarks, and I just haven't been able to get it out of my mind, since yesterday, reading your comments—10 percent of minority students who enroll in college—only 10 percent minority students who enroll in college will graduate. Ten percent. Only 10 percent who enroll in college will graduate. Just fill me in. Why is this occurring? There are some obvious answers.

Mrs. POWELL. There are a number of answers. Recession plays into it a great deal. Needs to drop out of school and go to work and have an income. The cost of higher education often weighs on young people. They simply cannot pay for the education that is offered to them, and have to drop out.

Last month, I spoke at Kentucky State University's commencement. That institution has a program to bring people back who have not completed their college education, allowing them to enter, at whatever state they are in their careers, and earn that college degree that they need. But, there are very, very many—most of them, financial—reasons for people not completing college.

Another problem exists. We spend a lot of time on underprivileged children and children in inner cities, pushing them to college, preparing to get them there, and then, once you get them there, you leave them.

Senator DODD. Yes, right.

Mrs. POWELL. For many of them, this is a culture shock, and they're not able to function in that environment without support.

The Harlem Children's Zone, in their support of young people in their amazing graduation rates that they have in the area that they cover, all of those children that go to school, go to college, have a mentor that stays with them through their college career. And this is often what is necessary for underprivileged children to function in a higher academic system.

Senator DODD. Yes. Let me ask Elaine Zimmerman—and, again, ask those who want to jump in, here. The YMCA obviously does this, so, in a sense, you've already commented on your answer to this question. But, I wonder how we can, at every stage or level of our government involvement, encourage more parental and community involvement with young people.

This is what, again—you don't want to oversimplify this, but at the root of it—because, as Ms. Powell, said—long before a child enters that preschool or kindergarten, it all begins.

And parents want to be good parents. I mean, they begin with the notion—it's just unnatural for a parent not to care about their children. So, begin with that notion. You're not beginning with people who don't care about their offspring. They do. Deeply.

The question is, How do we nurture that at a governmental or community-based level—to nurture that natural instinct of a parent to want to see their children have a better life than they do, at least that they'll be protected and secure? We just don't seem to have done a very good job of that. And how can we do a better job of that?

Mrs. POWELL. In communities, providing programs and facilities for new parents. Again, I referenced the Harlem Children's Zone that runs a parenting class, and volunteers go out and seek people

on the street, "If you're pregnant or pushing a stroller, come to the Baby College."

Senator DODD. Yes.

Mrs. POWELL. There, they have a training program on how to be a good parent. I don't know how we institutionalize this, but as we, at America's Promise, work with communities on their high school graduation rates, that is part of it, of helping parents understand what it is they need to provide to their children, and working with programs within communities so that they can have this ability.

Senator DODD. Mr. Lund, let me ask you—because the YMCA has had a great tradition for years. I've often thought, do you—talking about mentoring in schools, for instance, early stages—that an awful lot of parents had bad experiences themselves in school—dropped out, whatever else—so that that environment of a school setting can be an intimidating venue, as parents, themselves. And yet, to the extent we all know that, with Head Start, 80 percent—in fact, it's under law—requires that there be parental involvement with Head Start children. We get about 80 percent participation. By the first grade, on average in this country, there's less than 20 percent participation by parents in the education of their children. Just drops off like a cliff.

Instead of mandating these things, which I think is a bad idea—to the extent we could get other parents or other people, volunteers, such as you see—those home visits can make a huge difference. Instead of inviting, necessarily, the parent to come to the school in that—early stages, but actually getting parents to visit other parents in their home settings, so you begin to tear down the barriers of that venue being an intimidating place—I wonder if you've ever tried anything like that, and what success you may have had with it.

Mr. LUND. We've had a lot of success with it. And I think, as Mrs. Powell said, the Harlem Children's Zone, Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCAs, we demystify the institution. We're a safe place, not just for kids, we're a safe place for their parents, as well.

In New York City, teenage pregnancy is an epidemic. And the good programs are programs that require young parents to participate in parent education programs. It's not that they don't want to do a good job for their kids; they just don't know how.

Senator DODD. Yes.

Mr. LUND. And so, I think there's a real role for private-sector organizations to play in this regard, because we really are a destination for people that live in our neighborhoods, and we're seen as a lot safer than the schools.

Senator DODD. Elaine, you wanted to make a comment?

Ms. ZIMMERMAN. Yes. There is an important sentence, that is a familiar sentence around the country, which is, "But, I'm just a parent." Very frequently heard. What we've done in this country is, we say that parents are children's most important teacher, but we've marginalized parents since about revenue-sharing time. And we service parents, but we don't treat them as partners.

As soon as you shift and begin to treat parents as partners, they come back. And in our State, as you know, we began an effort to teach parents how change happens for children, and to invite them to the policy table, to invite them to participate. The Parent Lead-

ership Training Institute in our State, now fully diverse, cross-class, has over 2,000 graduates, with parents now on school boards and city councils, bringing other parents to the table, bringing parents to libraries. We've shifted the attitude toward parents, and parents have come forward, the poorest of parents.

What I've learned is that parent engagement is actually a civic issue, and we have overserved and distanced parents so they do not believe that they have a right. "Just a parent" is a sentence that says that they've become a marginalized constituency. That's our fault.

Mrs. POWELL. One of the problems that exists—in Head Start, parents are encouraged to be a part of that, but once the child goes into first and second grade, the parents are pushed aside.

Now, part of the problem is, a classroom teacher doesn't have time to be engaging a parent as well as a child. But, somehow we have to keep those parents engaged throughout the child's school career, and by making them a part of it.

That's what PTAs are supposed to do, but we all know that they're not always as well attended as they should be. You're usually talking to the choir when you're talking to parents in the PTA.

But, within social organizations, like the YMCA and other neighborhood things, like THEARC, in southeast Washington, reaching out to parents and making them a part of the programs that are going on will go a long way to keeping parental involvement.

Senator DODD. Yes.

Mrs. POWELL. They do not hand over their responsibility to someone else.

Senator DODD. I'm from a large family, by today's standards; not so large when I was growing up—one of six. And two of my siblings are teachers—one at the university level, at Georgetown, in fact; and a sister who taught for 41 years in the public school system, started out in the American Montessori system—Nancy Rambush, in the late 1950s. And when she finally retired, teaching the inner city of Hartford, CT, it was just overwhelming.

What we ask teachers to do, having now watched—well, having—of course, I've been teased in—someone once said, "Well, you had children rather late." I said, "I decided to have my own grandchildren."

[Laughter.]

With a 5-year-old and an 8-year-old.

[Laughter.]

But, going and watching how hard teachers work. They work very, very hard. It is incredible, the amount of energy you need in a room full of 5- or 8-year-olds, for 6 or 7 hours in a day—it just takes a lot. But, they've been asked to assume so many additional responsibilities, and it's overwhelming to them. And so, there's an exhaustion that's taken over among the teacher corps, particularly in areas where they're asking to take on a lot of—well, you don't get a lot of parental involvement. There are not a lot of people showing up. There's not a lot of field trips where people have the time or the ability to go along, or even how to do it. We've got to figure out a way to do this, other than overloading—

Mrs. POWELL. Add to that the problem that teachers don't get paid enough for what they do.

Senator DODD. Yes, exactly.

Mrs. POWELL. A teacher in our society is probably the most important person that assures the success of this country. If we don't have teachers, we don't have anybody who knows how to do anything.

Senator DODD. And the burnout is just overwhelming.

Mrs. POWELL. The burnout is overwhelming.

Senator DODD. Overwhelming. So, I always worry—sometimes, when this thing—we've kind of shifted again, but somehow we've got to figure out a way to balance this. And I think that—that's a great line, Elaine; "Just a parent," I think says an awful lot.

Mr. HOLZER. Senator, can I make a comment, also, on the—

Senator DODD. Sure. Yes, please.

Mr. HOLZER [continuing]. Parent issue? I agree with all the comments my colleagues have made here, but we're missing an important dimension, I think, about these parents. Their lives—low-income parents, working in the low-wage labor market, and especially if they're single parents—are very, very stressful.

Senator DODD. You bet.

Mr. HOLZER. And often very unstable, and a whole range of things that go on in jobs. Parents often can't go to meetings at their schools because of the demands of the workforce, just the time it takes to commute back and forth, and work. And, of course, the jobs themselves are very unstable.

I think, in addition to all these important suggestions, there's a range of services—we need to make parents' lives more stable and less stressful. It starts with things like paid parental leave and sick leave, which every industrial country in the world manages to provide, except for ours. It starts with more effective childcare and more steady childcare for working parents, transportation assistance.

I think all those things would make the lives of parents less stressful, so then these other services that my colleagues have talked about might then be more effective in that kind of an environment.

Senator DODD. Now, you're preaching to the choir. I mean, I've been trying to—

[Laughter.]

I've been—that paid leave bill—took me 7 years to just get the one unpaid-leave bill through, back some 20 years ago. I couldn't agree with you more. Obviously, those—recognizing the very points you've made—

In fact, I was looking at some numbers—and they may have come from you, Dr. Holzer—and I'm trying to find them—here it is; I think it should be. Census Bureau 2008 data show that a typical American household made less money that year than they did a decade ago. Typical family. And as incomes fell for the typical family, costs for the basics of a middle-class life—homeownership, healthcare, childcare—rose so much that two-breadwinner families had less discretionary income than a single-breadwinner family had, a decade previously. That's a pretty stunning statistic.

Things were just flat. While we're watching salaries at some levels in our society skyrocket here, in fact, the average middle-income family was basically falling further and further behind.



Your point, I guess, one I wanted to make when you said it, wasn't just holding down the one job; it's holding down the second or the third job—or four jobs, in some cases—with a two-parent household. And then tell me how you're going to find the time, in that case, to be that mentor, to go on that field trip, to do all these other things that we all recognize would be valuable.

The direct correlation between the ability—I've tried to have a leave policy that would just provide 24 hours a year for a parent to be able to make the case and say, "I need to be at that PTA meeting. I need to be at that sporting event. I need to go have that session for an hour with my child's teacher to understand how they're doing," that that would qualify as leave. Rather than just the sick child and the sick parent, but, here, understanding how valuable a limited amount of time can be to be at those kind of events or to participate on a regular basis, can make a difference.

I obviously haven't gotten very far with the idea, but that's the point of trying to—

Mrs. POWELL. Well, we also say, with that first promise of ours, "a caring adult in every child's life," it doesn't necessarily have to be limited to the parent.

Senator DODD. That's true.

Mrs. POWELL. There are opportunities for others to be mentors in a young person's life, and there are many, many success stories of young people who have succeeded because of that mentor who is outside of the family, but someone who gives their time and talent and interest to the well-being of a young person.

Senator DODD. Yes.

Elaine, can you just—let me jump back to the commission notion with you for a minute. And again, you've had a wonderful experience in Connecticut. I love the fact that it's gone from getting data, and then doing something about it. Give us some advice and counsel—if you take Mrs. Powell's concept, and the one I've mentioned here—what would you have us do to make a commission at the national level effective, so it isn't just a place where we're going to gather once a year to listen to data collected by a bunch of people—how do you make those translations?

Ms. ZIMMERMAN. Yes. I think that's such a key question, because we do find entities that end up counting data, sort of like collecting tuna-fish cans in a cabinet. It seems to me that we would need to collect what works, to only look at outcomes, so that we're not just looking at numbers, but what's proven. We also need, in this country, to do what you did in healthcare, we need to look at prevention. If we had a commission, which would be so wonderful, nationally, but one of its mandates was not just to gather data and research, but to look at how to prevent problems, essentially creating a stock portfolio for children on what works, what's proven, where do we have a return on investment because the outcomes work, and then how do we look at economic modeling with that, so what builds upon one another so it will have the grandest impact for the best outcomes for children in this country?

I think if we built that in, at the onset, so it was not just data, but prevention, outcome, and what should best be combined to combust the best results?

Senator DODD. I'm going to ask you—in fact, I'd like to ask you, Mrs. Powell, and you, Elaine, and any others who want to participate—help us, maybe, craft this over the coming few weeks and months and see if we can't put together, not just the idea of writing a bill that says “form a commission”——

Mrs. POWELL. No, a national council on children would provide a coordinated national action plan.

Senator DODD. Yes.

Mrs. POWELL. It would raise the visibility of the needs of children in Federal policy and solidify our commitment, as a Nation, to the needs of young people. It would go a long way to have a council, where the needs of children are brought there, and are constantly assessed, looked at, and seeing what is the next step forward. But, having a constant coordinated national policy effort.

Senator DODD. Well, I'm going to invite you to help us write this——

Mrs. POWELL. Yes.

Senator DODD [continuing]. In the coming days.

Mrs. POWELL. And this council, once a year, could say what the goals are for that year, and how well they have met the goals of the past year.

Senator DODD. The idea is to establish sort of a report card.

Mrs. POWELL. A report card.

Senator DODD. Right.

Mrs. POWELL. But, one that takes stock of what has actually happened, and not sit there and formulate policy about what we ought to do.

Senator DODD. Yes.

Mrs. POWELL. We've done that for a long time.

Senator DODD. Long time. Go back—in fact, Senator Harkin pointed out, a week or so ago, there was a wonderful report done by Corporate America on what needed to be done in education, over 20 years ago. It's got some wonderful what you ought to do, but——

Mrs. POWELL. We've got lots of what we ought to do.

Senator DODD [continuing]. Ought to do, yes, not how to do it.

I was very curious, Dr. Holzer, you made a very good point, I thought, earlier, and I've thought a lot about this, as well, and—on food and nutrition. And again, the obesity issue, we're all familiar with.

I tip my hat to the First Lady of our country, Michelle Obama, for making this a priority issue. In fact, she's worked awfully hard at it. We've done a lot of work up here over the years in trying to address this question. It's been difficult.

Again, Senator Harkin, who chairs the committee now, has talked about just how we can get vending machines and soft-drink companies and so forth out of school buildings and the like.

But, you made a very good—I think you made this point; and maybe it was Mr. Lund—and that is, of course, the absence—these deserts on nutrition. And we see this all the time, where the only food stores are these small stores that have more highly concentrated fat and poor quality food in them. But, that's the only choice. You live in the only place you can go.

Mrs. POWELL. That's the only place they have to go.

Senator DODD. And how do we turn this around? How do we actually make a difference? I think, Mr. Lund, you mentioned that you actually had some success in this. I want to know what you did.

Mr. LUND. We did. We are part of the Food and Fitness Consortium in East Harlem, and we worked with local government to do our very best to attract supermarkets to make an investment. And what attracts the supermarkets is knowing that they're not going to be Fort Apache, they're not going to be the only economic investment that's being made in that community, and making sure that we attract additional investments so that there's a critical mass of economic success—has been a model that's worked for us.

Mrs. POWELL. In New York City, one of our poster children, for example—one of our things is “schools as hubs,” delivering services in a community, the place where they know the children's name, and they can reach out to the parents.

At P.S. 50, in New York City, it's a public school that sits in the middle of a housing project. In that school, there is a program to bring parents—mothers, particularly—into the school for nutrition training, cooking classes on how to prepare healthy food, and then they work to help these mothers bring in fresh produce and have their own business, selling to the people in the housing projects.

Ms. ZIMMERMAN. Great.

Mrs. POWELL. Because there are no supermarkets anywhere near there.

Senator DODD. No, I know.

Mrs. POWELL. The mothers soon saw the importance of good health and nutrition when one of their members in the class died because of her obesity and high blood pressure, etc.

Senator DODD. Yes.

Mrs. POWELL. In this school that serves as a hub, there is a free health clinic for children, run by the Children's Aid Society. There is an autistic charter school, where the other children mentor the autistic children. And City Year is in there, working with the children in that school to do projects in the community. This is one way to deliver those services to help educate a contained community about what is necessary for good health.

Senator DODD. Yes. Maybe we ought to bring together—that would be interesting—I know there are good people in some of these chains that—

Mrs. POWELL. There are many good things.

Senator DODD [continuing]. The people with Whole Foods have gotten to know, and—obviously high-end, but high-quality food, and—you know, the markets now—we're seeing more—we know that produce and stuff that's consumed within 15 miles of where it's grown is healthier in many ways. And there's this sort of a trend to move in this direction. But, how we can begin to see to it that these providers of nutrition, and those who seem to understand the value of it, and there's an appetite for it—

Mr. LUND. There have to be economic incentives for the providers.

Senator DODD. Yes. No question about it.

Mr. LUND. And that's really a key.

Senator DODD. But, we ought to figure out how to do that, because if you don't, all you're left with is what you have today. And you've got to break that cycle, it seems to me. It's another aspect of all of this.

Well, we're just touching on these things, and there are so many things to talk about. I could stay all day with you, discussing these issues.

I like the idea of us getting something where there's going to be a permanent place to start doing this, other than sort of this lurching—all of a sudden we pick up the paper, I guess, like *USA Today*, who made the point about one in five living in poverty, and then there's a raft of congressional hearings for a few weeks, then everyone, you know, comes around and bellows at one another, and then the next issue hits the front page, and we move on. We need to have some consistent, year-in/year-out efforts in this regard, so we're not waiting for the next headline to provoke a congressional hearing on it.

You've set the table for us here today, and that's been very, very helpful. Obviously there are a lot of people who could be sitting at that table to offer advice and counsel on how to go from here to there. My hope is we can get this idea going on a way—at least we've got a place now to really think about results-oriented—not just what-you-ought-to-be-doing recommendations, but actually how to do things. And then, from that hopefully we can breed some real, solid thinking.

And seeing us move, Dr. Holzer, those numbers again, getting those numbers—pushing those numbers back down would be a great contribution.

I can't thank you enough for being here this morning.

I'll leave the record open for colleagues who may have some additional questions for you, and ask you to participate.

And we'll stay in touch with you now as we go to the next stage of hearings, we're going to focus on for some very specific pieces of this, and maybe you'd have some recommendations of some people that we might listen to.

In fact, Mrs. Powell, maybe just some of the suggestions you've made, some of the people who are at P.S. 50 might be some good witnesses for us to bring to the table of how something worked in a community like that.

Mrs. POWELL. Yes, you need people who have programs that work—

Senator DODD. Work. And so, we'll come back—

Mrs. POWELL [continuing]. So we can share how to do that.

Senator DODD. Thank you.

Thank you all very much for being with us this morning.

The committee will stand adjourned.

[Additional material follows.]

## ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

## RESPONSE TO QUESTION OF SENATOR SHERROD BROWN BY ALMA J. POWELL

*Question 1.* The kind of collaboration that you have built is exactly what we would like to replicate in Ohio and in other States. That is why I am preparing to introduce legislation—called the DIPLOMA Act—that will help communities coordinate, integrate, and provide services to strengthen student achievement, ranging from early education to tutoring and extended learning time to health care and social supports. Schools cannot do it alone but they can be a central place for connecting children and families to the support they need to be successful. What are the essential elements to building and sustaining these partnerships?

Answer 1. The essential elements to making these partnerships work is to ensure that all sectors of a community are represented (corporate, nonprofit, civic and policy, faith and young people etc.) Each participant should understand their stake in the work, with clear goals and benchmarks to meet those goals set.

At America's Promise Alliance (the Alliance) we have always believed that the success and well-being of children is the responsibility of all of us, which is why the structure of these partnerships must be all-inclusive. Moral significance aside, our young people are the future leaders of this Nation. They will be the ones to lead, sustain and grow our communities and if we don't invest in their success then we do so at the peril of the entire Nation. Nowhere is this more evident than in the high school dropout crisis we currently have in this country where 1.3 million teenagers drop out each year. The academic success of a child is determined just as much by what happens outside the classroom as inside. It's about the whole child, and therefore requires a whole community. We all have a stake in their success.

If you're a taxpayer or concerned about our economy, you certainly have a stake. That's because each year of dropouts will ultimately cost our economy around \$320 billion in lost wages, productivity and tax contributions. Instead of becoming productive citizens, 4 of every 10 dropouts will depend on public assistance. And dropouts are eight times more likely to be incarcerated.

If you own a business, you also have a stake. That's because dropouts have just one-third the consumer buying power of a college graduate.

The Alliance has had some great success in leading, supporting and uplifting this type of collaboration across the country. We see it in communities—large and small, several of them in Ohio—that we've recognized as one of the *100 Best* in the Nation for children. And we've also seen it recently in Detroit. Viewed as one of the most demonstrative examples of the dropout crisis, Detroit found itself with the lowest on-time graduation rate of the Nation's largest cities just 5 short years ago. But Detroit was the first city to host one of our Dropout Prevention Summits in April 2008. At this summit, the idea to form a new partnership to help Detroit's most troubled schools was born. That partnership, called the Greater Detroit Education Venture Fund is now working to improve graduation rates at the 30 high schools in southeastern Michigan currently graduating less than 60 percent of their students.

The strength of this partnership lies not only in the passion of the people involved to really change course for the children in this city, but also in the broad support and sector diversity that makes up this partnership. Led by the United Way for southeastern Michigan in collaboration with AT&T, Ford Motor Company Fund, the Skillman Foundation, the Fund has attracted support from the corporate, philanthropic, government, community-based and education sectors, as well as parents and young people themselves.

In the 2 years since its inception, the Fund has launched five "turnaround schools" in Detroit and after just 1 year in the turnaround model, projected graduation rates for the class of 2013 at these schools now range from 71 percent to 95 percent. One 9th grader started high school with a 1.8 GPA and now has a 3.0.

This partnership has grown and thrived in a city hit hard by an economic downturn which demonstrates how its structure is one made for success.

## RESPONSE TO QUESTION OF SENATOR SHERROD BROWN BY JACK LUND

*Question 1.* School is letting out for the summer, and many children will lose access to the academic, social and nutritional supports they have during the school year. Just as many kids in high poverty environments backslide academically during the summer, they also backslide nutritionally. I worry that the participation in the summer meals program is much lower than the school year program. Do the YMCAs participate in the summer feeding program? How could we help you enroll more children?

Answer 1. At the YMCA of Greater New York, the majority of our day camps (38 of 47) use the USDA Summer Feeding Program (SFSP) for lunch for our campers. There are many camps that use the program for breakfast as well. I would say an estimate of over 7,000 campers have lunch through the school program. The camps involved also have the opportunity to get lunches-to-go for campers when they are going on a trip.

We bring most of the campers to a school feeding site and also have what they call “satellite meals.” Satellite meals are when the school provides meals that the camp picks up and feeds the campers at camp instead of at a school.

Some challenges have been that where the feeding site or satellite site is too far from the camp, the distance has made it too difficult to either go to or pick up the food. If it were possible to have feeding done at the schools we occupy for camp that would be ideal.

During the school year we are provided snacks at the majority of our afterschool programs. Some of the programs (those with 100 or more children) may be given dinner (a hot meal) instead of a snack. It depends on the school and services available.

Although the program has gotten better with healthier choices it can be improved. It would be great for all children to receive snacks like fresh fruit.

Nationally, I know that YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) has recently increased the promotion of the Summer Food Service Program in YMCA camps by working with the USDA and a national nonprofit (the Food Research Action Council). Just this year, Y-USA has hosted national webinars for local Ys, utilized the newsletter that is sent to all Ys, and sent informational postcards to 800 camp and child care programs at Ys. In addition, Y-USA Government Relations and Policy Staff here in DC have also been working with your Senate colleagues on the HELP Committee (particularly Senator Franken) on introducing legislation to promote nutritious offerings in the “out-of-school settings” both after school and in the summer.

If you would like any more information on the New York City YMCA offerings, that of Ys nationwide, or the policy work of YMCA of the USA, please contact Kevin Shermach on my staff in New York City ([kshermach@ymcanyc.org](mailto:kshermach@ymcanyc.org)) or Richard Bland ([Richard.bland@ymca.net](mailto:Richard.bland@ymca.net)) of the YMCA of the USA staff in DC.

RESPONSE TO QUESTION OF SENATOR SHERROD BROWN BY HARRY J. HOLZER, PH.D.

*Question 1.* How long-term unemployment affects next generation of workers and what policies might help?

Answer 1. We have little direct evidence on how long-term unemployment among parents affects the job prospects of children and youth in the future. However, we have some reasons to believe that there will be some negative and long-lasting impacts on some of these youth.

For one thing, long-term unemployment is correlated with parental poverty and with involuntary/permanent job loss, and there is direct evidence that these factors tend to hurt children’s educational attainment and earnings over the long run. These factors—often associated with parental loss of resources and stress—are quite negative for children. If the unemployment is accompanied by housing changes and especially homelessness, the effects can be particularly negative for kids.

Furthermore, high unemployment among adults comes hand in hand with high youth unemployment rates, which will recover very slowly in the coming years. The lengthy periods of joblessness for youth are known to generate long-lasting “scars” on their earnings potential, as Lisa Kahn (Yale) and Till von Wachter (Columbia) have shown.

In terms of policy responses, I wouldn’t necessarily target the children of the long-term unemployed *per se*, as there are many other categories of young people who need assistance. Rather, the appropriate assistance should be made more available to anyone who needs it, including these young people.

I would expand any kind of short-term work experience efforts that are also linked to skill-building and credentialing for youth. These efforts include jobs programs—not just summer employment efforts (which are too late for this year) but year-round programs for youth, as long as they are enrolled in school or a legitimate training program. Funding apprenticeships and customized on-the-job training for youth and young adults makes sense, especially if we can obtain some employer buy-in. High-quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) for high school and community college students, as accomplished by Career Academies and Tech Prep, fit the bill as well. “Sectoral” training (as encouraged by the SECTORS Act) and career pathways also make much sense, as the training is directly relevant to and often interacts with real jobs and work experience.

Alternatively, we can encourage more of these young people to go to (community) college and get credentials rewarded by the labor market they otherwise wouldn't get. The higher credentials would then offset their loss of work experience. But it would be crucial that they obtain serious credentials in areas where we expect employment growth to resume in the not-too-distant future.

Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

