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CLASP Audio Conference Transcript

Commitment to End Child Poverty, Developments in the UK and US

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JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR AND SENIOR POLICY ANALYST, CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY: Welcome to the Center for Law and Social Policy's Audio Conference, the Commitment to End Child Poverty, Developments in the UK and US. This is Jodie Levin-Epstein. In 1999, Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that the United Kingdom would take action to eliminate child poverty in a generation, by 2020. The pledge called for specific interim targets as well, including a cut in child poverty by one quarter by 2005. In the US, Senator Ted Kennedy has introduced a measure that seeks to halve US poverty within a decade. In this conference call, we'll explore some related developments in the US and we will review the politics, policies and findings from the UK. My guests for this audio conference call are Carey Oppenheim, who is the Chair of the London Child Poverty Commission; Jane Waldfogel, who's at Columbia University's School of Social Work; Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs of New York City; and Secretary Robert Gennario with the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management.

My first guest is Carey Oppenheim. Until May 2005 she was Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on social security, employment, poverty, children and families. She now is Chair of the London Child Poverty Commission, which was launched just a few months ago in February 2006. Carey, welcome.

CAREY OPPENHEIM, CHAIR, LONDON CHILD POVERTY COMMISSION: Hello.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Your various posts in the past as well as your current one enable us to look at you as almost a kind of twofers; we want to ask you both about the national commitment to eliminate child poverty as well as this brand new effort in London. Let me first start with this great quote from Tony Blair, when in 1999 he said, "Our historic aim will be for ours to be the first generation to end child poverty forever and it will take a generation. It is a 20 year mission, but I believe it can be done". When CLASP staff recently took a study delegation over to the UK, and I was lucky to be one, one theme we always heard was that the initiative to eliminate child poverty was not only bold, but it was also driven by the nation's leaders. Carey, from your perspective, can you fill us in on how the initiative came about? What were the motivations to address child poverty?

CAREY OPPENHEIM: I think the reason that it had such high profile and such strong leadership from the top was that the Labour government inherited a huge legacy of very high rates of child poverty that had been developing over the previous couple of decades, and so there was wide recognition that this was a very big problem, more of a problem than in any other OECD country at the time except for New Zealand. Because of the wide recognition of the nature of the problem, the government was very committed to increasing opportunity, especially for children and young people. So that was the context in which the Prime Minister made his speech, and that then translated into the whole sort of whitewall machinery that, our various UK departments made into a real target to end child poverty.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I'm not going to ask you the details of the programs and policies that have been put in place. I'm gonna throw those to Jane Waldfogel in a bit, but instead, could you help us focus in on the initial feature of the Child Poverty Initiative, the numerical target we've been speaking to? How did that come about and how important in your view has it been to have a numerical target which eliminates child poverty by 2020?

CAREY OPPENHEIM: In many ways the numerical target came from the voluntary sector organizations. For a long time, the poverty lobby has been talking about child poverty as measured by relative income, so there was a kind of context for that debate. In Europe that is the way that child poverty is measured, so when the UK thought about itself in a European context, we drew many of the lessons from there. I think the numerical target has been very important in driving change because we can all have goals and aspirations that we all share. If the government had not been held accountable, not only by itself and by the range of different departments that all have an interest in that, but also by the public, I think we wouldn't have made the progress that we have.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes, and also when you say held accountable by the public, it's also that the numerical target is very clear; it's very understandable. Is that part of it in your view?

CAREY OPPENHEIM: Yes, I think that's right. I think there's an income level that has to be achieved. In fact, our target is slightly changing from 2010, but I think people do understand what child poverty is and they understand the nature of the goal and that that's been very important in terms of catalyzing action.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: There is an interim target and the first target was to cut child poverty by a quarter in the year 2005 and that was not met. Instead of getting the 25 percent cut, how much of a drop was actually achieved?

CAREY OPPENHEIM: We managed to take around 700,000 to 800,000 children out of poverty, so we are well on the way. Rather than the quarter we shot for, we've reduced child poverty by about 20-21 percent.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I can just imagine folks listening to this right now, worrying about headlines if you don't make a target, and it wasn't made in the UK, but what was striking to us in reading the UK press accounts here in the US was the response of the political leadership. Instead of abandoning the initiative, Carey, it almost felt like the near miss in the target actually strengthened the political resolve to do even more. Is that a fair read in your view?

CAREY OPPENHEIM: Yes, I think it is a fair read and I think it's interesting that the government has responded in that way. I think the commentators and the stakeholders were very responsible in their response to meeting the target, because I think there's general recognition that there have been substantial resources and substantial effort put into trying to make a real impact on levels of child poverty, so I don't think anybody out there thinks the government isn't really trying, and I think that made it easier then for the government to say rather than them feeling like it was being bashed and attacked, to respond in the way that actually we want to try even harder and we want to really get to grips with the things that we haven't got right so far.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Let's turn to London. Greater London has the highest rates of children living in poverty, 24 percent, not considering the cost of housing. While there are differences in the way you all measure poverty, and we'll discuss those with Jane, the fact remains that London has the highest concentration of poverty in your nation. What do you expect as the Chair of the London Child Poverty Commission to actually be able to accomplish?

CAREY OPPENHEIM: As you say, we have a very big challenge and actually people are often surprised by the scale of child poverty in a thriving and affluent city, but our inner London has particularly high rates of poverty and particularly amongst some of our black and minority ethnic communities, so we have a very substantial challenge. I think we have a number of roles; in particular it's a policy role, to really try and think through how we get some of the most disadvantaged groups into jobs and also to have a greater number of skills. In many senses, the strategy so far has not actually reached the groups that are hardest to

help, and many of those groups are clustered in London and in other cities. So one very interesting initiative that the government has just started to do some thinking around is a city strategy, and that is precisely in recognition of the fact that about two-thirds of the children still living in poverty in Britain are living in cities. If we can get that cracked and, in particular, if we can get that sorted out in London, that will enable us to meet our national target. But cities of course have very particular issues around housing. In London we have a very substantial issue around just the costs, that the work incentives are not as high in London as they are in other places, and those are some of the things that we want to develop policies and grassroots projects that will start to deal with some of those problems.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Carey, in my final question, I'd love to pick your brain about lessons for the US, and, in fact, you'll soon be visiting with a delegation from New York City. Our guests later in the program will soon be meeting you face to face. Two questions for you: if you were encouraging this New York City delegation or if you have a chance to talk to other Mayor's offices or even Governors offices, would you encourage a numerical target? And also could you weave in an area we haven't had a chance to talk with you about, which is how in the UK there is a focus on what you call progressive universalism? Could you help define that and tell us whether or not you think it's an important factor in addressing child poverty?

CAREY OPPENHEIM: That's fine. I think a numerical target is very important, so that if you can get New York City or other cities to sign up to something that has that kind of public recognition and is very clear the steps that you're making towards meeting it, I think that's key and it's also very important because it's a kind of catalyst for funding and money.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Targets itself?

CAREY OPPENHEIM: Yes, I think that's right. For instance, in Britain, people in different areas of government policy know that the target is very important and that it's important to couch and think about their own policies in relation to child poverty, because they are more likely to get funds, and I think that can happen at the city level as well. It's not just a national thing. So I'd say find a numerical target that does have legitimacy and acceptance and that is comprehensible to the wider public. And in relation to progressive universalism, this has been very much a part of Chancellor Gordon Brown's way of thinking about welfare reform and the welfare state and I think it's got lots to recommend it, and that is that there is a flaw which everyone shares in, so we have a child benefit that goes to all families with children regardless of their income levels, but there's also recognition that obviously poorer families need much more help and so the progressiveness is the extra resources or extra services support that goes to more disadvantaged families. And I think the advantage of trying bring those two things together is that it creates a wider coalition and political interest that is shared between poor and middle income families that have those issues addressed, because they all have something to gain from that, even if in monetary terms they're getting different amounts at the end. It's about political coalition building between different sectors of society.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Carey, this has been really great to get your take both from the national and your local perspective now in London. We expect to stay closely in touch to hear developments and learn lessons on an ongoing basis. It's been lovely, Carey.

CAREY OPPENHEIM: Great.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Thank you very much for joining us.

CAREY OPPENHEIM: Pleasure. Let's stay in touch.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Excellent. I'm joined now by Jane Waldfogel from Columbia University's School of Social Work. Hi, Jane.

JANE WALDFOGEL, PROFESSOR, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK: Hi.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Jane bridges the continents. She also has worked with the London School of Economics Center for the Analysis of Social Exclusion. Her research lens has been trained on poverty on both sides of the pond, so we're pretty lucky to have you on, Jane. Research actually motivated political and policy action in the UK. We didn't get to talk with Carey about that, so I'd like to ask you, Jane, just about that question of the role that research played. Among the findings that got attention was longitudinal research that demonstrated the long-term effects of child poverty and the implications for employment. What was the general thrust of that research and does it also apply to US children?

JANE WALDFOGEL: What really moved the UK policy makers were a series of studies conducted on UK data, but also US data, that traced the long run detrimental effects of growing up in poverty on children's prospects, and this research led them to have concerns about social mobility and the need to intervene earlier in childhood if they were going to break the inner generational cycle of poverty.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: You were also mentioning just now social mobility. The research that pointed to growing inequality, what did it exactly say?

JANE WALDFOGEL: What they were concerned about in the UK was that, as in the United States, there had been a tremendous growth in income inequality and associated social inequality, and it looks like social mobility was declining over time. The chances of a child who grows up in a poor family exiting from that life situation were actually declining over time, and the society was becoming less mobile.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Then why did they care?

JANE WALDFOGEL: Why did they care?

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Was there something in the research that grabbed attention to make people care about it more, or did they think they had less or more equality before, or what was it that made it so compelling?

JANE WALDFOGEL: They were stunned to learn that their society was becoming more unequal, that income inequality was growing, that they had the dubious distinction of now having one of the highest child poverty rates in Europe. This was something that they thought should be addressed. When the Prime Minister gave his speech about child poverty and said a child's chances shouldn't be determined by whether he's born in a leafy suburb or in an inner city, this really resonated with the public.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So a whole image of what they were about was thrown in their face by this research in terms of inequality?

JANE WALDFOGEL: Yes. The other research that was influential was research showing that early childhood interventions could make an important difference in children's life outcomes. That evidence actually came from the United States from interventions like the Perry Preschool Program and the Aviceredian Program. That evidence was actually very influential.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So the US research is what helped propel this UK initiative to eliminate child poverty?

JANE WALDFOGEL: Yes.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So we ought to be able to use it the same way?

JANE WALDFOGEL: Absolutely.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So far we have not yet tackled, and I've left it to you, to give us a good sense of what actually is being done to achieve this elimination of poverty in the UK. What are the variety of policies and programs that have been put in place to tackle child poverty? Can tick off a list of the key efforts for us so we have a sense of the scope?

JANE WALDFOGEL: It's actually a really good question, because we're familiar in the United States with welfare reform which involved a number of policies that provided work incentives and increased mandates for employment, and there are some of those elements in the UK reforms. They instituted for the first time a national minimum wage and set at a higher level than we have in the United States. They have something very similar to our Earned Income Tax Credit. They don't actually have work mandates for single mothers with children, as the culture's quite different there. They don't feel that single mothers should be compelled to work, but they do have work incentives, greatly increased child care subsidies, but alongside that they have some things that we don't have as part of our welfare reforms here, so there was a major effort to increase cash benefits for low-income families with children. All of the child related benefits were increased quite substantially, and the result was that incomes went up a good bit for low-income families, faster actually than incomes went up for higher-income families.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Can I just stop you there? You had been talking about welfare and then you were saying low income. Are these changes limited to welfare families or applied to working low-income families?

JANE WALDFOGEL: They definitely cut across all low-income families, whether or not they're on welfare, and actually there were increases in child related benefits that were universal. Like most advanced countries except the US, the UK has a child benefit, a universal child allowance.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: What does that mean? What does that mean for folks who are not familiar with that vocabulary, a child benefit that's universal?

JANE WALDFOGEL: This is a grant that goes to all families with children, just by virtue of having a child, so everyone from a low-income family on up to Prince Charles would receive it. In our context it would be a low-income family on up to Donald Trump.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I don't know how Prince Charles is going to feel about that comparison to Donald Trump. But let me ask you a substantive question: Is this particular child benefit a universal one, meaning it's the same amount for everybody? Or is this subject to the progressive universalism where the amount varies however high up you go?

JANE WALDFOGEL: It's progressive universalism in that, ultimately, it's funded by taxes and taxes are progressive, but no, it's a flat benefit. Everyone gets the same amount and that's what makes it popular. So any benefit that went to children, whether it's means tested or whether it's universal, the amounts of those benefits were increased quite dramatically so that low-income families saw an increase in their income whether or not they were working. The motto of the reforms was "work for those who can, security for those who cannot". So even for families where somebody wasn't working, they saw very substantial income increases. And then the third leg of the reforms were investments in children. Universal childcare, universal preschool for three and four year olds, extended maternity and paternity leave in the first year of life, increased investments in primary and secondary education. Investments in the human capital of children and improving their life chances was separate from income increases, but really oriented towards services and towards education.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, a broad array of strategies are now all under this umbrella of the initiative to eliminate poverty?

JANE WALDFOGEL: Absolutely, yes. So it's reducing poverty in the current generation and also trying to reduce poverty in the next generation.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: When we talked with Carey we zeroed in on the value of having a target, an explicit number and a goal for reducing poverty. The announcement to eliminate poverty was made boldly, but, as we understand it, even before there was an agreement on actually how to measure it so, they said we're going to measure it but didn't indicate how that would be done. Can you briefly tell us about the poverty measures that are being used with an eye to helping us understand the comparison to the US?

JANE WALDFOGEL: The most important distinction between the UK and the rest of Europe and the US is that in the U.S. we tend to use an absolute poverty line that's fixed and doesn't change over time except for things like cost of living. In the UK and in Europe they use what's called a relative poverty line, which means that as those upper income families become richer, the poverty line moves up along with those rising incomes, because the idea is that no family should be too far behind the middle of the income distribution.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: That gets to this inequality focus.

JANE WALDFOGEL: It gets to this focus on inequality, so it's meant that it's tough for them to make progress on poverty because their poverty line is a moving target and as their economy has grown, which it certainly has in the past ten years, higher-income families have seen big income gains. Therefore, the poverty line has moved up along with that making it harder to reduce poverty against it.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Now when they report of progress, do they just use this relative measure or are they also using an absolute measure?

JANE WALDFOGEL: They never use an absolute measure. We sometimes use an absolute measure because it's useful in making comparisons against the United States, so if we compare the two countries on an absolute measure more quickly in the UK than it has in the US. But they wouldn't they don't measure poverty in an absolutely way, and they really want to hold themselves to a higher standard, which is the relative standard.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Both you and Carey pointed out that one of the big motivators for the UK and the Prime Minister and getting into this initiative in the first place was that the UK had this really bad child poverty rate in the OECD.

JANE WALDFOGEL: Yes.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And that was really striking for the nation. How much of the improvement has the UK been able to make compared to the other OECD nations in terms of the poverty rate? And you just said it's improved. How much better is it doing?

JANE WALDFOGEL: They're certainly better. I wasn't able to find current statistics for the OECD, but I was able to find statistics for the European Union, which is the relevant reference groups for them, and they've decreased poverty faster than any other country in the European Union, so they're right to feel very good about the progress that they've made.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Wow. Can you help us then compare to the US?

JANE WALDFOGEL: Compared to the US, as I was saying, if you compare on our metric, the metric that we think is correct, which is absolute poverty; they've reduced absolute poverty quicker than we have. They've seen a bigger reduction post, their welfare reform is different from our welfare reform, but they're roughly contemporary, the two welfare reforms, and they've done a quicker job of reducing poverty than we have.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Pretty telling. We talked with Carey about how the first UK target was missed. Instead of reaching 25 percent it was about 20 percent reduction. Yet she mentioned that 700,000 families, which for their numbers is pretty significant, actually benefited enormously. Can you let us know, is there any way to capture some of the economic outcomes for these families so we can get a sense of what it means that they benefited? Right now it's just an abstract idea. We know they did better but help us understand what that might mean.

JANE WALDFOGEL: The average low-income family gained about 3,000 pounds a year compared to what they would have if the anti-poverty initiative reforms had not gone through. This is against a poverty line of something like 10,000 pounds a year. So a 3,000 pound income gain is just enormous when you're

talking about a poverty line of 10,000. That's a very substantial income increase. It's a very substantial gain. I've also looked at what this has meant in terms of families' well being, because you really want to know how families are using the income and whether families are experiencing less material hardship as a result.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Right, and I do want to delve into that research with you, and in that research – I got to read it last weekend – and I'm going to quote back at you your own research because you observed, “the rapid pace of reform, it means that there have been sharp increases in household income among poor families with children whose incomes have risen faster than incomes on average”. I was really struck by that. You've drilled down these economic findings to the individual family household level and looked at how the money gets spent, as you was just saying, and this is what determines the material well-being of children and how well poor children are catching up to higher income children and households, and that's all part of your investigation. But let me ask you a bottom line question, Jane, before I get to some details on your research: what's so important about looking at household expenditures? Isn't it sufficient to know, for example, that we've gotten to 20 percent of the households and we're planning on getting 100 percent of the poorer children and eliminating child poverty? Why do we need to know about the expenditures at the household level?

JANE WALDFOGEL: Well, the reason that we worry about children growing up in poverty is that it means that they are growing up in families that are financially strapped, where there's financial hardship, there's stress, but it also means that they're growing up without the goods and the resources that we know are associated with better outcomes. Children growing up without books, without learning materials, without the things that they need to compete and be ready for school.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Okay, so now that we've gotten and understanding why it's important, give us the headline for your findings. Are parents who are poor spending wisely or not to meet their family's needs now that they have a ton more money to spend frankly? And if you could help us understand both what your findings say about families where parents are working and those where parents are not.

JANE WALDFOGEL: We looked at low-income families actually without regard to whether or not they were working and found that families were increasing their spending on items that are related to work, things like owning a car or owning a telephone, things that you need for social connections and for work connections. Low-income families were definitely catching up in their ownership of those two items. They were spending more money on transportation and on motoring, on expenses related to having a car, but in addition what was fascinating was that families were spending more money than comparable families on items that are for children – children's books and toys, children's clothing and footwear, fresh fruit and vegetables, items that past research in the UK had found that poor families were lagging behind in. We could see low-income families catching up in their expenditures on these items so that their children were getting resources that were more similar to children in more affluent homes. The other striking finding was that families were not increasing their spending on alcohol and tobacco.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: That is striking.

JANE WALDFOGEL: Yes, because you were asking before why we care about how the income is spent. One worry is that if you give families more funds, they may just squander them on resources that are not good for children, but we found that expenditures on alcohol and tobacco were declining in the wake of these reforms.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Any rationale, any explanation for that?

JANE WALDFOGEL: We found a small increase in leisure spending: having telephones and having cars, being more connected with the world, and it's possible that if families were able to be more out and about and more involved in the world, that they were cutting back on spending money on things that they would do at home like drinking and smoking. But certainly they were not spending the extra money on those two goods, and they were spending the money really in ways that benefit children.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Your research concluded that in fact it was those policy changes themselves that made the difference because you were able to do some comparative work between different aged children. Could you explain that component of the research and its significance?

JANE WALDFOGEL: We had essentially a natural experiment where the income increases for low-income families were greater for families that had young, pre-school aged children. There had always been a sort of kink in the benefits system that provided higher benefits to families with school age children or adolescents on the grounds that they're more costly and the policy reforms corrected that kink and it disproportionately increased benefits for families with young children because of this concern about early childhood and really wanting to get resources into the early years. So we were able to compare how much low-income families with young children gained on more affluent families versus low-income families with older children, how much they gained on more affluent families, and that really allowed us to isolate the effects of the reforms.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And so it was the reforms that made these purchase changes?

JANE WALDFOGEL: It was the reforms, absolutely.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: In the concluding few minutes together I'd like to turn to the US, and I know you recently had a chance to present findings regarding household expenditures in low income single mother US families. What did you find there and how did it compare to the UK?

JANE WALDFOGEL: In some ways the results were similar to the UK in that we found here that, in the wake of welfare reform, more families went to work, some families gained income, similar to the UK. We found families increasing their ownership of telephones and cars, those goods that connect you to the world, that are essential for employment, but unlike the UK, we didn't find the increased expenditures on children's items, and we looked at exactly the same children's items, books and toys, clothing, footwear, fresh fruit and vegetables, but just couldn't find it. What we found instead in the US, and of course this makes perfect sense given the kind of welfare reform we had, is increased expenditures on adult's clothing and on transportation expenses. So this makes perfect sense given that the families that saw increased income were families that went to work. And families that go to work have to spend more money on clothes and more money on transportation. In the UK a lot of families saw income gains even if they didn't greatly increase their work effort, because of the benefit increases, these universal, across the board benefit increases. In hindsight, it makes perfect sense, but it is a terrible shame that we're not yet seeing these benefits for children in this country that we found in the UK.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: By the perfect sense that you're saying we're seeing in these outcomes on expenditures between UK and US families, it's because in the UK the whole effort's been framed around eliminating child poverty and in the US it's all about getting single moms to work?

JANE WALDFOGEL: Yes.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So you're saying that the very framing is what's contributing to the differences, because people are in fact responding to what the goals are of the various agencies, or am I putting too much in that?

JANE WALDFOGEL: I think partly the message does matter in the UK that these benefits are coming as child benefits. These are child related benefits. If you have a child in this age group, you're getting an extra benefit. I think that does help induce parents to spend more of it on children's items, but I think it's also just in order to get the benefits, in order to get the increased income in the United States, single mothers had to vastly increase their employment. That's the only group that has seen an increase in income. Women who are not working more are not seeing increased income. So if anything benefits have fallen.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So you have to spend the money on the...

JANE WALDFOGEL: You have to spend the money.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ...purse and the shoes and the...

JANE WALDFOGEL: The clothes for work and the transportation for work.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Jane, one last question, open ended – you're sitting with a bunch of governors and you're talking about the value of research in motivating the UK initiative, what piece of research would you want them to understand and appreciate in terms of their thinking through what they ought to be doing in their state initiatives?

JANE WALDFOGEL: I think the most readily transferable lesson from the UK is their move to universal preschool for the three and four year olds, and, to tell you the truth, I don't think I would have to push very hard with our governors to get them to get that message. They're already on their way there. They're working very hard, our governors, to implement universal pre-kindergarten, and I think that movement is already underway and that they understand the research and how it's going to pay off for them. If anything, they're even more motivated than people were in the UK because of the pressure of No Child Left Behind. So I think the governors already get that and are moving in that direction, but I think there's lots of other things that we can build on from the UK. It's going to take more to educate Americans about the importance of the first year of life. The policy makers in the UK are more attuned to that than we are here, but we'll get there as well.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Thanks very much Jane Waldfogel for joining us.

JANE WALDFOGEL: Oh, my pleasure.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Now we move to New York City, where Mayor Bloomberg established the Commission on Economic Opportunity just this past March. The Commission is a public-private initiative charged with devising strategies to increase economic opportunity and reduce poverty in the city over the next four years. I'd like to welcome the person put in charge of the Commission, Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs. Welcome.

LINDA GIBBS, DEPUTY MAYOR, NEW YORK CITY: Thank you very much.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Could you first tell us the overall charge of the Commission? Is it to define the goal, offer a blueprint for action, or something else altogether? Also, could you let us know how long the Commission has to get its mission done?

LINDA GIBBS: The Commission itself has 32 members intentionally selected from various sectors – government, non-profit, business foundations, to bring recommendations to the Mayor for how we're going to achieve the objective as you accurately described it of increasing economic opportunity and reducing poverty. The Commission itself is the legs of the work for the Mayor, and the intent is that by the time the Mayor reviews the recommendations, they'll be sufficiently developed so that he adopts them as his action plan. And that's what this is really all about, putting together the actions that the city will commit to taking, together with all of those partners who are part of the process in order to have the best possible success at reducing poverty.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So it's going to get pretty specific?

LINDA GIBBS: Absolutely. The goal is that we look at the various governmental agencies who have a role in one fashion or another and the potential of reducing poverty and use them as the champions to work in partnership with the sectors on the implementation of specific initiatives.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And when's your due date?

LINDA GIBBS: The draft recommendations are due to the Mayor in three weeks.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Wow.

LINDA GIBBS: Our goal is very aggressive, and we were intentionally aggressive. I think this is an important lesson when you think about governmental organizations trying to define these kind of reform agendas. We work within a political environment that is time limited. The Mayor in New York City has been re-elected to his second and final term. We have a two-term limit in New York City for our elected officials, and we essentially have these remaining three and a half years to get a process in place. We want to deliver outcomes during that period, and, probably more importantly, we want to create an institutionalized structure that can help to perpetuate those gains over the years that follow this administration.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So the draft is three weeks and the final is when?

LINDA GIBBS: By Labor Day.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Putting the labor into Labor Day.

LINDA GIBBS: There you go. Having the detailed implementation schedule accountability for the individuals who will be responsible for implementation of the initiative and setting milestones for both the completing the actions as well as achieving the targets of the outcomes that are identified.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Deputy Mayor, earlier in this audio conference we zeroed in on the UK commitment to eliminate child poverty, where as you know the government established a numerical goal to get the job done by 2020 with benchmarks along the way. We also discussed how the first target was missed a bit; instead of a cut of 25 percent actually 20 percent was achieved. The political resolve appears to be stronger than ever to address the problem. What do you see as some of the possible advantages or disadvantages that need to be considered by New York City in weighing a numerical target in a drive to address child poverty?

LINDA GIBBS: I really firmly believe that you're not going to make progress on an issue like this unless you set those kinds of targets. The commitment to taking action is just made more tangible by everybody who needs to be involved in the success. If they know what the target is, where you want to go and then everybody can quantify their contribution in terms of whether or not they're contributing to achieving that target, or their lack of a contribution. I also think that targets ought to be set a little bit higher than you think you can actually achieve.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Really?

LINDA GIBBS: Absolutely, they become aspirational and you don't want to be limited by your assumptions of what you think is not easy to achieve. You may think it's only possible to get to get to 10 percent when in fact it would be possible to get to 20 percent.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: But don't you worry politically that you'll get, in the UK where some think the headline that they didn't miss the target is a political embarrassment. It didn't turn out that way because they've gotten stronger political will. What about that factor?

LINDA GIBBS: I think this kind of work, when you take on challenges that are this big and seem so intractable, that the credit will go to the elected officials who continue, who express a deep resolve to tackling the issues and who are willing to be accountable and I think that if you come up short against an aggressive goal that what will be remembered most is your willingness to tackle tough issues and to be accountable, and I think that that overrides coming up a few percentage points and maybe even large percentage points short of aggressive goals.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Interesting. And I hear you loud and clear. I hope a lot of people do. Deputy Mayor, you're about to head off to the UK to see first hand what's been done to date. It's pretty

impressive. Jane Waldfogel just before was telling us about the change in income for individual families and how substantial it's been. In US dollars there's been an increase of roughly \$5,000-6,000 on an \$18,000-20,000 poverty line. What are some of the key issues you want to explore when you visit over there and take a look at their commitment to eliminate child poverty?

LINDA GIBBS: There are some similarities and there are some differences. So maybe just starting with the differences, we do need to recognize that theirs is a national agenda and working here in New York City, we're working at the local level and part of the challenge that we're giving to ourselves is to see whether or not you can actually tackle the issue of poverty at the local level. I think in this country we're used to considering poverty a national problem and one that localities can't impact. In this Commission, we're really looking into whether or not that is in fact the case and whether there are things that can be done locally. So the real distinction will be looking for things that are national policy setting things compared to things that might be done at the local level.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And on that regard Carey Oppenheim who opened this audio conference, and she's heading up the London effort, it'll be helpful for you to see city to city even though the context'll be different since their national government has in fact begun to tackle child poverty, so her effort, her local effort is within that context and your context is different, but at least it's city level to city level, right?

LINDA GIBBS: That's right, and we'll also be visiting Liverpool, so we'll have a comparison of two very different cities. We will be looking for both types, the policies and programs that can be structured locally and we'll be looking for the implementation strategies, how can you manage these initiatives to get the most impact out of them? I really think that there is a lot that can be done just by more coordinated and more intentional management and again by having individual agencies and organizations all moving in the direction of a shared outcome. I think when you set a target for folks then people are more alert to, how can we get there, what can we do, how can we manage that, how can we work together to do that?

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: In announcing the Commission the Mayor did not shy from describing the big things he hopes from you. He stated quote, "In recent years we have proven that problems once thought to be beyond hope like dangerous streets, failing schools, chronic homelessness can be turned around if we set measurable goals, if we target our resources where they are needed most and if we hold ourselves accountable. We believe we can do the same thing in reducing poverty". Deputy Mayor, you were very much a part of the track record of turning things around that the Mayor cited since you were a central part of a similar effort around chronic homelessness. That effort led to a five year plan, *Uniting for Solutions Beyond Shelter*, which challenged the public, private and non-profit sectors to reduce homelessness by two-thirds during five years. There are several process steps in the New York City approach taken to tackling chronic homelessness that might inform an effort to take on poverty. First, as we've been talking about, there's a clear numerical goal in the homelessness piece and you've hinted at your support for having a numerical goal, and it's not a hint, you're shouting out about it. Could you dig a little bit deeper into the virtues of having a numerical goal perhaps in the context of how you've seen it achieve things within the chronic homelessness effort?

LINDA GIBBS: Sure. The plan that the Mayor released two years ago set the goal of reducing homelessness by two-thirds in New York City over a five-year period, and we have in New York City a huge homeless sheltered population. At the time the plan was released it was 36,000 individuals and over, close to 5,000 people living on the street. Setting a target led to a huge reduction in the absolutely numbers of individuals who are homeless – tens of thousands of people. A couple of critical things, one is that if you took a spreadsheet and added up the expected impact of each of the individual initiatives, you probably would not have come up with the two-thirds reduction. Part of that is the fact that the release of a report is not the totality of what's going to happen over a five year period, and what you want to do is really set the goal that aligns with your values and where you'd think in a just society and a well managed city what the situation should be. Then in the release of the plan manage to those goals but always learn and adapt along the way and once the plan's recommendations are complete, look for the next set of recommendations that now become apparent because you've sort of peeled the layer of the onion back, and so the initiatives themselves all move in the direction and set the tone and framework for the reduction, but don't necessarily add up to that. And if you limited yourself to that, then it makes it easier for the process to say, well, gee,

we were successful, we can end now, when maybe it was a reduction of just 15 percent. So it's really back to this setting targets that are more akin to what your goal and aspirations are rather than what you can sort of add up to be the impact of the things that you see immediately in front of you.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So you first had this numerical goal and then second you established accountability procedures? In the chronic homelessness effort you had 60 initiatives to address chronic homelessness that were identified and as you've been talking about, you'd laid out plans and those plans then had implementation base as well as expected outcomes. Do you envision something similar with the child poverty or the economic opportunity initiative?

LINDA GIBBS: Absolutely, and it will by comparison probably make the homeless plan look very simple. With the homeless strategy, and by the way, we are about to successfully pass our second year targets that we set on our annual schedule toward that five year goal.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Really?

LINDA GIBBS: Yes.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Wow.

LINDA GIBBS: So just a word of encouragement there that this is possible.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I'm just going to be so optimistic all the rest of this day.

LINDA GIBBS: The complexity involved on the issue of the Economic Opportunity Commission is that the number of agencies that need to be involved and working with the same intensity around the issue of poverty is much greater. So while there were probably five or six key agencies on the homeless strategy, including housing and our Public Housing Authority and our Office of Health and Mental Hygiene who all needed to be involved, on the issue of economic opportunity and poverty, it's not only a broader array of social service agencies, but it's also the entire array of economic development and workforce development agencies, and certainly the education system as well. And so the complexity is around how to effectively manage when the number of agencies is so much greater, when the mix of missions of those individual agencies is therefore more diverse and how do you find a structure for coordinating around outcomes that diverse range of agencies share?

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: A third process point that I gleaned from going on the chronic homelessness website, and I have to say, I'm totally smitten, especially by this piece, which features public transparency. The city website invites the public to see how much progress is being made for each of these 60 initiatives and coming cold to it, I readily could understand and appreciate where you were on each of these benchmarks and what the benchmarks were all about. Are there lessons from this transparency effort so far that you anticipate will be applicable to the Commission's work on poverty and economic opportunity?

LINDA GIBBS: I think we often really underestimate the value of good, clear communications, and I think long term success on these type of efforts really do revolve around effective accountability, the willingness to create those measures and to be accountable. If we create the accountability measures in a way that nobody can understand or access, then we undermine the effort that we're creating to sort of institutionalize that accountability, which is key to the long term success. Part of the success depends on everybody's, everybody meaning citizens, stakeholders, clients, agency officials, everyone who has a potential of contributing, being able to clearly see the direction and the path so that they can identify where their opportunity to jump in and participate is. And so if we can effectively communicate the goals and the paths then that is enabling anyone who can contribute to be more effective in that.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And to help our audience see what you and I are talking about, if folks go to the resource page they'll be able to link immediately to this website that we're talking about. Deputy Mayor, the New York City framing is economic opportunity and poverty in general. In the UK, the poverty focus is on child poverty. Do you think the framing matters in any way?

LINDA GIBBS: I do. Clearly, the way that the Economic Opportunity Commission has chosen to frame it is to focus on improving the benefits of working, so making work pay. If you're employed you should not be living in poverty and how can we structure things so that the incentives around work can be better aligned and support the individual's need in order to be able to successfully compete in the labor force. It's not a discussion for instance on how to create a bigger, broader safety net. So it very strongly prioritizes economic opportunity and employment and helping to make sure that everyone in New York who is able to work has an equal access to that opportunity. In adopting the recommendations we will clearly have to pick which ones are most appropriate. Within the broad population we unfortunately have 20 percent of our population who does live in poverty. That's 1.7 million people here in New York City and we will have to identify where we can have the greatest impact on poverty by looking at the complex demographic characteristics of the population. We will choose the sub-populations within that broad population that we'll target for our first wave of activity.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Deputy Mayor, in wrapping up, the US Conference of Mayors has launched the Mayor's Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity. What do you think is the national and political as well as policy import of your Commission and that the US Conference of Mayors as well has decided to take on poverty?

LINDA GIBBS: What I really liked about this conversation I feel is it's very exciting to me at this point in time is that the issue is not one that people are sort of waiting for somebody else to do, that more and more people are taking it on and I think particularly for the Conference of Mayors, I think we'll have to see how the conversation proceeds, but if there are conversations that allow more local leaders to identify those things that can be accomplished at the local level, we can be part of the solution rather than really taking the back seat that I think oftentimes state and local governments have on this issue in deference to the national leadership on it. And so I think it's a very promising sign and I think we have to create more opportunities for local laboratories to develop solutions that can be replicated across the country.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: We're glad you're taking it on Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs and we thank you very much for sharing your experiences with us. Thank you.

We now turn to the State of Connecticut, where the legislature established a child poverty council in 2004 and we're going to talk today to Secretary Robert Gennario, who heads the Office of Policy and Management. Welcome Secretary.

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO, OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT, CONNECTICUT: Thank you, thank you for having me.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: It's great to have you on. Recently a bill merged to the State's Child Poverty Council together with a prevention council to create a new Child Poverty and Prevention Council. It imposes new reporting requirements on the Governor, Executive Branch agencies and the Council. It also ties prevention services to others included in the Child Poverty Council's plan to reduce child poverty by 50 percent by the year 2014. When we were planning this audio conference, we wanted to feature a state that also had developed a numerical target along the lines of the UK, which we heard about at the outset of this audio conference. Connecticut appears to be the closest. Some states collect data as part of performance measures, but Connecticut stands out because it has stated a date, 2014, by which it will cut child poverty in half. By the way, if anyone out there is listening and is in a state, which in fact is doing something similar, please send me an e-mail at Jodie@clasp.org. We'd love to stand corrected. And Secretary Gennario, perhaps you would want to know too if there's anybody else doing this as well, but pretty much you seem like you're a standout state and I'd like to ask you about having a legislated mandate come up with a plan to meet the target. Do you think that having a legislative mandate that calls for the Council to develop a plan helps or hinders you in the Executive Branch in accomplishing the task?

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: I think generally it helps, Jodie. It creates a buy-in from the Legislature. It gives the Council confidence that the Legislature is watching and that the Legislature is going to take recommendations seriously and that this is a priority in the State of Connecticut. So generally

speaking I think it helps when two branches of government work with each other. Every once in a while you may come up with a disagreement as to a particular approach and to the extent the mandates includes certain areas, but not other areas that we might think are helpful in solving these problems, it can sometimes strap you a little bit.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I was wondering how you were going to delicately describe this.

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: Yeah, but to be perfectly honest, this administration has a very good relationship with the Legislature and we enjoy working with them and frankly by and large it's much more helpful than it is a hindrance.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: The Connecticut Legislature focused on child poverty. The UK commitment is focused on child poverty. In contrast, the US Conference of Mayors and the Mayor of New York's Commission are focused more broadly. They're on poverty in general. It's not just about kids. For those around the country who are considering addressing poverty with similar councils or commissions, Secretary, do you think there are strong advantages or strong disadvantages between a focus on child poverty versus a focus on poverty in general, or is it a distinction without a difference in your mind?

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: I think there's a difference and I think what Connecticut is saying and evidently the United Kingdom is saying is that we want to get at kind of base and root causes of poverty and if you can eliminate child poverty and target your resources to eliminate child poverty, then you have a hope for sustaining that elimination as the children grow and then eliminate poverty over the long term. So we're targeting our new programs towards children and families because we think it has a better long-term effect. Having said that, Connecticut has a number of standout anti-poverty initiatives for the adult community.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Now, there are probably many different ways the Council could take action. We presumably could do anything from pass the mandate on to local jurisdictions to focusing on state systems coordination to lifting 60 initiatives, as we heard in New York City on its chronic homelessness efforts, and could assign timelines for action. Where is the Council in the development of its plan? Has one been issued? Is it underway? Broadly, which of those kinds of approaches likely will be taken?

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: The Council submitted a plan to the Legislature in January of 2005 and it had 67 recommendations for action in it.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I'm remiss. I didn't read those or look at that. I didn't know that you'd gotten that far.

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: We actually have gotten that far and in general as you might imagine, the recommendations fall into several categories from methodologies and programs to enhance family's income and earning potential, help low-income families build assets, enhance access to health care, support safety net programs, that sort of thing. And then what happens is the Governor, in preparing her budget, and our office initially when we assist the Governor in preparing her budget, will pay attention obviously to those recommendations and will include in any given year, to the extent that we can do it consistent with our other budgetary priorities, some of those recommendations in. Then the Legislature obviously will also be guided in determining what action it takes, so to date a number of the recommendations have been enacted into law with emphasis on increased access to health care and early childhood educations or readiness programs as well as a number of child creation programs.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Now you mentioned the budget. As the Chair of the Child Poverty and Prevention Council, do you think that to get the job done at the state level it takes a position at your level to ensure that all the players are playing?

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: I think it's helpful for a variety of reasons. First of all, attacking child poverty is kind of a cross-agency goal. There's no one agency; whether you're dealing with social services or public health or early childhood education, it crosses many disciplines and many jurisdictions,

so to be able to have someone who works with all of the agencies on a policy development budgetary basis, provides an ability to coordinate the efforts of a variety of agencies and coordinate proposals that come from those agencies. It also, frankly, because our office is also charged with putting together the Governor's budget and working with the Legislature, helps to have the Chair of the Council on board because it generally results in the Council's recommendations being fresh in my mind when we're preparing the budget.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Let's get on that question exactly, as Director of the budget you clearly need to worry that the child poverty initiatives can cost money. Last year the Council urged a state level EITC as I understand it, and that's a state Earned Income Tax Credit, but you have these two halves as you've been describing and advocating for children and advocating for the budget. Do you foresee a time when a cost item like a state level EITC could move forward in Connecticut?

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: It's interesting. Let me just start out by saying that I think any long-term plan has to be based upon responsible budgeting process. Anytime you want to create an initiative and you want that initiative to be sustained, it has to be based on a responsible budgetary process. So I don't think there's anything inconsistent with eliminating child poverty or reducing child poverty in responsible budgeting. With regard to the Earned Income Tax Credit in particular, that is actually one of the very few, if not the only, recommendation of the Council that the administration took exception to; we did not support an Earned Income Tax Credit this year for a variety of reasons. It had a cost of about \$30 million and Connecticut has heretofore driven its anti-poverty money to direct programs like health care, early childhood education, child care and the like and we felt that that is a better use of anti-poverty funds than sending cash back where we have less control over how the cash was going to be utilized. So we didn't support that, so I guess I'm not predicting that it will pass in the near future. We'd rather see the money spent in more direct social service proposals.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And if money was not constrained, is it that you're trying to prioritize between different opportunities for funding or that you don't think that an Earned Income Tax Credit is helpful in fighting child poverty?

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: I think that as a priority it certainly would be very low on the totem pole. If I have \$30 million to spend I'd much rather spend it on increasing my early childhood education services where I know that a child is getting direct education services or health care initiatives, where I know a child is getting a health care program, than sending a check back where I don't know what that check is going to, whether it's going to Cablevision or something else I don't know, and...

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I think I'm going to e-mail your office. We had Jane Waldfogel in on this conference call earlier and she's done some interesting US and UK research with regard to household expenditure, and it's really quite fascinating in terms of households when they do get increased money, how that money gets spent, and in the UK they found clear evidence that the increased income got directed to children. Less clear here in the US because in Jane's view in part that may be because this money got spent more on costs associated with going to work, transportation costs, clothing and so forth, but it's really fascinating. It think it gets to the heart of the question that you're raising and few pieces of research do, so I'm going to send that on to your office if I can.

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: That would be great. I'd be delighted to see it.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Absolutely, we'll send it on. But let me catch up with you about developments in the Senate where you may be aware that a bill has been introduced by Senator Kennedy to halve child poverty in a decade, and my question for you as a state official, is whether a Federal Bill that focused on child poverty helps states and presumably also would help cities that want to address poverty?

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: Like anything else it depends on what the bill says and more importantly what the bill does. One of the things that would concern us would be a goal and mandates that weren't properly funded, to the extent, I mean the Federal Government can be very helpful in the war against poverty, if you will, and the reduction of child poverty by providing funding for programs that

reduce that, whether it's in the education area or whether it's in the health care area or otherwise. But when the Federal Government says do this and then provides no assistance, is it a nice statement? Yes, it's a nice statement, but they're basically leaving us on our own and that's fine too, but the extent to which a bill is helpful if it doesn't include funding directed at important programs is very limited.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Secretary Gennario, coming back to Connecticut then, what do you see as some of the bigger challenges in accomplishing the mission of the Council?

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: To follow up on the last question, one of the concerns we have is diminishing Federal revenues. We're looking at a 30 percent reduction in our Federal Social Services Block Grant next year, which is one of the main drivers of social service funding in Connecticut. I also think that you can't ignore the overall national economic health and the state's economic health. When all is said and done, a lot of the battle against poverty in general and child poverty specifically is directed at keeping a vibrant economy, so the overall national economic situation, the overall state economic situation are critical. Rising health care costs are also an area of concern because it costs us more to provide health care for those children and at the same time as we spend more and more on health care, whether it's for impoverished children or otherwise, it saps resources that we might otherwise direct at anti-poverty programs.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: According to Kids Count, the Annie E. Casey effort to track how children fare in our nation, the child poverty rate in Connecticut is at 10 percent. You have the lowest child poverty rate in the nation. Would you say that therefore you have the lowest hanging fruit in order to address child poverty, and, if so, do you think other states ought to be able to tackle this if you can, if it's inherently more difficult for you to find ways of paring down what's pretty well pared down compared to other states? Does that make sense as a question?

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: I don't know whether we have the lowest hanging fruit or not. I think it's reflective of the fact that Connecticut has taken this issue seriously for a number of years, even before announcing this goal. Connecticut has been in the forefront of providing generous funding for education, generous support for health care. Connecticut has been attentive to its economic growth. Not that we don't have our problems, because do. But it's something that we've paid attention to for a number of years and, yes, to the extent states, other states are not paying as much attention to it, I certainly think we would all be better off if they did.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: In closing, Secretary Gennario, one would hope that efforts around fighting child poverty would be bipartisan. You are part of a Republican Administration and maybe your efforts could help be a model for other states thinking about doing a similar Commission or Legislation. Would you offer study visits to Connecticut to members of the National Governors' Association or maybe delivering a PowerPoint presentation at a convening of the NGA? Anything along those lines you'd be willing to do?

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: We'd be honored if we received any invitations; certainly we would welcome anybody visiting here so that we can show them what we've done. We'd be honored to participate in whatever way we could to help move this effort forward. Any child poverty is a national and an international issue and Connecticut may well have taken a lead in that and to the extent that our efforts can be a model for others, we'd be honored to help participate.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Thank you very much for your time, Secretary Gennario.

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: Thank you. I appreciate the phone call and the interview and thank you for taking the time to talk to us.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Bye, bye, Secretary Gennario.

SECRETARY ROBERT GENNARIO: So long, now.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Thank you and this is Jodie Levin-Epstein from the Center for Law and Social Policy. I want to thank our audience. Remember, if you sign up for CLASP updates off of our website, you'll automatically get notifications of future audio conference calls. Also, we encourage you to forward this website to colleagues in your office, your community and around the country. Use these audio conferences to spark dialogue and action, and we thank you for that. This concludes the CLASP audio conference on the Commitment to End Child Poverty.

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