

WINSTON FELLOWSHIP REPORT: WEEK 10 & 11**August 28**Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, Minority staff

I met with minority staff members and fellows on the Ways and Means Committee's Health Subcommittee to discuss specific placement options. The office seems like it would be a great fit for me both in terms of the content of the work and the interpersonal relationships. The current fellows working there discussed their experiences to date and the reasons they chose the committee for their stints on the Hill, and I inquired more about the culture of the office and expectations regarding "work-life balance." I told them I would be in touch later this week as I continue to think through my options – but I am definitely excited about this possibility.

Joy Grossman, Congressional Research Service

Dr. Grossman described her initial foray into investment banking in New York following completion of her doctorate in economics at Berkeley. Like many others we have met this summer, Dr. Grossman happened to fall into a health care-focused group, which launched her career in health policy. Before coming to CRS three years ago, she worked for the Center for Studying Health System Change. Now, as a section research manager in the Health Insurance and Financing group, she oversees the work of analysts to support Hill staff in the areas of Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, and health insurance marketplaces, among others. As Michael and I shift into the placement stage of our fellowships, we asked Dr. Grossman about the interactions between CRS and Hill staff and the process for submitting requests and attending some of CRS's courses that others have told us are incredibly valuable when just starting out on the Hill. She said the goal of CRS is to be objective, non-partisan, authoritative, and timely – and that mission allows CRS analysts the ability to provide support to staff members on both sides of the aisle on a range of topics.

August 29Rachel Nuzum, Commonwealth Fund and Winston Board Member

We recapped the last few months of interviews with Ms. Nuzum and discussed some of our "lessons learned" from the experiences, which she said would be helpful to relay to the rest of the board. Michael and I also discussed our current thoughts on our placements and asked her for her words of wisdom as we make our final decisions and begin the next chapter of our fellowships. Ms. Nuzum emphasized the importance of cultivating trust with our mentors off the bat so that they will advocate on our behalves throughout our respective tenures on the Hill over the next nine months. Ms. Nuzum also told us about a few events coming up in the next six months that we will want to attend.

Tammy Kramer, Mimi Spalding, Lisa Humes-Schulz, Planned Parenthood

We met with representatives from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America/Planned Parenthood Action Fund to learn about the work they do on behalf of their 56 regional affiliates.

We discussed some of the challenges of working in an environment that does not recognize Planned Parenthood as a primary care provider and the work the organization is currently doing to push its regional affiliates to develop community partnerships and offer more services that extend beyond reproductive health. Since passage of the ACA, Planned Parenthood has experienced a decrease in the number of patients accessing its services. Ms. Kramer, Ms. Spalding, and Ms. Hunes-Schulz attributed this trend to a fundamental misunderstanding about Planned Parenthood, which many do not think takes insurance. As a result of the uptake in insurance under the ACA, patients have opted to see primary care providers elsewhere, rather than continuing with their gynecologists through Planned Parenthood. Beyond the obvious concern about ensuring federal funding for the organization, it needs to find ways to connect with some of the delivery system reform programs, which often do not touch maternal and child health care delivery.

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Nancy DeLew, ASPE

We had another opportunity to sit down with Ms. DeLew – this time, to hear more about the day-to-day work she oversees in her ASPE office at HHS. Among other things, we discussed the annual cycle for developing the office’s budget, legislative program work (which varies based on the administration), and work on “other duties as assigned.” I was particularly interested in hearing about development of ASPE’s research agenda, so Ms. DeLew walked us through the process of prioritizing work, which often comes from collaborating with the HHS agencies.

Wendell Primus, Office of the House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi

I met with Dr. Primus again to learn more about the type of work a fellow would experience in his office. We specifically discussed the day-to-day of a placement there, the types of work he anticipates coming to his office this fall, and the expectations of a fellow in his office. He gave me a lot to consider – it sounds like an incredibly exciting place to be – as I think through my final placement decision over the next day or two.

Sean Cavanaugh, Center for Medicare Advocacy

It was a privilege to sit down with Mr. Cavanaugh, who has a wealth of experience working in the federal government – first, as deputy director of CMMI and, second, as director of the Center for Medicare at CMS. Having worked on the CMMI Pioneer ACO evaluation, I found it fascinating to talk to Mr. Cavanaugh about his work developing the model when he started at CMMI in 2011. We discussed some of the challenges associated with approaching risk adjustment, determining beneficiary alignment (i.e., prospective vs. retrospective), and justifying the program internally within CMS, particularly in a climate with such high expectations for the program. We also discussed his time working as director for the Center for Medicare and his responsibility for overseeing the Medicare fee-for-service annual rulemaking process and communicating with the White House and other agencies to ensure any updates to payment methodologies or larger changes were appropriately understood.

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Hannah Katch, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

We rounded out the short week by meeting with Hannah Katch, a senior policy analyst at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Ms. Katch described her time working as an LA in Sen. Franken's office and how that drove her to pursue work at the state level following her four years on the Hill. She said that she wanted to become an "expert" in Medicaid policy, which was hard to do on the Hill when, as an LA, being a "generalist" is often more important. She said that her experience working as assistant deputy director for health care delivery systems at the California Department of Health Care Services has helped her approach policy discussions from a different perspective that accounts more for state budget and implementation challenges. She also explained how the CBPP holds a unique role in DC, serving as a nonpartisan research arm of the Hill, in many instances. Unlike CRS, CBPP also has the ability to offer recommendations, acting as a trusted resource for both Democrats and Republicans.