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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

April 4, 2014

Jon Baron  
President  
Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy  
1725 I Street, NW, Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. Baron:

Thank you for testifying at our April 2, 2014 Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources hearing and for sharing your valuable expertise related to using evidence to evaluate programs. Because of time limitations, there were a few points you made during the hearing that we were unable to fully explore. I would like to ask you to provide the Subcommittee with additional information on these issues, and I have included two questions below that I hope you will answer in writing by April 18, 2014. As I mentioned at the end of the hearing, we will include your answers in the official hearing record.

Thank you again for your participation in our hearing, and I look forward to receiving your responses.

Sincerely,



Dave Reichert  
Chairman

## **Questions for the Record**

### **Hearing on the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program**

#### **1. Ensuring More Programs Operate Like the MIECHV Program**

Your organization is focused on increasing the effectiveness of government. Given the demands on the federal budget, it's absolutely critical that we figure out what really works and direct our spending towards those programs. Especially because a large part of this Subcommittee's work focuses on helping children and families in need, we cannot afford to waste money on things that aren't working.

From what we've heard about the MIECHV program today, it is set up in a way that values evidence over anecdote. I understand there is some disagreement on exactly which programs should be considered "evidence-based," and that's an important question. But most of all, I am grateful that—at least for this program—we're actually discussing outcomes. We're discussing what programs actually do, based on good evidence, to get us to those outcomes we're seeking.

This evidence-based and outcome-focused approach is sorely lacking in almost every other social program run by the federal government. We spend money on programs that have no outcome goals. We spend money on programs that have never been evaluated. Sometimes, we even spend money on things that have made participants worse off than if they hadn't participated. We can't afford to do this any longer.

Given your experience, how can we apply this evidence-based, outcome-focused approach to other major entitlement programs within the Committee's Human Resources jurisdiction where it is currently absent? What steps should we take to get other programs operating in the same way the MIECHV program does?

#### **2. Ideas to Improve the MIECHV Program**

In your written and oral testimony, you noted that modest revisions could be made to the MIECHV program to ensure the most effective home visiting programs receive more funding and that "evidence-based" programs actually have meaningful results that make a real difference in the lives of children and families receiving these services. In your written testimony, you mention the standard of evidence required under the Department of Education's Investing in Innovation program as an example.

How would you suggest the evidence standard be changed in the current MIECHV statute to ensure models that have been proven to result in significant, meaningful outcomes are the ones that receive the most funding? What other changes might you recommend to ensure these MIECHV funds are spent in ways most likely to result in positive outcomes for those participating in home visiting programs funded with this money?