Using Evidence in Policy and Program Decisions

Speaker Biographies

Welcome
Margery Austin Turner is senior vice president for program planning and management at the Urban Institute, where she leads efforts to frame and conduct a forward-looking agenda of policy research. A nationally recognized expert on urban policy and neighborhoods, Turner has analyzed issues of residential location, racial and ethnic discrimination and its contribution to neighborhood segregation and inequality, and the role of housing policies in promoting residential mobility and location choice. Among her recent publications is the book Public Housing and the Legacy of Segregation. Before joining Urban, Turner served as deputy assistant secretary for research at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from 1993 through 1996, focusing HUD’s research agenda on the problems of racial discrimination, concentrated poverty, and economic opportunity in America’s metropolitan areas. During her tenure, HUD’s research office launched three major social science demonstration projects to test different strategies for helping families from distressed inner-city neighborhoods gain access to opportunities through employment and education. Turner has a BA in political science from Cornell University and an MA in urban and regional planning from the George Washington University.

Evidence for Policy and Data Decisions
Katharine G. Abraham served as chair of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking and is now the cochair of the Bipartisan Policy Center’s Evidence-Based Policymaking Initiative. She is professor of economics and survey methodology at the University of Maryland and has written extensively on the effects of labor market institutions and policies on firm and worker behavior, labor market adjustment over the business cycle, and the measurement of economic activity. Abraham first joined the University of Maryland faculty in 1987 after holding positions at the Brookings Institution and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Sloan School of Management. From 2011 to 2013, she served as a member of the President’s Council of Economic Advisers, and from 1993 to 2001 she served as commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. She is a fellow of the Society of Labor Economists and of the American Statistical Association and has served as a vice president of the American Economic Association. Abraham received a BS from Iowa State University and a PhD from Harvard University.

Anne DeCesaro is the staff director for the Human Resources Subcommittee of the House Committee on Ways and Means. She has added foster care and adoption, TANF, and home visiting to the issues she covered when she served as professional staff for the subcommittee from 2011 to 2014, including unemployment insurance, child support enforcement, and Supplemental Security Income. In 2015, DeCesaro was the lead staffer on the House Agriculture Committee subcommittee on nutrition, which oversees the nation’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Earlier in her career she spent a number of years at the Office of Management and Budget and the Social Security Administration, working on programs for low-income individuals and families. DeCesaro received her bachelor’s degree from Saint Mary’s College and her master’s degree from Johns Hopkins University.

Nick Hart is the director of the Evidence-Based Policymaking Initiative at the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC). Before joining BPC, he worked in the federal government for nearly a decade, most recently as the policy and research director for the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking. In that capacity, he oversaw the commission’s policy and research support team and led the drafting of The Promise of Evidence-Based Policymaking, the commission’s final report and recommendations presented to Congress and the president in September 2017.
Tammy Tippie is the chief data scientist for the Navy Analytics Office. The Navy Analytics Office reports directly to the vice chief of naval operations and is responsible for the integration and alignment of all analytic efforts across the Service. Previously, Tippie was the director of performance management and evaluation for the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Intelligence and Analysis and the DHS Intelligence Enterprise. During the last year, she was also the acting executive director for the Office of Management and Budget’s Performance Improvement Council where she provided executive leadership and direction for activities to advance and expand practices that improve organizational performance and management across the federal government. Tippie has also held multiple positions in the Departments of Defense and Health and Human Services, leading enterprise-wide efforts to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of program performance and enable transparent, data-driven resource decisions.

EVIDENCE FOR PROGRAM DECISIONS

Laura Berntsen is domestic policy advisor for Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Ron Wyden. Before joining the committee staff, she worked in Sen. Wyden’s personal office between 2011 and 2013. Her legislative portfolio spans the issues of child welfare, human services, education and workforce policy. Before joining Sen. Wyden’s staff, Berntsen spent five years working in the House of Representatives for Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA). She has a BA from the University of Washington and an MA from Georgetown University.

Yvette J. Chocolaad is policy director at the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA). She is a member of the leadership team and helps direct NASWA’s Workforce & Labor Market Information Committee and NASWA’s Employment & Training Committee. She also conducts research and leads research and technical assistance projects. Chocolaad currently supports the Urban Institute on a Department of Labor project assessing performance measures related to employer engagement under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Recently, she coauthored the report Evidence-Building Capacity in State Workforce Agencies: Insights from a National Scan and Two State Site Visits, and a chapter on unemployment insurance claimant reemployment policies for the 2015 Federal Reserve book Transforming U.S. Workforce Development Policies for the 21st Century. She helped direct and write a Department of Labor study on the implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and has developed surveys and reports on state use of Wagner-Peyser Act funds and state workforce agency responses to federal funding reductions after the recession. Before NASWA, Chocolaad was on the professional staff of the House Committee on Ways and Means. She is a member of the National Academy of Social Insurance. Chocolaad studied economics and public policy at Duke University, and has an MPP with a concentration in human services policy from Harvard’s Kennedy School.

David B. Muhlhausen leads the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the research, development, and evaluation agency of the US Department of Justice. NIJ provides objective, independent knowledge and tools to inform the decisionmaking of the criminal justice community to reduce crime and advance justice, particularly at the state and local levels. Attorney General Jeff Sessions named Muhlhausen executive director of the Federal Interagency Council on Crime Prevention and Improving Reentry (FIRC). Established by Executive Order 13826, the FIRC is part of President Trump’s effort to encourage prison reform and reduce recidivism. Muhlhausen, a former research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, has championed using rigorous, empirical research to formulate and evaluate government policies. He has testified frequently before Congress on the efficiency and effectiveness of various federal programs. He has been called most often by the House and Senate Committees on the Judiciary to discuss how to improve policing strategies, prisoner reentry programs, and other important criminal justice programs. Muhlhausen joined Heritage in 1999 after serving on the staff for the Senate Judiciary Committee. Before that, he was a manager at a juvenile correctional facility in Baltimore, Maryland. He also taught program evaluation and statistical methods to graduate students at George Mason University for 11 years. Muhlhausen holds a bachelor’s degree in political science and justice studies from Frostburg State University and a doctorate in public policy from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.
Demetra Smith Nightingale is an Institute fellow at the Urban Institute, where her research focuses on social, economic, and labor policy issues. She was the chief evaluation officer at the US Department of Labor from 2011 to 2016, where she developed what is recognized as one of the premier evaluation units in the federal government. Before joining the Department of Labor, Nightingale was at the Urban Institute for three decades, conducting research and evaluations on employment, labor, welfare, and other social and economic policies and programs, and at the Johns Hopkins University for seven years, where she taught graduate courses in social policy and program evaluation. She is also a professorial lecturer at the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at the George Washington University, teaching graduate courses in program evaluation, integrating evaluation, and performance management in the context of evidence-based policymaking. Nightingale is the author or coauthor of five books and numerous articles. Among her books are Repairing the US Social Safety Net (with Martha Burt) and Reshaping the American Workforce in a Changing Economy (with Harry Holzer). She is a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration and serves on many task forces and advisory panels. Nightingale received her doctorate in public policy from the George Washington University.

Lauren H. Supplee is deputy chief operating officer for Child Trends and a senior program area director for early childhood research. Supplee has devoted her professional career to working on research and evaluation with the goal of applying the knowledge to policy and practice. She is committed to conducting research and evaluation that can contribute to program improvement and improved outcomes for children and families. Her research has focused on evidence-based policy, social-emotional development in early childhood, parenting, prevention and intervention programs for children at risk, and implementation research. Before joining Child Trends, Supplee worked for the federal Administration for Children and Families in the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation for 10 years, with the last 4 of those as the director of the Division of Family Strengthening. She began her career as a research associate at the University of Pittsburgh. Supplee received her PhD from Indiana University in educational psychology with a specialization in family-focused early intervention services.