

Weekly Report: 711 – 7/15

Olivia Pham

Monday July 11, 2016

Kelley Whitener – Center for Children and Families, Georgetown University

We met Kelley near GWU for lunch. Kelley spoke with us at length about her experience as a fellow, and spent some time confirming the differences we had heard about the House and Senate committees. She admitted that she was probably biased, but Kelley highly recommended a placement on the Senate Finance committee.

Danielle Steele – Office of Representative Michael Burgess

Ms. Steele spoke with us mostly about her work in the office and the way Rep. Burgess's office runs. It is unique in that there are 3 dedicated health staffers, which most House members' offices do not have. Ms. Steele also explained to us that Rep. Burgess, as a OBGYN, believes that healthcare should ultimately be centered around patients and providers..

Greg D'Angelo – Senate Budget Committee

Mr. D'Angelo met with us to speak about his experience on the Budget committee – this was an extremely helpful meeting to me since I am trying to better understand how budgetary decisions are made in creating policy. He explained how the Senate budget is created, and how he works to contribute to the budget. Mr. D'Angelo worked on the ACA repeal-and-replace plan for two years, even knowing that it would be immediately vetoed.

Tuesday July 12, 2016

Keith Fontenot – Hooper, Lundy & Bookman

Mr. Fontenot provided us with a wealth of information about OMB, and spoke about his time at OMB in contrast to his time at CBO. As expected, the organizations are two different animals, although Mr. Fontenot pointed out that each taught him valuable skills. From his description, it seems that OMB would be an excellent place for me to go or at least look into. He also provided us with names for people to speak to in IHS and OMB.

Kim Zimmerman – American Health Care Association

Ms. Zimmerman was an excellent resource on long-term care issues and was really able to engage Kripa in this meeting. I learned quite a bit about the issues facing older adults, their care, and the role of nursing homes simply from listening to their discussion.

Fish Brown, Ann Kempfski – Kaiser Permanente

I have always been interested in Kaiser Permanente as an integrated health system, so I was not surprised to learn about their positions on specific policies or their goals as an organization. Hearing about Mr. Brown's and Ms. Kempfski's backgrounds was also very interesting since they are so different from mine. Ms. Kempfski's history in union organizing was especially fascinating.

Robin Strongin – Amplify Public Affairs

We were introduced to Ms. Strongin through Glenna Crooks. Ms. Strongin did not share too many details about her time on the Hill, but she did explain the concept of "disruption" to us and how her organization seeks to innovate in healthcare. She suggested we look for alternative ways to learn about health policy, such as through the Dept. of Labor or the Dept. of Defense. By learning about health policy through alternative pathways, she suggested we would have a unique understanding of the policy and be able to think more creatively about it. To her, these alternative ways of learning/thinking are the source of innovation.

Wednesday July 13, 2016

Tim Engelhardt - Federal Coordinated Health Care Office, CMS

Mr. Engelhardt was our first meeting with CMS, and it was an excellent meeting! Mr. Engelhardt spoke to the challenges his office faces in working with dual eligibles and finding ways to maintain their continuity of care while trying to navigate the challenges of the complicated reimbursement system. I learned that there are many problems with properly incentivizing the health systems that care for dual eligibles, and these improper incentives ultimately lead to higher Medicaid and Medicare expenditures. Mr. Engelhardt is clearly passionate about this especially vulnerable, especially expensive population and it is so wonderful to see that at such a high level of government.

Rachel Nuzum – Commonwealth Fund

Our meeting with Ms. Nuzum was excellent. In addition to speaking about her experience as a fellow, she helped us explore our interests and intends to e-introduce us to several more members of Commonwealth Fund. She also gave us great advice for navigating the hill and strongly recommended a committee placement.

Kathleen Cantwell - Office of Strategic Operations and Regulatory Affairs, CMS

Ms. Cantwell was another excellent meeting at CMS, where I learned so much about work that goes into decision-making and regulatory processes of the agency. This office has so many (seemingly unrelated) roles – one I found particularly interesting was acting as a broker between senior officials and stakeholder groups. The FOIA requests the

department handles seemed completely overwhelming, especially upon learning that the technology of the office is so outdated. This was a brief, but interesting look into the system that keeps the agency running – I would love to have an opportunity to learn more or better understand this office.

Disruptive Women in Healthcare – Happy Hour Event

Robin Strongin, who we had met just the day before, was kind enough to invite us to a Disruptive Women happy hour event. I was grateful for the opportunity to attend – we had excellent networking experiences and had the chance to meet with other young women who are also interested in health policy.

Thursday July 14, 2016

Senate HELP Committee (Minority)

Our meeting with the health team was a little overwhelming since there were so many people in attendance, but I think we got a good look at the wide breadth of work that they do. Each member of the team introduced themselves to us, and explained that as fellows we would have the opportunity to work with several of them due to the intersections of their work. They also mentioned that we could find work on any topic we wished and have the expertise of anyone on the team at our disposal. The team really seems to value bipartisan work, and work closely with the majority on legislation.

Sarah Schmidt – Office of Senator Rob Portman

Our meeting with Ms. Schmidt was one of the best meetings we've had in a member's office so far. She was very gracious in sharing her career experience with us, and spoke with us at length about her office's relationship to others who are also part of the Senate Finance committee. I am very glad we were able to stop at this office before meeting with OMB so we could get a glimpse into the agency's priorities.

Mark Garufi – Chief Public Health Branch, OMB

Mr. Garufi and his team met with us inside the New Executive Office Building, and this was one of the best meetings we have had so far. Mr. Garufi had prepared a schedule for this meeting, and made sure to give us a chance to speak with everyone that he thought shared our interests. We were able to learn about Medicaid, Indian Health Services, the Ryan White program, FQHCs and other organizations in the context of OMB. Their focus on implementation evaluation and budget analysis was really interesting to me, and I think I would really enjoy the opportunity to work here in the future.

Friday July 15, 2016

Tiffany Guarascio – Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health

Our second meeting with Ms. Gaurascio was simply to gain more information for Kripa and myself. Since our initial meeting with E&C was in our first week and our first committee meeting, we felt we had missed some important questions. In this meeting we were able to gain a better understanding of the working relationship among committee staff, the potential portfolio, and the types of opportunities that would be available to us.

Sean Cavanaugh – Deputy Administrator and Director, CMS

Our meeting with Mr. Cavanaugh was brief, but it was a wonderful opportunity to discuss his work at CMS and how much the agency has changed since his arrival. He spoke about working for the agency in a time of transition and stated that there would be plenty of work for a fellow to do, but since his is a political position he would be leaving soon. He also directed us to other people at CMS to speak to about our interests.