



Valuing Care: Principles for a Post-Pandemic Care Economy – Transcript

Hosted by the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Description

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the value of caregiving work and the need for equitable and affordable access to care – for children, for elders, for those with a disability, and for all of us in hard times. Yet care work remains underpaid and often invisible, contributing to the inadequacies of the US care system and deepening challenges for caregivers and families. As we move from crisis to recovery, how can policy contribute to building a care economy that dignifies the work of caregivers and expands access to quality, affordable care? How can our systems center gender and racial equity to construct a care economy that serves all families? And how can our society support a healthy and sustainable caregiving system for our post-pandemic future, one in which the demand for caregiving is poised to continue to grow?

This special event hosted by the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program explores these questions and more. The event features an exciting lineup of policy and practice experts, cultural leaders, and caregivers, including:

- Justin Baldoni, Director and Producer, "Clouds," "Five Feet Apart"; Actor, "Jane the Virgin"; Cofounder, Wayfarer Studios
- Erika Beras, Reporter, Marketplace
- Heather Boushey, Member, Council of Economic Advisers, The White House
- Abby McCloskey, Founder and Principal, McCloskey Policy LLC
- Ai-jen Poo, Executive Director, National Domestic Workers Alliance; Director, Caring Across Generations
- Dan Porterfield, President and CEO, The Aspen Institute
- Adria Powell, President and CEO, Cooperative Home Care Associates
- Mitt Romney, US Senator from Utah
- Tina Tchen, President and CEO, TIME'S UP
- Dorian Warren, President, Community Change; Cochair, Economic Security Project

Speakers discuss the important role of caregiving in our economy and society, as well as a variety of ideas for building an equitable care economy both in the near term for recovery and in the long term for a post-pandemic future.

Agenda

Opening Remarks

- Maureen Conway, Vice President, The Aspen Institute; Executive Director, The Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program
- Dan Porterfield, President and CEO, The Aspen Institute
- Mitt Romney, US Senator from Utah
- Heather Boushey, Member, Council of Economic Advisers, The White House

Panel: Policies and Approaches for Building an Equitable Care Economy

- Abby McCloskey, Founder, McCloskey Policy LLC
- Adria Powell, President and CEO, Cooperative Home Care Associates
- Tina Tchen, President and CEO, TIME'S UP
- Dorian Warren, President, Community Change; Cochair, Economic Security Project
- Erika Beras (moderator), Reporter, Marketplace

Campaigning for Care: A Conversation between Justin Baldoni and Ai-jen Poo

- Justin Baldoni, Director and Producer, "Clouds," "Five Feet Apart"; Actor, "Jane the Virgin"; Cofounder, Wayfarer Studios
- Ai-jen Poo, Executive Director, National Domestic Workers Alliance; Director, Caring Across Generations

Speaker Bios



Justin Baldoni

Director and Producer, "Clouds," "Five Feet Apart"; Actor, "Jane the Virgin"; Cofounder, Wayfarer Studios

Justin Baldoni is a director, producer, actor, and the cofounder of Wayfarer Studios and the Wayfarer Foundation. Baldoni is known for creating purpose-driven media that impacts social change and leaves a lasting impression on audiences. In 2020, he directed and produced "Clouds," which became Disney's first-ever narrative acquisition for its global platform, Disney+. He made his feature film directorial debut in 2019 with "Five Feet Apart." He also created and directs The CW's documentary series, "My Last Days," and played Rafael on the network's award-winning show "Jane the Virgin." Inspired by his personal journey, Baldoni created "Man Enough," a conversation series that explores the messages of masculinity while reimagining what it means to be a man in the world today. Baldoni has followed up his wildly popular viral TED Talk with a book he wrote boldly and transparently about his own journey, "Man Enough: Undefined My Masculinity," published by Harper Collins as a part of a three-book deal, available April 27.



Erika Beras

Reporter, Marketplace

Erika Beras is a reporter for Marketplace, covering health, education, and how the pandemic has changed the way we live and work.

Prior to joining Marketplace, Beras was a regular contributor to several top public radio shows such as NPR's "Morning Edition," PRI's "The World," and the Scientific American podcast. She has written for National Geographic, The New Yorker, and other publications.

She has been recognized for her work, receiving grants and fellowships from the Radio Television Digital News Association, the National Association of Science Writers, International Center for Journalists, the International Women's Media Foundation, the Center for Health Reporting, Third Coast International Audio Festival, and others. She was previously a reporter at WESA in Pittsburgh and a staff writer at the Miami Herald.

Beras has reported internationally from places as varied as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Switzerland and is a returned Peace Corps volunteer.

She grew up in New York and is a native Spanish speaker. Beras graduated from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and currently resides in Pittsburgh.



Heather Boushey

Member, Council of Economic Advisers, The White House

Heather Boushey is a member of President Biden's Council of Economic Advisers. Heather Boushey is cofounder of the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, where she was president and CEO from 2013 to 2020. She previously served as chief economist for Secretary Clinton's 2016 transition team and as an economist for the Center for American Progress, the Joint Economic Committee of the US Congress, the Center for Economic and Policy Research, and the Economic Policy Institute.



Abby McCloskey

Founder and Principal, McCloskey Policy LLC

Abby M. McCloskey is founder and principal of McCloskey Policy LLC, a research and consulting firm serving business and political leaders across the country, including presidential and congressional candidates, Cabinet-level appointees, Fortune 500 CEOs, and foundations.

Most recently, McCloskey was policy director for [Howard Schultz' 2020 exploratory presidential bid](#) as an independent. Previously, she served as policy director for [Governor Rick Perry's 2016 presidential campaign](#) and an economic advisor to Governor Jeb Bush's 2016 presidential campaign. She was the program director of economic policy at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in Washington, D.C.; the director of research at the Financial Services Roundtable; a staffer for US Sen. Richard Shelby; and a policy associate with the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation and the Mercatus Center at George Mason University.

Her work has largely focused on economic opportunity and policies for working families. She is a member of the [AEI-Brookings Working Group on paid family leave](#).

McCloskey is widely published, with her work regularly published in The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, National Affairs, The Dispatch, Forbes, AEI, and National Review, as well as a regular column in The Dallas Morning News. McCloskey has testified about her research before the US Congress, frequently appears on major media outlets, and is often a featured guest speaker at conferences.

McCloskey holds a Master of Science in Applied Economics from Johns Hopkins University and graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Wheaton College. She lives with her husband, three children, and golden retriever in Texas.



Ai-jen Poo

Executive Director, National Domestic Workers Alliance; Director, Caring Across Generations

Ai-jen Poo is an award-winning organizer, author, and a leading voice in the women's movement. She is the executive director of the [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#), director of [Caring Across Generations](#), cofounder of [SuperMajority](#), cohost of Sunstorm podcast, and a trustee of the Ford Foundation. Ai-jen is a nationally recognized expert on elder and family care, the future of work, and what's at stake for women of color. She is the author of the celebrated book, [The Age of Dignity: Preparing for the Elder Boom in a Changing America](#).



Daniel R. Porterfield

President and CEO, The Aspen Institute

Dan Porterfield is president and CEO of the Aspen Institute. Previously, Dan served for seven years as the president of Franklin & Marshall College. He has been recognized as a visionary leader and advocate for expanding educational opportunity and improving the human condition and was named a White House Champion of Change in 2016. Prior to his appointment at Franklin & Marshall College, Dan served as senior vice president for strategic development and an English professor at his alma mater, Georgetown University, and for four years as a senior public affairs official in the US Department of Health and Human Services. He earned Bachelor of Arts degrees from Georgetown and Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar, and his Ph.D. from The City University of New York Graduate Center, where he was awarded a Mellon Fellowship in the Humanities.



Adria Powell

President and CEO, Cooperative Home Care Associates

As CHCA's president and CEO, Adria Powell oversees the cooperative's work to provide high-quality care, support its workers and worker-owners, and sustainably grow to serve more clients. Ms. Powell supervises the senior leadership, who have oversight of the cooperative's various divisions: operations, training and workforce development, finance, quality performance, and clinical services. She works closely with these teams to ensure that the organization maintains the

best quality of services possible, by maintaining a deep investment in the development of the home care workforce.

Ms. Powell assumed the role of president in January 2017 after serving as executive vice president, at a time of significant change and challenge in the home care industry. In addition to guiding CHCA's ongoing strategic planning efforts, she has advocated on behalf of the cooperative's workers for adequate funding for rates that support the cost of home care services and has collaborated with Local 1199 to support home care workers.

She leverages CHCA's identity as a worker cooperative to champion the foundation and principles of the cooperative model, both with CHCA workers and worker-owners and to the broader community. Ms. Powell works with local government bodies to support CHCA's work and advance the stability and support of the home care workforce. Through all this work, Ms. Powell focuses her efforts and those of CHCA on providing person-centered care for every client, and continually improving the care and the jobs for those who provide that care.

Ms. Powell holds a baccalaureate degree in psychology with a minor in Black studies from Boston College. In 2000, she earned her Master of Public Administration (Health Policy & Management) from New York University.



Mitt Romney

US Senator from Utah

Senator Mitt Romney was sworn in as Utah's newest senator on January 3, 2019. He currently serves on the Foreign Relations; Health, Education, Labor & Pensions; Homeland Security & Government Affairs; and Budget committees. On the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Romney serves as ranking member of the Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy. He is also a member of the Senate National Security Working Group.

Before entering public service, he led a successful business career as the cofounder of Bain Capital, a leading investment company, and the turnaround CEO of Bain & Company, an international management consulting firm.

Prior to serving as the governor of Massachusetts from 2003 to 2007, Senator Romney led the 2002 Salt Lake Organizing Committee for the Winter Olympics and, with a team of volunteers and managers, helped turn the struggling Games into a Utah success story. He was a candidate for the 2008 Republican presidential nomination and Republican nominee for president in 2012.

Senator Romney earned his bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University and his JD/MBA from Harvard University. He is the proud husband to Ann, father to five sons, and grandfather to 25 grandchildren.



Tina Tchen

President and CEO, TIME'S UP

Tina Tchen serves as president and CEO of TIME'S UP Now and the TIME'S UP Foundation, overseeing the organizations' strategic plans to change culture, companies, and laws to make work safe, fair, and dignified for all. In 2017, Tina cofounded the TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund, which has connected thousands of people to legal or PR support for sexual harassment. Previously, Tina was a lawyer advising companies on gender inequity, sexual harassment, and diversity. She also served as executive director of the White House Council on Women and Girls and chief of staff to First Lady Michelle Obama.



Dorian Warren

President, Community Change; Cochair, Economic Security Project

A progressive scholar, organizer, and media personality, Dorian Warren has worked to advance racial, economic, and social justice for more than two decades. Like the organizations he leads, Warren is driven by the innate conviction that only social movements — led by the communities most affected by economic, gender, and social injustice — can change their communities and public policies for the better.

At this historical and challenging moment, Dorian is uniquely positioned to lead the work of Community Change, organizing and mobilizing powerful, multiracial alliances around social justice at a time when inequality, political apathy, and exclusion are on the rise.

Growing up on Chicago's South Side, Dorian learned firsthand the power of unions to unleash economic opportunities. His great-grandparents were sharecroppers, his grandparents were janitors, and his mother was a teacher in Chicago's public schools for more than 40 years.

Guided by his intuitive understanding of inequality, Dorian has devoted his life to building the power and capacity of low-income people. As an alum of progressive organizations and universities, Dorian is an unparalleled force in progressive politics in America.

About

The Economic Opportunities Program's [Opportunity in America](#) discussion series has moved to an all-virtual format as we all do what we can to slow the spread of COVID-19. But the conversations about the changing landscape of economic opportunity in the US and implications for individuals, families, and communities across the country remain vitally important. We hope you will participate as we bring our discussions to you in virtual formats, and we look forward to your feedback.

We are grateful to the Ford Foundation, Prudential Financial, Walmart.org, the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth, and the Surdna Foundation for their support of this series.

The [Economic Opportunities Program](#) advances strategies, policies, and ideas to help low- and moderate-income people thrive in a changing economy. [Follow us on social media](#) and [join our mailing list](#) to stay up-to-date on publications, blog posts, events, and other announcements.

Transcript

Maureen Conway (00:00:00)

Good afternoon and welcome. I'm Maureen Conway, vice president at the Aspen Institute and executive director of the Economic Opportunities Program. It is my pleasure to welcome you all to valuing care principles for a post pandemic care economy. This conversation is part of the Economic Opportunities Program's ongoing Opportunity in America discussion series, in which we explore the contours of opportunity in America and think about ideas, strategies, policies, to help more people connect to the livelihoods that they value and to build lives of meaning and importance for them. I want to thank Prudential Financial, the Walmart Foundation, the Surdna Foundation, and MasterCard Center for Inclusive Growth for their support of our Opportunity America discussion series. Although today's conversation is on care, I'm sure the events of yesterday, the verdict in the case of George Floyd, together with the loss of Ma'Khia Bryant in Columbus, are also on people's minds.

They're very much on our minds at the Aspen Institute. The need for systems that advance racial justice has been painfully demonstrated again. And this need is evident really every day in our justice system, in our economy, and certainly in our systems of care. I'm sure these events and concerns are also on the minds of our incredible speakers today. And I thank them very much for joining us. In just a moment, I'm going to turn it over to Dan Porterfield, president of the Aspen Institute, who will kick off today's discussion. Then we'll be honored to be joined by Senator Mitt Romney and Dr. Heather Boushey of the White House Council of Economic Advisors. They will provide opening remarks on the importance of care. During our panel conversation, we'll be joined by a fantastic group of policy and practice experts who will discuss ideas for strengthening care in the near term and in the long-term building a healthy and sustainable care economy.

And finally, we'll welcome Justin Baldoni and Ai-jen Poo for an exciting conversation on campaigning for care and the role of culture in cultivating awareness and support for social change. But first, a quick review of our technology. I'm sure many of you are used to the technology by now. All attendees are muted. We very much welcome your questions and participation. Please use the Q&A box to submit questions. We're very excited with the participation in today's event, and we'll get to as many questions as we can. And we also encourage you to introduce yourself in the chat and share resources and comments in the chat as well. Please tweet about the conversation. Our hashtag is #talkopportunity, and if you have any technical issues during the webinar, you can chat with the Economic Opportunities Program or email us at eop.program@aspeninstitute.org. The webinar is being recorded and will be shared via email and posted on our website following this event. The webinar also includes closed captions. If that's useful to you, please avail yourself of that.

And now it is my great pleasure to introduce Dan Porterfield, president of the Aspen Institute. We're so grateful, Dan, that you could join us for today's conversation. And I just turn it over to you. Thank you.

Dan Porterfield (00:03:22)

Thank you, Maureen. And for many things, especially though for your steadfast and visionary leadership in leading the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program, and making sure that we always ask the right questions about the principles of equity, inclusion, fairness, and sustainability, that should be at the heart of these conversations. I'd like to thank everyone who's in our audience today, our speakers and the entire EOP team. It's a great, great group at the Aspen Institute for their work and for joining us today. And it won't be too long, let's all hope, where we can gather together in person safely to be able to share ideas and get to know one another in the post Zoom universe, which is coming, I think. A word about the Institute. The Aspen Institute was founded 70 years ago in the aftermath of genocide, world

war, and nuclear destruction. It was founded by a group of pragmatic and humanistic optimists who believed that a good society must be organized around, and must protect and promote, human dignity.

And if you believe in human dignity and the sort of corollary principle that everyone has it equally, then you're called to do the work of the EOP program, the Aspen Institute, and worked for free, just an equitable society. And in that spirit, it was both a relief and a cause for hope and a challenge for all of us that a jury of his peers found Derek Chauvin guilty on all counts yesterday. That verdict won't bring back Mr. Floyd, or the many other men and women of color who've been killed in police custody, most recently in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota and Columbus, Ohio, nor does one verdict heal multi-generational trauma or obviate the need for real change in law enforcement and policing.

But I think we can all take heart from the jury's demonstrated respect for Mr. Floyd's human dignity. And then we can assign ourselves the job of doing more place by place, policy by policy, to dismantle structural racism and all forms of discrimination and othering in the service of a beloved society. That certainly includes our need to assist, embrace, and provide secure legal status to our hardworking immigrant families and communities and all children.

Clearly, this is a defining moment in the history of our country. As we try to do a lot of important things at once to promote racial and gender justice, to stop COVID-19, to end childhood poverty, to reform immigration, to fix American healthcare, to make the economy work for all, to renew our democracy and mend the social fabric, to see one another as human beings. All of these American imperatives connect directly to the topics we have convened here to discuss today. We must enhance the quality of jobs and dignity of work for care workers. We must guarantee access and affordability of care to those who need it. We must address the social determinants of inequity that threaten the wellbeing of care workers and the resiliency of our healthcare, social and political systems. A high quality affordable accessible care system is critical to sustaining that free, just, and equitable society that we're working towards.

Developing it is the right thing to do and the smart thing to do for our country and now is the time to work together, to build back better in the service of our full population and our ideals. As Ai-jen Poo, who joins us later today has said and I quote, "Movements of people create change, not just any one person or organization, but when lots of people are in motion around a shared vision." We are that movement that motion. And today is our moment. Thank you for coming together to hear from our eminent speakers and for the love and hope that motivates your work and your solidarity with all who give and need care. Now I'm pleased to introduce Senator Mitt Romney and Dr. Heather Boushey. Senator Mitt Romney was sworn in as US Senator representing Utah in 2019. He currently serves on the foreign relations, health education, labor, pensions, Homeland security, and government affairs and budget committees.

Prior to entering public service, he had a successful career in business. He then went on to serve for four years as the governor of Massachusetts and in 2012, earned the Republican nomination for president. He is the proud husband to Anne, father of five sons, and grandfather to 25. Dr. Heather Boushey is a member of the Council of Economic Advisers in the Biden administration and is one of the nation's leading voices on economic policy, Dr. Boushey is co-founder of the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, where she served as president and CEO from 2013 to 20. She previously served as chief economist for Secretary of state Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential transition team, and as an economist for the center for American progress, the joint economic committee of the US Congress, the Center for Economic and Policy Research and the Economic Policy Institute. Thank you all for joining us today. My very best.

Mitt Romney (00:09:25)

Hi there. I want to thank all the folks at the Aspen Institute for hosting this discussion on issues that affect some of our most vulnerable citizens and the families across the country. As you know, our families are facing greater financial strain, which was made worse by COVID-19. And of course, marriage and birth rates are at an all-time low. Parents aren't having as many kids as they would like to have, and they say that financial concerns are the primary reason for that. As a matter of fact, if the 2008 birth rate had held constant until today, we would have 5.8 million more kids than we have. So this is a real problem that's going to have major ramifications for our labor force in the years to come. Now on top of that, we also have not comprehensively reformed our family support system in about three decades.

And our changing economy has left millions of families behind. So simply dumping more money into existing programs, programs that really need reform, is probably not ideal economic policy. So America currently spends about \$500 billion a year to support families, but it's not working as it should. Benefits like the earned income tax credit have a massive problem with improper payments stemming from the fact that calculating the benefit is an extremely challenging process for families at the beginning of the year, when the money's going to come at the end of the year. Additionally, our largest child and family benefits are administered once at the end of the fiscal year, leaving uncertainty as to how much the family is going to receive. Existing policy also penalizes marriage and fails to recognize the important and necessary work of parents that choose to stay at home. So I've introduced a proposal that would create a new national commitment to American families by hopefully modernizing antiquated policies into a monthly cash benefit, providing families with confidence for their financial security.

My Family Security Act would provide \$350 a month for each child under six years of age and \$250 a month for each school aged child. Parents would also be eligible to start receiving the benefit four months prior to their child's due date. Now it's important that expecting parents receive the help they need to face expensive associated expenses associated with preparing for the child. And of course, low income families don't have to choose between a bigger paycheck or maintaining eligibility for support. My plan would immediately live nearly three million children out of poverty. It would eliminate the marriage penalty. It would also provide a bridge to the middle class all without adding a dime to the federal deficit. So now I think is a time to a new, our commitment to families, to help them meet the challenges they face as they take on the most important work any of us will ever do, raising our society's children. I continue to work with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to advance the proposal. So thanks again for giving consideration to this and for hosting such an important discussion. All the best.

Heather Boushey (00:12:42)

Hi, thank you so much for having me today. Thank you, Dan, for that terrific introduction. I just appreciate so much that the Aspen Institute recognizes the importance of building a post pandemic care economy. The speakers here today at the conference that you put together are truly leaders in this space. I'm sorry that we're all not here together so we can connect, but happy to be here virtually. But the leaders you have here today, they deserve the credit for keeping this issue on the front burner for policy makers. We knew that the care economy was in trouble long before the pandemic hit. Too few workers have access to paid leave, too few have the right to paid sick days, and too many struggle to afford the kind of quality care of their loved ones need. We know that without time to care, families cannot address all the day in day out conflicts between work and family.

And now these challenges have been unmasked for everyone to see. This past year has taught us all across the nation how the care economy is the foundation of our economy. As childcare centers closed, as schools closed, many parents have had to choose between caring for their children or educating their children and going to work. As a result, millions of workers left jobs in order to do that care work at home. Too often, these were women workers. And we've watched as early childhood education centers, childcare centers and schools have been struggling to provide essential services.

And of course, among those small centers, many of them are small businesses that are owned, managed, and staffed by women of color. We had long known the answer to the twin crises of the lack of good care and the lack of good jobs. Investing in the care economy creates a positive feedback loop.

Those who need to work outside the home can find care, while those who need to provide that care can find work and good jobs. We also know from the research evidence that quality care goes hand in hand with fair wages. Yet, right now, one in seven childcare workers are living in families with income below the poverty line. Nearly half of home care workers live in a low-income household. This is unacceptable. Low wages contribute to high attrition rates, and it reduces the quality of care especially for children. The quality of care can have long-term positive effects, particularly for low-income families. But quality is important to everyone who needs care. Moreover, the knee for long-term care is growing. By 2034, there'll be more individuals over the age of 65 than under the age of 18. This will be the first time that this has happened in US recorded history.

And our aged are going to need high quality care that well compensated workers can deliver. President Biden recognizes that in order to fully address the needs of the care economy, we must build back better than where we were at the start of this pandemic. This requires bold solutions. The administration started to address the need to build a true care economy in the American Rescue Plan. That was the plan that was signed into law on March 11, 2021. It focused on getting a fast infusion of dollars to families and to childcare centers. It provided emergency leave for those hard hit by COVID. It increased the child tax credit from \$2,000 per child to \$3,000 per child and provided \$130 billion to help schools serve all students. And it expanded childcare systems, helping hard hit childcare providers cover their costs so they could keep their employees on their payroll. This is the largest investment in childcare since World War II. But I can assure you, President Biden is not content to stay with interim solutions.

He understands that while we needed short-term investments to get us to the other side of the pandemic, we need long-term policies as we do indeed build back better. The American Jobs Plan, which he proposed a few weeks ago, would be a once in a generation investment that includes money to modernize our nation schools and childcare facilities. It proposes infrastructure reform of our care economy by creating jobs and raising wages and benefits for essential home care workers. President Biden understands that infrastructure is not just roads and bridges, but the underlying organization of our economy. This includes workers and it certainly includes workers who provide care.

The plans that President Biden has laid out offer a new paradigm for thinking about care infrastructure, but there is certainly more to be done. All of us at all stages of our lives deserve to enjoy America's promise in full. If we want an economy that works to its fullest potential we must invest in the people who make all of our other work possible, and we must recognize how critical they are by paying fair wages and creating a system where everyone can thrive. This takes a vision of what could be, and I am very proud to be a part of an administration that is willing to take that leap forward and very pleased to have been able to talk to you for a few minutes today. Thank you.

Maureen Conway (00:18:32)

Thank you so much, Dr. Boushey for joining us today. Thank you to Senator Romney and to Dan Porterfield for also being with us and sharing your remarks. And now I'm excited that we'll turn to our panel conversation to really dig into some of the policy issues. But first, just to ground that conversation, we're going to play a short clip our colleagues at the National Domestic Workers Alliance have put together to really give us the flavor of the experiences of care workers and the texture of care work. And then immediately following that short clip, we'll turn to Erika Beras from Marketplace, who will be moderating our panel. Erika is deeply engaged in issues related to care and the economy. And we're just delighted that Erica can be with us today to moderate this discussion.

(Video clip) Jennifer Smith (00:19:39)

Okay, let's see, brush your teeth.

(Video clip) Veneicia Smith (00:19:49)

None of us could have known that COVID was going to come, but you know, as a mom, we have to multitask, but this is multitasking times two.

(Video clip) Susie Rivera (00:19:58)

I was getting all kinds of calls from people in our community. If I could do errands for them, go to the grocery store, pick up their prescriptions.

(Video clip) Nichole Eubanks (00:20:07)

I'm able to provide care to my children and my husband and my mother. I feel like I have to stay structured otherwise there'd be straight chaos.

(Video clip) Jennifer Smith (00:20:16)

Homeschooling him and then working at the same time feels like I'm Wonder Woman or something. The hardest part about the day is trying to find time to fix lunch, to help with a math problem. It's like my maximum speed. And I'm doing like a hundred miles per hour nonstop.

(Video clip) Nichole Eubanks (00:20:40)

I haven't had anybody I can rely on. Everybody relies on me and I do my best to handle everything.

(Video clip) Speaker 1 (00:20:45)

The purple one. I want the purple one!

(Video clip) Jennifer Smith (00:20:48)

I feel my body deteriorating.

(Video clip) Nichole Eubanks (00:20:53)

Caregiving is definitely underappreciated, especially now with COVID-19.

(Video clip) Susie Rivera (00:21:01)

COVID is the unknown. I've never, ever, ever been as scared to do my job.

(Video clip) Veneicia Smith (00:21:08)

A lot of people think that caregiver's the last thing that you want to do. I hold that title with pride. It's very scary and daunting, but I've been able to find those beautiful moments.

(Video clip) Jennifer Smith (00:21:23)

We're all together and we're healthy. And I know we're safe. Yay got a new pet.

(Video clip) Susie Rivera (00:21:30)

We're a close-knit community. We take care of each other. We know what it's like because we're doing it. And my hope is that we can create a society that cares for us as caregivers, the way we care for others.

Erika Beras (00:21:52)

Good afternoon. What a fitting way to begin this panel, hearing directly from care workers and getting an inside look at what this work actually looks like. I'm very excited to introduce our panelists, who can talk a little bit about the ways in which we'll be injecting public funds into this space and the way that a lot of the work that a lot of this caregiving work care economy work that has been for many are siloed in different categories and sort of pushed aside, is now being looked at as something that is worthy of a larger federal type of infrastructure. I think when we talk about infrastructure for years, we've talked about roads and bridges. And for the first time it appears that we are sort of really addressing it in a different way. And I'm excited to hear from our panelists, as I'm sure you all are, about how this looks for them and what they envision.

I'd like to introduce our first panelist, Abby McCloskey. She's the founder of McCloskey Policy, LLC. Abby will join us in a minute. Then we have Adria Powell, president and CEO of the Cooperative Home Care Associates, Tina Tchen president and CEO of Time's Up, and Dorian Warren, president of the Community Change Co-chair Economic Security Project. All of their bios are found on the site's page, but we can start off and talk a little bit about some of the respective work that everyone's been doing in this sector and what everyone can bring into this. I'm going to start with you Adria, and asking you as a long-term care provider, who's worked closely with workers, can you talk a little bit about that video we just saw and a little bit about what your organization... Who your employees are and what the jobs look like on the ground?

Adria Powell (00:23:39)

Absolutely. Thank you so much, Erika. And I just want to say thank you also to Maureen and the entire team for asking me to participate as part of this panel. I think this conversation is really important and quite timely, and I'm excited to be here today with everyone. So that clip really resonates as a Black woman and mom of two elementary school age children. I very much share similarities to the women in that video. And then the part where Susie Rivera, the home care worker, is talking about her desire for us to have more care invested in the workforce, it really resonates with me and it's particularly poignant because of my connection to home care. So I am the president and CEO of Cooperative Home care Associates, which is the largest 100% employee owned company in the United States. Cooperative was founded more than 35 years ago by a team of people who were working at a large social services organization.

And they were charged with starting up a business that would provide good jobs with low barriers to entry for marginalized communities. And so they landed on home care jobs because they were so bad that even any modest investments would lift the bar and right from the outset, they really deeply understood the connection between creating quality jobs and delivering quality care. Personally, I was lucky enough to be there at the beginning because my mother was one of the team members and her area of expertise was, at that time and still continues to be, workforce development and training. In fact, I have the opportunity to continue to work with my mom this many years later because she's still connected to CHCA through CHTA's sister organization, which is PHI. PHI does policy and advocacy research and practice-based work across the long-term care spectrum. And they focus on ensuring quality care for older adults and people with disabilities by creating quality jobs for workers.

And in fact, PHI is a really incredible resource on these issues for the workforce for long-term care and for care recipients. And I'll drop a quick plug that they had a report that came out in January called PHI's Caring for the Future. Hopefully we can have the link dropped into the chat. It's just really a comprehensive snapshot of the issues that have gone on for the past year during the pandemic. Back to CHCA in 1985, we started with just 12 home care workers. And before the pandemic, we had 2000 workers, but sadly, today our numbers stand at just over 1500. We train, certify, and employ personal care aides and home health aides. And we continue to work to try to make these jobs quality jobs. We do this by investing in comprehensive worker training and education. We work to provide the highest possible wages and benefits given the extreme limitations that we face with Medicaid reimbursement rates. We build career ladders and opportunities for advancement within home care so that workers don't have to leave the field in order to advance.

And as a cooperative, we offer ownership opportunities so people can actually have a stake in the company and share equitably in any kind of financial benefits that we get gained when we're profitable. At CHCA 99% of our workers are Black and Latinx women and more than half are immigrants. These workers provide in-home supports with activities of daily living to adults who are aging, living with chronic conditions, or living with disabilities in order for them to be able to stay in their homes and live independently and stay in their communities. Our workforce has tended to be largely invisible to society and most people don't even think about home care until they need it, or someone in their circle actually needs it. And yet home care workers are the largest segment of the care workforce, a number around 2.3 million nationally.

And this number is going to substantially increase as we've heard in previous remarks. In New York state alone, which is where Cooperative Home Care is located, we are looking at the need to fill roughly 700,000 new job openings between now and 2028. And that doesn't even account for loss of workers to the field. If you factor that in, we're looking at a million jobs that will need to be filled by that same period of time.

Erika Beras (00:28:25)

Well, let me ask you. One of the first things you said was that many of the jobs are held by women. And it makes me think a little bit, Tina, your organization, Time's Up, focuses a lot on issues of equity and gender equity. And a lot of what we've seen throughout the pandemic is that women have been disproportionately affected in every possible way. Can you tell us even a little bit, understand, even when we talk about what we see when we say the care economy, what we're even talking about? What does that even look like?

Tina Tchen (00:28:54)

Well, thank you, Erika. And I'm Tina Tchen, president CEO of Time's Up, and people probably will think of us as the anti-sexual harassment organization sort of founded on the Golden Globes red carpet three

years ago. And we stand for survivor justice and combating sexual harassment, but we also know that if we want workplaces where it doesn't happen in the first place, then we need to build truly safe, fair, and equitable workplaces for everyone. And that means places where women and people of color and LGBTQ and disabled workers can work safely and thrive. And what we're seeing right now from the pandemic is, as you point out Erika, women are disproportionately losing out in this pandemic and in this recovery. Women are over half of the nine million jobs were lost last year in the pandemic. And even more seriously, we know that over two million women have actually left the workforce.

They're not even in the unemployment statistics right now because they've actually left the workforce. And women's labor force participation is at the lowest levels since the 1980s. So we are in a single year undoing generations of effort to try to bring women into the workplace. And so if we don't address this caregiving crisis, we are going to lose those women. We're going to lose them. And it's an up and down the wage scale, it's women on their way to the C-suite and it's women who are working in those hourly jobs and putting food on the table for their kids, because they cannot deal with this lack of a caregiving infrastructure that we do not have in this country. And so to your question, what does that look like?

It looks like actually a comprehensive caregiving infrastructure. What's new about this conversation is that we're not talking about these issues as childcare over here and elder care over here supports for caregivers themselves like Adria in a third place and paid leave over in a fourth place. We need a system that is end-to-end, right? Covers you from the time you have young children to the time you're caring for your elderly parents to the time like me, when you're an elderly person on their way to needing that care, and we don't have it in this country. We have never had that kind of investment or infrastructure. We entered the pandemic, let me just remind everybody, we entered the pandemic as one of only two countries in the world that did not have a national paid leave policy of some form. We didn't even have a national sick leave policy when the pandemic started. And even right now, while we patch together some emergency family leave, it's very limited. We need, actually, a system that will address everyone. And so that is what we talk about when we're talking about a caregiving infrastructure that invests in these caregiving options, that invests in good paying jobs and careers, as Adria talked about, for caregivers themselves, and gives workers themselves that paid leave so that they have the flexibility to address their care needs when they need to.

Erika Beras (00:31:58)

All right. And Dorian, you were an advisor on the Biden administration's transition team when it comes to the care economy. Can you tell us a little bit about why are we situating childcare so prominently right now? I think Tina and Adria kind of spoke to it a little bit, but tell us a little bit more about why it is that all of these different things that we've thought about for so long in silos are finally coming together and convalescing.

Dorian Warren (00:32:22)

Thanks, Erika. I just have to name as... I'm entering this conversation today, and thanks, Maureen, for naming it earlier. Obviously on our minds and in our spirits is the verdict of the trial yesterday around the murder of George Floyd. And of course, the police killing of 16-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant in Ohio. So a lot of conflicting emotions today. And it's not lost on me that as a country and society, we have spent way too much money and resources on our carceral state and not enough on care infrastructure. So those two things are related. It's not unrelated.

To your question, let me just say, Community Change, my organization, we work with about 200 grassroots community groups around the country on a range of issues. About half a decade ago, Erika, we convened a group of organizers and asked, what would it take to fix the flaws and create a genuinely comprehensive and equitable early learning and childcare system? And one of the biggest

challenges that organizers identified was the absence of a broad-based constituency that could mobilize public will in a different direction. There's so much fragmentation, or there has been, between childcare providers in particular, between advocates for children, for parents, for elders in terms of the broader care economy. And so part of our role and where we sit in the larger care ecosystem has been to incubate and help to build the capacity for grassroots organizations focused on childcare that brings together these fragmented stakeholders, right? That bring together providers and teachers and parents to mobilize public will, to change public will, and place childcare firmly on the local, state, and national agendas.

And I have to say what a different place the movement is in today, the broader care movement. Heather Boushey on this call, on this webinar, is in the White House and is the leading thinker in our ecosystem around the care economy. So that is the result of a decade of organizing, of putting forward bold ideas of, in some cases, disruption. And there have been so many policy wins and changes that have led up to this moment at the state and local level, and of course, at the federal level.

Let me say also, this is a movement that really has to be spearheaded and led by black and brown women. And I want to make sure that we center those most directly affected and those impacted families in the push for structural changes to improve care for children and care for all families.

Lastly, I'll just say, there's just so much at the federal level that's moving that makes us very happy. And again, it's not an accident. It took a decade and years of organizing to get here. There's so much moving at the state level, especially amid COVID recovery efforts, that have advanced permanent improvements, particularly in childcare systems. There are a lot of administrative changes that are moving right now.

So I just want to leave you with this one very hopeful note, and that is, the real traction we've seen, especially at the state level that hopefully we can scale up in this moment around childcare, years of organizing by our grassroots partner, OLE in New Mexico, has brought the state of New Mexico one election away from becoming the first state to declare a constitutional right to early childhood education. That is incredible in this moment in which we find ourselves. The idea that it's a constitutional right, that it's an entitlement for early childhood education. And New Mexico voters will consider this proposal in the November '22 general election. So if you have friends and family in New Mexico, start talking to them now.

The last thing I'll just say, and I'll stop here, is beyond the childcare system and creating one that's inclusive and accessible. And in addition to the amazing investments in paid family leave, as well as elder care and home care, the child tax credit that Senator Romney spoke about is also super important. And I just want to make this point. Monthly direct cash for parents to use at their discretion, whether it be food or diapers or childcare, will be such a help to struggling families right now, and will help with the income volatility that so many people struggle with. So I'll stop there.

Erika Beras (00:36:37)

Thank you for those thoughts. That's really interesting. And you mentioned paid family leave, which brings me to Abby, which is something that had been essential part of your work and is something that we've really seen come to the forefront this year, especially when we talk about sick leave and how we define that, and who gets that and how that is doled out. Can you talk a little bit about that and how that's entering the national landscape right now in terms of the discussion?

Abby McCloskey (00:37:01)

Yeah. Thanks, Erika. This is such a powerful panel. I was getting lulled into listening and it's like, oh wait, here we go. But obviously, paid family leave and caregiving is... Personally for me, I'm the mother of three children under the age of five, so I've experienced it. But it's also been the subject of my professional life for the last decade, and came around to it more or less on accident, looking at the drivers of economic mobility. I was at a center-right think tank, and lack of affordable childcare, low wages for caregivers, lack of paid leave, kept coming up as significant barriers for economic opportunity not only for the adults we were talking about, but also for the children who didn't have access to those high quality care institutions. And at the time, I don't think it's out of school to say that wasn't a focus on the right. That's obviously changed significantly, as we can see with Senator Romney's remarks and others.

But committed with a few of my colleagues to start working on, are there bipartisan solutions? Are there center-right solutions that we can put forward to begin this conversation that, admittedly, was significantly more advanced on the left side of the political aisle than it was on the right? I feel like we've gotten to that moment on paid leave. I can't think of a single thing that President Biden and President Trump have in common, other than that they both support a type of paid family leave system. That's something, and I think we should pay attention to that.

And just one last thing. Obviously, the issue of caregiving is a diversity of different needs and different individuals, both on the providing end and the receiving end. And the same with paid leave. There's a lot of different types of leave, whether you're recovering from cancer and it's your own medical leave, whether it's caring for an aging relative, whether it's caring for your child. But to me, why a lot of my focus has been on paid parental leave is because it's literally the moment someone comes into the world is completely dependent. And it's the moment most adults become full-time caregivers, along with full-time work and everything else they're juggling. And at that very vulnerable moment, we are the only developed country that doesn't protect that time, even though we know about the economic implications that has and the health implications that has for both the caregiver and the one receiving care. And I feel like that just sets the stage and the narrative on how we value care, or the lack thereof, and then the decades and years to come after that.

Erika Beras (00:39:26)

Thank you for those thoughts. I think this idea of what the narrative is, is something that's really interesting, and who is describing this narrative. Adria, something you mentioned earlier was about what people that you work with have seen over the course of the past year. And I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about how that's changed throughout the pandemic. What it looked like before the pandemic, what it's looked like over the course of the past year, and how you've seen it change.

Adria Powell (00:39:52)

So I will say that the challenges that our workforce faces definitely pre-dated the pandemic. Home and community-based services have long been underfunded, and really lacking any real investments for workers who deliver this care and the care recipients who receive it. The workers in our sector are underpaid and are providing essential services. We don't invest, as a society, in their training. The training is under-regulated. And even where there are regulations to help support around training, they're antiquated. The regulations are really antiquated and need to change. And even at this stage, we don't have enough accessibility to affordable care. So this was a system, before the pandemic, that had significant challenges, and the pandemic really only exacerbated those challenges and really further destabilized the sector in terms of long-term care.

In addition to the pandemic amplifying those challenges, we did see changes that happened, obviously, as a result of the pandemic. At the very beginning, the whole need to acquire personal protective equipment for our workforce, the amount of personal protective equipment that we needed to secure, and the new type of personal protective equipment that was needed in order to keep our workers safe and keep clients safe was almost impossible to secure and totally unaffordable for us as an organization. So imagine the stressors of trying to help this workforce go out and support the most vulnerable clients who need these services to stay safe and independent, and we can't protect them. And then when we were able to secure the PPE, we needed to train workers so that they could be safe. And that meant taking an extra bus or a train ride to our organization, putting themselves at further risk. Since these are workers who were working in someone's home, we needed to have a centralized location where everybody can be trained.

And then while the majority of this country was going fully remote, we didn't do that, and we couldn't do that. We had to be there. We provide direct services that need to be delivered by human beings, and we had to have workers in clients' homes, talk to clients about their fears of having workers coming into their homes who have been traveling, potentially on public transportation and may have been exposed. We had to talk to workers through their fears around going into clients' homes, where there may be family members who are there, and they don't know what exposure they're going to put themselves through.

Ultimately, the pandemic, over this past year, has really an economic toll on those who could least afford it. We had workers who lost hours during this crisis, while other workers picked up additional hours because shifts were open. And having those extra shifts could mean that someone, while they may be earning more, it also brings a level of stress with it because now workers may be spending more time with their clients and managing their own family needs. We had workers who really talked about challenges with riding public transportation. And early on, some of them talked about using taxis or ride hailing services so that they would stay safer. But on the wages that our workers earn, that's not a solution that's sustainable for any amount of time.

And one thing I will share that I think is really important to understand what we went through this year, and what we're continuing to go through, is an issue that emerged around unemployment and the pandemic unemployment assistance. And that is that home care workers who collected unemployment benefits, or are collecting them, could earn more staying home and not putting themselves at risk or putting their families at risk than they could earn, going to work. I fundamentally believe that the unemployment benefits were, and they continue to be, necessary. My issue is that these jobs are not low wage work, and they need to be compensated in a way that recognizes the essential services that home care workers are delivering.

I had a home care worker who's a member of our board stand in my office and share that her coworkers chose not to go to work and collect unemployment because they could earn more, they could be safer, they could stay with their children who were attending school remotely, they could take care of people, their family who may be battling COVID. And she looked me in the eyes, and she said, "I would earn more staying at home too, but I have to work because who else will be able to take care of my clients if I don't go? They need me and they have no one else." I am in no way passing judgment on any of our workers or the workers who do this job. What I'm saying is that, first and foremost, this is a by-product of the way that our nation values, or doesn't value care, as the case may be.

Erika Beras (00:45:20)

And hearing that, this is something I've heard from many sectors throughout the course of the pandemic, especially sectors in the care economy. I'm curious, Dorian, if this is something you've seen or heard when it comes to childcare, in addition to all the other struggles that there are related to

childcare right now that you addressed earlier. And if you see any effective policy possibly happening to address that anytime soon.

Dorian Warren (00:45:45)

How much time do we have, Erika? There's so many. Let me outline the challenges and then I'll say what I think is moving in terms of policy. So of course, the pandemic in particular has brought into focus childcare as a racial and gender justice issue. And as Tina has already mentioned, we know around 2 million women, I think, have left the labor force, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. For many, it's made more sense to forego those wages they'd be receiving from going back to work in the absence of reliable and affordable childcare. The childcare sector itself is made up of mostly women, especially women of color. Childcare sector lost approximately 400,000 jobs during the pandemic, and many childcare workers have been out of work almost a year. That doesn't include the preexisting issue of childcare deserts in way too many low-income communities and communities of color that existed before the pandemic.

And I do have to go backwards for a minute, Erika, before I go forward about the policies. Because historical context is really, really, really, really, really important here. It's important for understanding the working conditions, the systemic exclusion from economic opportunity that especially black and Latinx early educators and providers experience today. You got to start with the institution of slavery that forced black woman to care for white children. You have to look at Jim Crow, where black women were delegated to domestic work. You have to look at how the New Deal, which was like... I celebrate the New Deal every day, but it also excluded domestic workers from even basic labor protections under the National Labor Relations Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, because we know southern whites resisted policy that would grant black workers new rights at the time. And then more recently, immigration policy has created, you might call a supply of exploitable undocumented women in the care sector. So this is the history that shapes the outcomes for women workers in the childcare industry today.

Then you add on top of that, historically, childcare has been relegated to, let's call it a private responsibility rather than a public good. It's been your individual problem. Then on top of that, you have a childcare sector that's historically been split among a number of lines. So private in-home versus center-based care, formal versus informal care, and uncompensated caregivers. So this has created challenges for uniting a broad coalition of providers, but that has changed dramatically.

And so your policy question, Erika. I do think the opportunity before us right now, today, this is a once in a generation chance to really deliver for working families in America. But also, it's embarrassing we are this rich democracy and the rest of the world has figured this out. This is a once in a generation chance to deliver the core investments in a care economy going forward. And I think that comes with lots of organizing. But as we have just witnessed with the passage of the American Rescue Plan, we can move even with razor thin margins.

And so now, how do we build on this foundation to deliver a just, equitable, inclusive economy? The moment is right now. The proposals are on the table right now. And I know at the end of the conversation, we'll come back to, how can you participate and get engaged to help make this a reality? So at the local, state, and federal level, there are so many things moving right now. The opportunity is before us. So we have to lean in and shift public will to really deliver on the care economy and care infrastructure.

Erika Beras (00:49:12)

And you said a phrase that is really interesting, the private responsibility for the public good. And I think that applies to all of the work that you all do and that you're all engaged in. It makes me wonder, Tina, that's also a lot of the policy work that you've done over the years. And I'm wondering how you see that it's changed, or what your messaging or what you're working towards has changed with the pandemic.

Tina Tchen (00:49:34)

Oh, no, absolutely. I completely agree with everything that Dorian laid out and the history of it. And look, I lived through the Great Recession in the White House. So I did all eight years in the Obama White House as the Executive Director of the White House Council on Women and Girls. And I remember during the last Great Recession, look, I was a single working mom. My immediate boss, Valerie Jarrett, was a single working mom her whole career. The Obamas entered the White House having been two working parents of young children. So we all lived this struggle, and Working Families Agenda was very important to us as we came in.

But I saw the polling, and the polling of the general public. So this isn't just policymakers, it's not just a red state or a blue state thing. This was across the board, everyone across the board at that moment 12 years ago just wanted a job. If you asked workers, do you want your employer to help provide you with caregiving solutions or paid leave? The answer was no. They said, "I just want my employer to get me a job. And the caregiving stuff is my own responsibility." So when Dorian describes that this was just viewed as a private responsibility, workers themselves thought that too, because that's what our history has been in the United States. That is our attitude. This was just something for workers to figure out themselves. Not the employer's job, not public policy job.

I'm happy to say that the last 12 years has seen that dramatic shift where now overwhelming majorities, and we've done the polling at times, we did a poll in December. Even in December, we were deep in the middle of the pandemic and the economic recession, not just nine out of 10 Democrats, eight out of 10 Republican voters also supported comprehensive caregiving solutions. So the script has flipped where now, workers, we actually see it as important. What we need is public policy makers to do it.

So I will tell you the current thing that I'm a little energized about, as Dorian knows, because we've had this conversation in our coalition meetings, is this idea, as Politico put it, that infrastructure calling the \$400 billion investment in home care that's in the American Jobs Plan and the \$39 billion that's in the Rescue Plan for childcare, calling that infrastructure was silly. It was like, no, no, no, no, no, no. It is key infrastructure that we have to build.

If you're going to talk about investing in roads and bridges to get people to work, nobody can get across those roads or bridges if they don't have caregiving. Folks who are trying to build the roads and bridges can't get to work to do them unless there's caregiving. Caregiving is as essential to our economic infrastructure as roads and bridges or the electric grid is, because it is the mechanism by which we put people to work. We will invest in caregiving jobs, in jobs that actually can't be shipped overseas, and will allow somebody else to go to work. So it is doubly stimulative to the economy. So that is the shift. And I agree with Dorian. We're in a generational moment where we see this.

And one more thing I'll add to the mix is it isn't just the workers who see this. So I've been doing equity and inclusion work for decades. I used to be a corporate lawyer. I used to see it from that angle. I used to be a lawyer that advised companies. I have seen employers come to the table in the last year in ways I have never seen before. Because all of a sudden, these CEOs, they're stuck at home with their kids at home. They can't just go up to the office and ignore what's happening at home. They're living it themselves. They're watching their senior women leave the workforce because they can't manage it.

And you've got manufacturers telling the Wall Street Journal, as they did this last summer, half of the manufacturers in Philadelphia said they could not field a full day of work on their manufacturing floor because their workers were at home with caregiving responsibilities.

So now all of a sudden, the employers understand they have a stake in making sure their employees have access to affordable care giving solutions, solutions that can work for them as an employer as well, and to those paid leave solutions. So this is a real turnaround and a shift. And look, if we don't invest in this, and several people have said it, Abby noted it too, we will get left behind the rest of the world. This isn't just something that's just good for individual workers or individual employee or employers. We, as an American economy, will fall behind the rest of the world if we don't make these investments.

Erika Beras (00:54:05)

Well, you got a little bit ahead of me, Tina. I was going to ask Abby about what kind of pressure we're seeing from the corporate world and from employers towards moving towards more parental leave policies. Because, as you said, this is something people are seeing. They've seen it now in real time. It's actually affecting a lot of companies' bottom lines, so that's shifting a little bit of the narrative as well. And I was wondering, I know Abby's done some work on how it's viewed on the employer side during the pandemic, so maybe you can tell us a little bit about that.

Abby McCloskey (00:54:35)

So we're winding a year. We went into the pandemic with less than half of low wage workers having access to a single paid sick day, and less than one in five workers of any income level having access to paid family leave. And that's incompatible with a public health crisis, with schools shut down and childcare centers shut down. And so I applaud Congress for passing the Emergency Paid Leave provisions on a bipartisan basis. And paying for them, not putting it on the backs of employers and specifically small businesses, but the government coming alongside and saying, this is really important. And it's so important, we're going to finance it for you and for your workforce. But now, those provisions have been extended through most of this year, but as we emerge from the pandemic, we have to think of what types of paid leave policies are sustainable in the long-term, not just those calibrated to a pandemic type environment.

Although I will note that even the Emergency Paid Leave provisions, there's a new survey out by AEI, by a former colleague, Angela Rachidi, which found that one in five workers, mostly women, mostly minority women, mostly low income minority women, reported needing leave in the last year and not being able to take it. And so that's a gaping hole in what should have been a robust safety net provision during this crisis. We need to understand why that is. If it was fear of retribution among colleagues, if it was the loss of income because the paid leave provisions weren't 100% wage replacements. We need to really understand that so the next time around, we have a more robust emergency system in place. And same going forward. When we look at a permanent type plan, we need to make sure that these types of policies aren't going to leave behind the most vulnerable people that technically, they're being crafted for or should be being crafted for.

I was part of a bipartisan working group with Heather Boushey with others for the last three years on paid leave, and the group came to consensus around an eight-week paid parental leave policy. People didn't like it for various reasons, but came behind that. And it would be my hope that that's included as part of Biden's next plan, the American Families Plan, something that we know has bipartisan support. And there's a lot of support, obviously, for broader types of leave too. For elder care and sick leave and medical leave. But they're more difficult to treat like one size fits all, and so I think our group had struggled to come to consensus on those types of policies.

Erika Beras (00:56:58)

Well, I was going to ask about what your thoughts are on the infrastructure plan and how they link these different types of leave policies together.

Abby McCloskey (00:57:07)

Well, I'm thrilled that this is being addressed as part of infrastructure. I'm thrilled that it's a comprehensive plan that Biden's put forward. I believe there's a lot in there that could have significant bipartisan support. On the caregiving side particularly, that \$8,000 tax credit, which among wary Republicans could be thought of as a massive choice program for childcare and for preschool, that parents can choose if they want to send their child to center-based care or home-based care or Montessori or something in between. I think that that could generate a lot of bipartisan support. I think the paid leave provisions, especially depending on how they're scaled, we know from public polling generates significant bipartisan support. I would love to see provision in there building on some of the work that the Bipartisan Policy Center has done about investing in apprenticeship and vocational opportunities to increase our supply of caregivers right at the beginning, in addition to having ladders of opportunity. I think, as Adria said, once they're in the job, I think there's a lot in that package that could generate support.

Of course, my fear is that one side will hold tightly to all the provisions in there and the other side will just say no to everything in there, and there's not going to be engagement on the specifics. And yet, that is so what's needed to have a sustainable care infrastructure going forward.

Erika Beras (00:58:29)

And until we get to that point, Adria, I'm curious what thoughts you have on how employers and how that can be handled until we're at the point where policy is actually fully addressing this.

Adria Powell (00:58:41)

So I think it's important to have strategies as care employers and for us in long-term care. And in this sector, our strategy is really to invest in the workers to the degree that we can. And that has really helped us to maintain lower turnover rates across our company. So the workers that we have trained are in this work and stay in this work and bring a level of continuity of care to the work.

I also believe that we add value to the job in many other ways, even if we can't raise the base wage, which we can't do alone. We invest in our workforce by providing them with free training. We guarantee them job placement at the end of their training. For workers who want to work full-time, we work to get them those full-time schedules. We have peer mentors who support workers when they're facing challenges on the job. Our home care workers are organized by 1199 SEIU and they benefit from union sponsored healthcare. We provide free dental, life insurance, paid time off, auto enrollment in 401k, and ownership. The piece about the ownership is really important and affords people the opportunity, when the company is profitable, to actually share in the benefits of their labor and what that labor has created.

Erika Beras (01:00:08)

Do you think that that model... I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you. Do you think that that model would work for every company or for everyone until there is some kind of policy in place?

Adria Powell (01:00:21)

I think it would be really challenging to turn every company into a cooperative, but I believe that the principles in a cooperative really lend themselves to supporting labor and recognizing workers as central, and having workers be able to benefit from the work that they do in a shared, equitable way.

I think it also means investing workers and treating them with respect. We have to value the contributions that workers are making. And for CHCA, one of the things that we do is also really work on policy advocacy efforts to ultimately get that base wage increased for the workforce. And in fact, this year, we worked really closely. I appreciated what Dorian said around having parents, providers, and teachers all working collectively together. We worked with grassroots organizers, other home care providers, consumers who need the services, and workers this year to really try to advance legislation that would increase home care worker wages to 150% of the minimum wage in New York. So those are the ways in which we are working now to change things.

Tina Tchen (01:01:35)

And can I just add, Erika? What Adria is saying is really important for all of us. Because this is already, as we sit here today, and anybody who's tried to find childcare for themselves or elder care already knows, this is an industry where demand is far outstripping supply. You just can't find it. It doesn't matter what your income is. You can't find quality childcare or elder care or care for a disabled loved one. And creating those economic opportunities, investing in good wages and labor protections for caregivers is critical if we're going to grow the supply, right? And this is demand is only going to increase. There's over three and a half million Americans turn 65 every year, right? 70% of us are going to need care at some point that doesn't account then the babies that are born every year. And so if we're going to really have supply, that is well-trained and well compensated and is available when we need it, we've got to make the investments in the caregiver workforce that Adria's talking about.

Erika Beras (01:02:38)

Tina, I want to ask you, because your organization recently published the paper, talking about what the economic impact would be, and you're somewhat talking about it, but can you sort of tell us in sort of broader strokes what this would mean? What the care economy would actually mean for our greater economy?

Tina Tchen (01:02:52)

Absolutely. So we actually took the Biden Harris campaign proposal as the proxy, right? Of a 770 billion over 10 years investment and use that broad stroke investment and put it through the economic analysis with Lenore Palladino up at UMass, and really tried to analyze what would be the economic or the traditional way of thinking about stimulus. Right? And as you come, trying to stimulate the economy, and what we found is, is that if you make that scale of an investment in a broad-based comprehensive caregiving system and structure, you will generate two and a half million jobs a year, right? So it little shy of that two million jobs a year and \$220 billion of economic activity every year for the 10 years of that investment, right? That is significant. And that actually, if not those numbers do not count what I said

earlier, which is the fact that these are jobs that actually allow someone else to get a job. So we didn't even take that into account.

We use the traditional model of how many jobs get created and how many sort of adjacent jobs as that spending increases right? Of those workers, and that's the level of stimulus that you get. So that's why the economic case for these investments right now at this critical juncture of our country is, the case could not be clearer.

Erika Beras (01:04:21)

And then Dorian, I'm curious what your perspective is on how the administration is approaching caregiving in the infrastructure package, and what role you see government having in all of this.

Dorian Warren (01:04:31)

Well, I'm really appreciative of this administration helping us to leave behind our outdated 20th century notions of infrastructure and offering up, thanks to lots of work with people on this webinar I've been doing the last decade of thinking of care infrastructure as central. So we know childcare, home and long-term care, paid family leave. That is the infrastructure that supports families that make up the economy. It makes work possible for others. To Tina's point on, just to say, on the investments, we know that investing in children's early development and a stronger care infrastructure builds the foundation for tomorrow, right? It is the down payment on the next generation's ability to tackle the problems of tomorrow. But I want to acknowledge that that makes the politics really hard because we don't see the results of those investments. And two-year election cycles. We might not see the results for a generation.

And so that makes the politics hard, and we have to make the hard choices around investing now in a care system. So, from my perspective, we have been honestly thrilled with the commitment of this administration to really investing in the broad and combined pillars of care infrastructure. Obviously, I care a lot about childcare, whether it's investment in facilities to, investments in the system overall, to providing support for low-income parents, that makes it affordable and accessible. The \$40 billion released from the American Rescue Plan for investments and childcare last week shows us this administration is very serious. The vice-president has made comments about this. So we're very, very hopeful and optimistic about what this means in terms of creation of millions of jobs and the childcare early education sector and the broad care economy or at large. We still have to, I'm an organizer, so we have to keep the pressure on at all levels to ensure that federal legislation and proposals are passed, that the implementation goes well at the state and local level.

We, a lot of us are engaged in policy advocacy, and we might win a policy and then we go onto the next thing and implementation is the story. How we implement any given policy makes all the difference in how people experience it. And so the last thing I'll say is I do think making sure that going forward for this administration, that we are also ensuring the voices of those most directly affected are at the table and are heard and are front and center and create a feedback loop to assess throughout the next several months and years, how we're actually doing and how those investments in care infrastructure are being spent.

Erika Beras (01:07:23)

So I'm going to open a question up front for everyone, and just say one thing that you each hope can be achieved to build a sustainable care economy for post pandemic. One thing that you hope is achieved, and we can say sort of give it around, like within the next year even, and I can, I'll start with you, Tina, because you're laughing and we can kind of go around the room.

Tina Tchen (01:07:46)

Well I'm laughing, Erika, it's never just one thing, right? Because if it had been one thing, we would have solved the problem already. But if I had to focus on the one immediate thing, I really do think we got to support the American Jobs Plan and what I expect will be announced next week in President Biden's address to Congress on the American Families Plan, which I hope will include the paid leave provisions in addition to the investments. That's the thing. I also learned this in the White House. You may sit there and you got the bully pulpit, and he's got the plan. That plan doesn't get passed from the White House alone. And to Dorian's point about organizing. People need to make their voices heard on both sides of the aisle, and I really appreciate Abby being here and pushing that, because this is not a red and blue state problem.

The pandemic didn't hit red and blue states. Caregiving challenges for workers didn't hit red and blue states. This is everybody right now is living it, and everyone needs to make their voices known to their policymakers that this is what they want. And so it doesn't get stuck in those corners that Abby just described, right? With everybody just going off in Washington to their partisan corners, because we do know that everyone across the country really needs this right now. Seize the need. And so we need employers and workers and local electeds to make that known right now. That's like the one thing I would pick. Not one thing, but one concept.

Erika Beras (01:09:12)

Let's see, Abby, I saw you unmute yourself.

Abby McCloskey (01:09:18)

Oh yeah. It's genius. Package a bunch of different things into one thing. I was going to do the same thing. If there was a kind of a skinned down, if we could get the moderates in the Senate to come together, Senator Sinema, Senator Romney, people who have led on these issues to come together to say, this is the type of, these are the pieces of President Biden's plan to support, these are other ones we would include and kind of come up with some type of bill that both sides could get behind to triangulate the argument, which we know how it's going to play out.

We know how it's going to play out and we know that when these things are passed on a strictly partisan basis, whether it's the ACA, whether it's tax reform, whether it's all the things that we've been seeing, they're not as sustainable as they can be if they are kind of corded together and passed with buy-in from both sides of the aisle, and I know that's a huge ask, especially in this political environment, but I would just hope that there's something that can triangulate what is going to be kind of the standoff here on this next package I imagine as it's released next week.

Erika Beras (01:10:17)

All right. Thank you. Audra?

Adria Powell (01:10:22)

Yeah. I mean, I would share the same points that both Tina and Abby are talking about. I think for me, I look even before that, to the place of trying to ensure that there's recognition for an understanding of the ripple effects of higher wages and better treatment. So when Tina's talking about having care givers so that people can go to work, there's endless ripple effects or not endless, but I guess yes, endless, right? I think about if we make these investments, right, on community health, workers themselves are able to actually go to work and deliver the care, the care that they need to deliver. They're healthy, right? For the person who's receiving that care to listen to a worker or listen to them about what the client's needs are for us in long-term care, but I'm sure it's the same in childcare, listening to the people who are involved and respecting and valuing and responding to them. The impact on community is just incredible.

For us in long-term care, the impact of investing in these workers is going to lessen the spending that happens in our sector because we have well-trained workers who can identify situations and avert things like hospitalizations, and if they're working as part of the healthcare team, be able to identify situations that could reduce the number of emergency department visits or prevent people from going into institutions, which is not where they want to receive care, and is a far more costly setting than to be in home care. Thinking about how these policies will impact the social determinants of health, that also could be uplifted and positively impacted with the higher wages and better treatment of this workforce, right? So positively impacting people's experience around housing and food security, help incomes, and lifting people out of poverty and keeping them out of poverty. Again, to Tina's point, the economic case is there, like we can't leave out the economic case of creating these jobs and then the infusion back into the economy by having these jobs exists, so that's what I will share.

Abby McCloskey (01:12:53)

Yeah. Dorian?

Dorian Warren (01:12:55)

Cool. It's really hard to follow my three colleagues. I don't have much to add, and I'll just maybe go in this direction. There is the economic case. I just have to say, this is also very personal for me. I, on this call, as we've been talking, have been dealing with an allergic reaction in my six-month-old, I do not have childcare. As soon as this call is over, we will be heading to the pediatrician. That means I have to take the rest of the day off to deal with this emergency. And I am fortunate that my organization provides leave, paid leave, but most Americans that is not the case.

And so I do think we have to do some collective problem solving for collective problems that aren't just individual problems. And therefore we will all benefit because all of our fates are linked, and we are, this is the moment. As we said, throughout this time, we are on the precipice of a once in a generation opportunity to really make a transformative change in the care infrastructure and economy that will benefit all of us. So there lots of cases to be made. The thing that everybody here that's listening or watching can do is to raise your voices and create a strong bold echo chamber that cannot be ignored when it comes to the care economy.

Erika Beras (01:14:06)

Okay. So I'm going to open it up to some questions from some of the folks in the audience and anybody who'd like to answer can feel free to answer. The first question I'm going to have is, what is the role of the school system in supporting childcare, which is a really interesting question, because we've seen that all

across the country from what different school systems are doing. What is the role of all of the different school systems? They're all different and how is that possibly going to change too? I'm adding that part because I'm kind of interested in hearing what your thoughts are on that.

Dorian Warren (01:14:42)

Whew. I don't even know how to tackle that question so I'm going to ask for help from my coll... I mean, it varies so widely, right? Because we have thousands of different school systems who are structured and then you have to sort out pre-K, early learning centers, in home care. There's just so much to unpack with that question so I can't really do it justice except to say that this is a moment, sort of reminds me, I keep going back to history of the New Deal period in the 30's of some creative experimentation around problem solving. Are there some models, some different new models we can try out in partnership with school systems and the early learning system around providing a different way, a model for childcare?

Let me make it concrete. Imagine you're a parent and you have say a three-year-old and a seven-year-old in first grade, and let's say that the childcare center, if you're lucky enough to have one close enough, and you're not in a childcare desert, is maybe three miles from the elementary school, your child goes to. What are, what's a different way to connect and make it easier for a parent to get that access to care for those two young kids?

Is there some different way to think about partnerships, say with existing public school systems that are K through 12 and the pre-K system, for instance, and I know there are a lot of models out there, whether in New York city or Seattle or other places that are experimenting with this, but it's a really good question. I don't have a really good answer. So I'm looking to Abby and Tina and Adria to help me out here around how to think about even what that relationship should look like.

Tina Tchen (01:16:31)

Well, let me jump in because it's related a little bit to something we talked about at the start, which was the siloing right? Of how we look at these issues. Let me first acknowledge because I do, when we were in the White House, one of my passions has been global girls' education. One of our great gems is our public school system in the United States, and even in the places where we've got schools that aren't up to par, they are so vastly better than the place that a young girl has an India that she has to actually pay for to go to a school with no electricity. But having said that, we've just thought about it in a very narrow way. And the investments in the public school system have been very narrow, very locally controlled on an agrarian calendar that makes no sense, like what are we doing?

Making sure everybody can be home for the harvest in the summertime? In our country, leaving working parents to try to figure that gap out in the summer. And so we haven't thought about systemically, right, to Dorian's point and that's what we need to do. So we need to pull that school system thinking into also, what is the connection to early childhood? What is that connection to summer learning? What is that connection to what families are experiencing across the board and where the location of all these institutions are in a cohesive way, because it's just been siloed piece by piece, by piece, by funding stream, by governance structure, by where the advocates are. And that is also part of the once in a generation moment. We need to sort of look at one of our greatest assets in our country, which is our public school system and how can we leverage that to its best abilities that will benefit children and their education as well as their parents.

Erika Beras (01:18:08)

And this is a somewhat related question that also came in is how can we incorporate other groups that have been doing this type of work? Faith-based groups, community organizations. How is funding passed down to counties? I think I'm putting three questions together in one, but they're very similar. I'm wondering if any of you have any thoughts on, again, this is more of a siloing of different groups that are trying to sort of do the same type of work.

Abby McCloskey (01:18:33)

Yeah. I'll speak to that. I think it has to be a big tent to include these types of groups. And I think that that becomes more difficult if either political party holds to just one solution. And it's just this one, and this can be the only one. And we've kind of seen that with the Family Act on the left. I think in order to bring these different groups and we have to kind of open ourselves up to creative and innovative thinking about if there are policy solutions we haven't even thought about yet, because we haven't heard from all of the groups who are affected by this. So I think that's very important.

Adria Powell (01:19:05)

Yeah. I would underscore that particularly around this experience that we have just had and we're coming off of. Broadening the stakeholder groups and also being able to not necessarily focus on the areas where we may not share a commonality, but looking for where we have a collective position and really leveraging that. I think it's going to be essential to really, to changing this, and being able to come up with those innovative approaches and responses that we've been stuck in the same place. We've had the status quo and things haven't changed, and in order for us to really test out new models that are going to infuse this care economy and really have it take hold, I think we've got to broaden the stakeholder group.

Erika Beras (01:19:56)

This next question is something I know I've done a number of stories about is how would raising the minimum wage change a lot of the discussion that we've all been having?

Tina Tchen (01:20:11)

I was looking to Adria to jump in, because obviously raising the minimum wage is key for home care givers and our home health workers, as I think she laid out on how many of them are subsisting right now. Some of our most critical work that folks are paying for, which is to care for our children or care for an elderly or loved one, who's ill and needs specialized care where they're subsisting on poverty level wages. So that's one thing that we've got to change. That actually to my point earlier, is what's going to help fix the supply problem, right? Because if we invest in these and we see them not as jobs that we only sort of pay for, cause we don't really believe it's a real industry and a real job, and see it as a profession and a job with those ladders of opportunity that Adria was talking about, then more people will come into it, which is what we want and what we need as our population ages and as we grow.

So yet, and to the naysayers about what that will cost. We can build a supports. We can build in tax credits. This is where the public part comes in, right? We can build in supports for small and medium sized businesses that need to do this already and provide it as we grow the economy. As wages go up, we know these are in jobs that the money gets spent right away. These are folks, if you're at a \$15

minimum wage, you are spending that paycheck to put food on the table all the time. So that's what's creating more jobs and stimulating the economy.

Abby McCloskey (01:21:38)

I mean, if I could just jump in, because I wouldn't be a token concern on the panel without raising the concerns about a \$15 minimum wage, including by studies, by the CBO that would show results in over a million jobs lost. And that's not even going all the way up to \$15 per hour. I think we have to do a better job. I don't think that anyone who works full-time should live in poverty. I think there should be a wage subsidy and wage support. I am supportive of something like the earned income tax credit that we do better that can be delivered with every paycheck instead of once at the end of the fiscal year. I think there are ways we can do this, that don't have the downsides that are potentially there with a higher minimum wage. And so I'm hesitant.

I think the minimum wage, it benefits one group, but there's an unseen group that would lose their jobs because of it, and I think we can support and raise wages, even higher using a different mechanism, like a wage subsidy that's actually targeted to our most vulnerable people as opposed to a 17 year old working his first job at McDonald's getting that too. I'd like to divert as much support as we can to the most vulnerable.

Adria Powell (01:22:44)

I'd like to share in terms of New York State. I'm sorry, Dorian. I just wanted to share, that the jobs, at least for us, in-home care, in education, and childcare, right? These aren't minimum wage jobs. Particularly in home care, we are faced in New York State right now with fast food workers who are about to make \$15 an hour in upstate regions and home care workers are still going to make \$12.50 in those same regions, right? That fundamentally comes from a place of who's doing this work and how we look at whether or not this is valuable work. And it is, I mean, people, I have been in situations where people have said to me, "Why are you fighting for that?" These workers, and this is people also in home care. I'm ashamed to say, but all these folks do is babysit grandma and white people's butts. That is absolutely not true.

If you ever needed care, ever had someone provide care to you, you recognize the value that they bring to allowing you to go to work, to allowing your family to have peace of mind, to having quality health outcomes and being able to age and be in their homes and in their communities, and those workers have dignity in the job that they're doing.

Dorian Warren (01:24:15)

Can I just quickly say amen to all of that? And just to emphasize, this is a gender justice issue, the minimum wage, because we wouldn't be having this conversation if care workers across the board are making minimum wage if this wasn't considered women's work, period. We wouldn't be having this conversation. And so I care a lot of course, about childcare. And if we've really, as a country, believe that zero to five in terms of development of the human brain is the most important time in a person's life, how is it conscionable to be okay with a minimum wage for an early educator? It is morally disgusting, frankly, and the economics is bad too. As Tina has already pointed out, it's just bad economics. So I do think we have to have a very different and serious conversation about the value we place on work in this country, particularly on work that's been gendered and considered women's work, particularly women of color.

Care work has to be seen as the most essential work that one can do and jobs have dignity. And we should be honoring all of our care workers, not just in a moment of a pandemic when they're considered essential workers, but this is the most important work human beings can do, I would argue. And so we have to have our policies catch up if we really believe that as a value.

Erika Beras (01:25:36)

And I'll have one final question that came through, which is what is the role of organized labor in all of this? What is the role that can play in linking these different siloed, the different ways in which caregivers who work in different siloed ways can sort of organize together and what struggles may there be along the way there? No. Okay.

Tina Tchen (01:26:06)

Well, look, I'll jump in. I thought Adria might just because she's in this and with SEIU and organizing. First of all, just starting with caregivers, they're outside of the labor protections, right? As Dorian went through the history on why they have been excluded, but they have been excluded from the ability to organize, excluded from the protections of what we expect otherwise in our economy. I don't think people understand that, right? That actually caregivers exist outside the formal economy. And that's what we need to do is to bring them, treat them like we're treating all the other jobs that need labor protections and wage protections for folks.

That's a critical piece where I think organized labor is a part of it. And I think organized labor is the place where when you look at jobs that are labor union jobs. Things like wages go up and the empowerment of vulnerable workers happens. That's another piece that is in the Biden plan is to make sure that they're supporting the ability of workers to organize.

Erika Beras (01:27:20)

Anybody else?

Adria Powell (01:27:23)

Yeah. As an organized organization that is within SEIU you, I think it's really important that workers have the ability to organize and because it does, it helps to improve the jobs. And there's a lot of gains and wins that have come along with unionization. We work very closely with 1199 SEIU and the more that we can have workers be able to organize is just really important. So thank you, Tina.

Erika Beras (01:28:00)

All right. Well, thank you all of our wonderful panelists for your thoughts today. Thank you for all the great questions that came in. I'm going to pass it over to Natalie Foster, who's going to introduce our next conversation. So thank you all.

Dorian Warren (01:28:15)

Thank you.

Natalie Foster (01:28:17)

Thank you all so much. Thank you, Erica, for moderating. Thank you. Dorian, Adria, Abby, and Tina. That was a great conversation. My name is Natalie Foster. I'm a Senior Fellow at the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program and co-founder of the Economic Security Project. And this next conversation is so important because indeed policy is downstream from culture, and nobody gets that more than these next two change makers that I'm so pleased to introduce. I am thrilled to introduce my friend Ai-jen Poo, who is the National Domestic Workers Alliance Executive Director. She is the co-founder of Caring Across Generations, and a true MacArthur genius. And she will be in conversation with Justin Baldoni, known to so many of us as Rafael on the hit TV show, Jane the Virgin and is the director and producer of Clouds and Five Feet Apart, and is the co-founder of Wayfair Studios. So Ai-jen, Justin, thank you so much for being here. We are really looking forward to your conversation and I hope that you will take it away now.

Ai-jen Poo (01:29:36)

Thank you so much, Natalie. Great to see you and huge gratitude to the Aspen Institute for hosting this incredible conversation today. I learned so much from that last panel and it's so great to see you, my friend, Justin, how are you?

Justin Baldoni (01:29:53)

Hi, it's so good to see you. So good to see you. Although it's an interesting, there's a lot in the air this morning.

Ai-jen Poo (01:30:01)

That's right before we dive in, I did want to acknowledge the intensity of this time, especially for black communities. As we grapple with the ongoing devastation of police violence in our nation, and really a hope and a commitment to transforming all this pain and heartbreak into more investment and care for black children, families, and communities, and all of us moving towards that vision together.

Justin Baldoni (01:30:37)

May we get there? May we get there?

Ai-jen Poo (01:30:40)

That's right.

Justin Baldoni (01:30:42)

And may we love each other enough to have justice look like love.

Ai-jen Poo (01:30:46)

Hmm. Beautiful. Justin, I have been looking forward to this conversation because you and I started this conversation about how we value care in our country years ago, maybe three years ago, four years ago?

Justin Baldoni (01:31:03)

Okay. I'm a baby, I'm a baby in this conversation. I'm sitting down with an Einstein in terms of care and infrastructure and giving. So I continue to be a baby, but man, you are something else, Ai-jen. I've been so inspired by all that you do and continue to do and fight for.

Ai-jen Poo (01:31:21)

Well, I feel honored because our partnership has enabled a whole opening of a conversation about care with men and so much more as a part of this larger opening that we're experiencing in our economy right now in our country. Right? When we first started talking, we were in this moment where most of us kind of thought about caregiving as a private, personal burden, something to be kind of dealt with in the privacy of our homes [inaudible 01:31:58] by women. And if we couldn't figure it out, it was because we somehow failed or we didn't have the right job so we can take time off or we are a bad parent or didn't save enough or something. And I think what the pandemic has shown us is that we are all struggling. We're in this together and we don't have the public policy and infrastructure we need in place to support us to work and care for our families at the same time. And that, my friend, feels like a huge opening and an opportunity. And I feel like everyone is starting to come together.

Justin Baldoni (01:32:37)

I'm just curious. What was that like for you? Because you have been for years talking about this pushing policy and then of course COVID-19 hits and there's some attention now. There's like space for it because people are like, "Oh, I get what you were talking about now. Well, that's what you were talking about. Well, that makes sense." I'm just curious.

Justin Baldoni (01:33:02)

Well, that makes sense. I'm just curious outside of all ... I know we're going to get into policy, and you're going to talk and educate all of us on that. But I'm just curious for you, what that's like to have your life's work suddenly be acknowledged very rapidly. And at the same time also balancing the reason why it's being acknowledged, it's devastating at the same time. What did you go through?

Ai-jen Poo (01:33:29)

Well, I think one piece of it is to see the experiences of caregivers be acknowledged and affirmed, that caregivers who have been kind of holding this, caring us as families, as an economy, finally being recognized and applauded. Care workers applauded as essential workers, family caregivers understood as needing support urgently. There's all kinds of calls to action, and seeing that recognition has been so transformative.

And I know one of our members, Susie Rivera, just had a conversation with the president of the United States, President Biden over the weekend. And it was all about her work, her experience, her life. And for that to be visible right now is so transformative and life-affirming.

Justin Baldoni (01:34:35)

Just being able to hold court and have that, right? I mean, that's such a huge win.

Ai-jen Poo (01:34:42)

Yeah. Well, as an artist and a storyteller, you know the power of seeing your experience recognized and represented and what it means in terms of feeling a part of the story, and a protagonist in your own story. And I'd love to hear what care has meant to you and your personal experience. What is your care story? We all have one.

Justin Baldoni (01:35:15)

I'm going to flip it because I want to talk about ... Because I don't have the care story that ... I mean, I have care stories, but this is what I want to say around my version of that.

Ai-jen Poo (01:35:29)

Yeah.

Justin Baldoni (01:35:31)

I am somebody who, because of my privilege, has missed a lot. I've missed a lot. I've overlooked a lot. And honestly, it's our friendship and so much of the work that you've done, your TED Talk, which was brilliant by the way. And we can always talk about that.

I would say that what I want to talk about right now is my version of this care story is how open my eyes have become to taking care of the ones that care for everything else, the ones that make the invisible work, that do the invisible work to make all the other work possible.

And I've missed it. I've missed it. I don't know if I would have been compassionate or empathetic enough or had the wherewithal in the middle of everything falling apart to think about all of the people when the pandemic hit, all the caregivers that were unable to care and were without jobs. And I don't know if I would have been able to do that had it not been for our friendship and for the work that you're doing.

So my version of talking about care right now is talking about how me as a white, straight, cisgender privileged man, has missed so much of the importance of it because society has taught me that that invisible work doesn't matter. And you coming in, reminding all of us at the beginning of the pandemic, like you got to keep paying people. We have to keep taking care of our workers, our caretakers, the people that are making minimum wage who are working three, four jobs just to put food on the table. They are the ones that were affected the most by it.

I got to be honest. I might seem woke to a lot of people out there that don't really know me, but I don't think I probably would have missed it. I would have been so wrapped up in my family and trying to figure out our world and having our kids and all of this, that I don't know if I would've been thinking about all of those other people.

And I think that right now, that's the care story. I think that's the most important for me, is my recognition of my shortcomings and my limited visibility with privilege. And it's the work that you're doing. It's conferences like this. It's the policies that you're trying to pass. The awareness that's happening that I think is making a lot of folks in my position able to see things that we haven't been able to see before.

And the fact of the matter is, and I still have touch points to care all over my life, of course. I have caregiver friends, I have family, but it's something different now. And in my awareness, to go from an awareness to understanding to a compassion and empathetic place, are steps that I don't know if I would've been able to take without you and your work, and without your TED Talk and your stories, and the beautiful work that you're ... And Monica, and I'm so lucky to be surrounded by these such bad-ass powerful women who are changing the world literally.

So that's kind of just ... I just wanted to throw that out because I think there's a lot of people like me that maybe don't admit it. There's a lot of people that where the pandemic hit, we're like, "Wait, I got to pay that person, even though they're not coming?" There's a lot of people like that, and they won't talk about it. They'll just say, "Oh, yeah, I paid." "Oh, yeah, of course I paid her." But it doesn't mean that you weren't thinking that you shouldn't.

And it's the thought that came up for a lot of people who were so focused on themselves. That thought is the thing we have to unlearn and that matters the most because that thought indicates where we actually view the human beings who care for us, the invisible work that makes the work possible.

And I couldn't be here. I couldn't do what I'm doing, if it were not for my wife and our nanny who we pay. Capitalism is not possible without the unpaid labor of mothers and all of the minimum wage here that we have all around the country. So that's my rant.

Ai-jen Poo (01:39:46)

No, it's not a rant. I think you're telling the story about this country. You're describing our culture, which is a culture that has made some of the most important relationships and work in our world, the least visible, the most taken for granted and the least valued and protected.

Justin Baldoni (01:40:11)

Why do you think that is?

Ai-jen Poo (01:40:13)

Well, and this speaks to your life's work, which is that I think that we have always associated care with women. And then women have always borne the cost of us not having care infrastructure, not having childcare, not having paid leave, not having long-term supports and services or home and community care for the elderly and people with disabilities.

Women have disproportionately kind of borne the weight and the cost of our societal lack of that system. And women of color who do work in the care economy have borne the brunt of it, working for

poverty wages and not able to take care of their own families doing this work. And so I think it is a reinforcing narrative that the people who do this work and this work itself are less than, less than real work, less than real workers, less than fully human.

And we have the opportunity right now to write a new story. And that's where I think storytellers, artists, director, producer like you, really come in and why it's so powerful that you've created this platform. For those of you who don't know it, it wasn't in the bio. But Justin has created this incredible platform called Man Enough to spark conversations among men about masculinity, conversations that are really essential to us undoing this hierarchy of human value and of economic value that keeps one set of people below another set and devalues work that's associated with women, devalues care work.

And I just love for you to share a little bit about why you started Man Enough and why you wanted to partner with us at Caring Across Generations on Man Enough to Care.

Justin Baldoni (01:42:30)

Well, first of all, thank you. That was an awesome answer. I learned every time I listen to you especially. It just makes me realize how much more I wish we talked. More private conversations.

Ai-jen Poo (01:42:46)

Deal.

Justin Baldoni (01:42:47)

Less public ones. I much prefer being a student than having you ask me questions, but Man Enough is really ... It's really reflective of my journey. It's my journey kind of digging up and unearthing a lot of these truths that I think I've been taught as a man to not explore, to have uncomfortable conversations, to challenge the very systems that are put in place that benefit us, benefit folks that look like me, which is messy and uncomfortable and really to learn.

It's also been created selfishly. It's not like as much as I wish Man Enough was like super successful and it made all this money. It's really the opposite. It's like I'm selfishly doing it because I'm learning. And I get to sit at the table with folks like you. And really what it's coming down to is let's have these conversations that we don't have. Why aren't we talking about it? Why aren't we talking about this stuff? Why haven't I thought about caregiving? Why has that not even entered my brain? Why have I just assumed that it's a woman's job?

What's the part of my brain that just when I see the word caregiving, it's synonymous with woman? And then if that's there in my brain, where did it come from? Was it planted? Was it taught? Definitely, I wasn't born thinking that. Well, geez, if that's the case, how do I unlearn that? What does it actually look like? This is like, I call it kind of the why ladder. It's like we got to keep asking ourselves why to get to the truth, to the actual answer.

And we have not been taught to do that as men, not in America, not in most Western countries. So Man Enough is really my journey of unpacking and undefining what it means to be a man to honestly just make room for anybody who identifies as a man to be a man. I don't want to redefine it. I want to undefine it because in redefining it, all we're doing is we're creating a new definition that somebody is not going to fit in.

So somebody out there is going to be left out of a definition and that's going to cause them the same pain that all of us are experiencing when in reality, you got to throw the whole damn thing out.

So, yeah, and it's funny and what I was thinking about ... So my book comes out Tuesday called Man Enough. And I'm actually at the Kelly Clarkson Show right now, so this is not my office. This is our green room. And I want to just point one thing out. It was our friendship. It was conversations with you. It's doing Man Enough to Care which I know we're going to talk about.

But as I was writing the acknowledgements for my book, and she doesn't even know this yet, I don't think she's watching. I was writing the acknowledgements for my book. And I was thinking about all the people that made it possible for me to write this book. And it was thanks to you that I recognized and thought about one of the most important people and the fact that I could write this book was our nanny.

I would've never thought ... It makes me kind of tear up. I would've never had that. I would have never had the blessing and the benefit of being able to even recognize that, had it not been for our friendship. How many authors thank their nannies at the end? But it's true and it's not like, oh, give me a pat on the back. It's just like, I've been so ignorant. I've been so ignorant my whole life to this stuff.

And so, I just wanted to say thank you for that. Because as I was thinking about all of this stuff, and this just happened recently, she was one of the first five people that I think, because I couldn't have written my book had she not been providing care. And that's where, and I just want to say, like policy is important. You're going to change the world with your policy. And I know we're going to talk about that and the way that you're advocating.

But it's this little things. It's the awareness of a white privileged dude like myself who sees that. And so then who do I share that with? How many people see that in the back of my book and like, "Oh, wait a second, it's because ... Oh, well, I have my version of that, or it's my wife," or whatever it is, or maybe it's flipped. And so I just want to say thank you for that too.

Ai-jen Poo (01:47:07)

Beautiful.

Justin Baldoni (01:47:09)

I want to hear quickly about what made you get into this because you have a caregiving story, of course. And then we can jump into maybe some of the other stuff. But I think that hearing that, I think, really grounds us in why you're doing the work.

Ai-jen Poo (01:47:24)

Yeah. Well, one, I want to say that it's so important that you told that story about who made your book possible, because I think so much of what we're trying to do right now, especially because our congress, our president, everybody is trying to figure out how do we get back to work in this time? How do we recover from this devastating pandemic?

And to just recognize for a moment that it's good care, it's going to help make it possible for so many of us to get back to work. And so many of us to have agency and to create and to learn and to grow in all of these ways, good care is at the foundation of it all. And your story is like a perfect example of that.

And it's why we've been saying care is infrastructure because if infrastructure is the fundamental stuff that makes everything else work, that is it, right?

Justin Baldoni (01:48:35)

You can't build anything without a foundation.

Ai-jen Poo (01:48:38)

That's right, exactly. And some of that foundation are people.

My own care story is that, one, I was raised by really strong women. My mom, my grandmother, they did everything. They worked. They took care of my family, me, and my sister. And I just thought they walked on water. And yet what I realized as I grew older was a lot of what they did in the community and for us as a family was just kind of assumed and kind of invisible and not really recognized. And so that kind of stayed with me about, kind of what women do in our homes and in our families that's just not really recognized or accounted for.

And then my grandfather, he started to lose his vision. And I remember growing up, one of the things he would always tell us is, "Don't put me in a nursing home. I want to stay at home." And because he lost his vision and we couldn't find the home care that would support him, we ended up having to put him in a nursing home. And it was a devastating experience in terms of just ...

When I went and visited him there, I remember being so heartbroken at the fact that this person who had helped raised me and given me so much was spending his final precious days in a strange environment, surrounded by strangers, sharing a room with six other people, half of whom were [crosstalk 01:50:18], the other half of whom were wailing in pain. The lights didn't work. He couldn't eat the food. And I just thought he and we all deserve so much better. We all deserve to have choices for how we age and how and where we get care.

And then I saw the care workers in that facility, and they were all overstretched. They had too many rooms and people, and just an impossible situation. And the more I learned about the care economy, the more I realized is that it's just not working for anyone. It didn't work for my grandfather. It doesn't work for a lot of women, a lot of care workers, I mean.

And we have this moment right now, Justin, where we can change all of that. We can put the building blocks into place so that people like my grandfather can actually live as they age. People forget that aging is living, living longer. If you have the support and care you need, it's a beautiful part of life. And we just don't have that in place. And our babies aren't getting what they deserve either. And this is our shot. This is our chance.

Justin Baldoni (01:51:41)

It makes me think. It's no wonder we have this cultural obsession with staying young. It's because of the way we treat the elderly also. The younger we stay, the more fit we are ... I don't even know if it's so much about extending our lifespans. I think there's a whole end of life care thing that's a separate conversation. I've been a part of a few really interesting things with End Well and things like that.

But we have such this ... We have this cultural obsession with youth, and I think it stems from us not respecting aging, not valuing our elderly. In other countries and other cultures around the world, there's a different view, right?

Ai-jen Poo (01:52:24)

That's right.

Justin Baldoni (01:52:24)

The system is placed for them because they're our elders. We have to take care of them. We wouldn't be here if it were not for them. But in Western countries, it's youth, youth, youth, youth, "Oh, they don't have anything to offer anymore," our capitalistic-

Ai-jen Poo (01:52:42)

We have a moment where we have to really face that as a country with a growing aging population. And I think there's so much opportunity there. If we design our policies to support the ability to live well at every stage of life and to care for our families across the lifespan, so much more could be possible. And it's one of the reasons why. I mean, this conversation happens among women quite a bit and always has. Now it's happening in the public square.

And one of the reasons why we were so excited to partner with you on Man Enough to Care was to really surface the fact that I think this conversation is happening more among men now. And it certainly needs to happen more. And I just love for you to talk for a moment about Man Enough to Care and what you hope people will take away from it, and maybe what you learned from it.

Justin Baldoni (01:53:38)

I learned a lot. I mean, it started with our friendship, of course. I remember sitting down and when we had coffee that day. We were just throwing around ideas of how we could help because first question I always want to ask is, how can I help? And we were building Man Enough. In doing my own research and in talking to you and others, when you think about undefining masculinity or just masculinity in general, you never associate caregivers with men. Yet, if you think about the qualities inherent in a caregiver, I think you'll find a very healthy mix of very masculine qualities. You got to be brave and fearless.

Ai-jen Poo (01:54:33)

That's right.

Justin Baldoni (01:54:34)

You got to be tough. There's a lot of things that you have to be. And I love taking masculine qualities and flipping them on their heads and saying, "Okay, well, if you're a man, all right, well, aren't you told as a man that you have to provide? Okay, well, what does that look like providing? Aren't you told as a man you have to protect? Aren't you told as a man you have to do all of these things?"

All right, well, we're not going to change the system overnight. Patriarchy is what it is, right? Our culture is what it is. But if these things make you a man, then maybe the challenge should be, well, doesn't that apply to caregiving? Doesn't that make you more of a man in many ways if you're a caregiver?

And so I thought it could be a really interesting conversation to again use that word man enough, that reclaiming of the word that's been used to put us in these boxes and to hold us back from being our full human selves, not just men and say, "All right, let's be man enough to care. What does that look like?"

And we created this thing together, which I'm really proud of. And we brought men to the conversation who had experiences with caregiving, on both sides. We brought in Zach Anner who has had to be a recipient of care his whole life. And we brought in Gavin who was a former football player, who at 25 years old was dealing with a daughter with a stage four cancer while playing football and had to become a caregiver. And we brought in a well-known caregiver. We had all these great conversations, Nathan Kress, whose wife has endometriosis and who's caring both for her and his baby.

And we talked about things that I had never really heard me talked about at a dinner table. And it was so eye-opening and heart-opening, and I left that conversation feeling like it is the most masculine thing that we could be.

Ai-jen Poo (01:56:45)

That's right.

Justin Baldoni (01:56:47)

I hope that's what people get out of it when they watch it.

Ai-jen Poo (01:56:51)

Yeah. And we're going to actually show a little clip from it, so people can get it.

(Video clip) Justin Baldoni (01:56:58)

This is a big issue, right, end of life and caregiving across the board. All of us are going to inevitably need to be cared for at some point. And then the medical system in general is just a crazy thing to navigate. What kind of support systems do we need in America, if God forbid something were to happen, because the trends are that we are all going to have to take care of somebody at some point in our lives and be taken care of, but nobody's talking about it.

(Video clip) Zach Anner (01:57:25)

And it's not just about people who are aging. Anybody can join the disability community at any point in their lives. Something can happen to anyone.

(Video clip) Robert Espinoza (01:57:39)

I think we need better supports for people with disabilities across the spectrum and across the lifespan. People should be able to access the long-term care they need.

(Video clip) Ai-jen Poo (01:57:48)

Our big vision, our big idea for the future is this idea called Universal Family Care, the idea that one day we should have one fund that we all contribute to, that we can all benefit from, that helps us pay for childcare, elder care and paid family leave. Basically, everything that you need to take care of your family while you're working.

(Video clip) Justin Baldoni (01:58:09)

What are the steps to making something like that happen and what are the roadblocks?

(Video clip) Ai-jen Poo (01:58:12)

Well, culturally, we haven't really had the conversation about care.

(Video clip) Justin Baldoni (01:58:16)

So, this is the first step?

(Video clip) Ai-jen Poo (01:58:17)

This, what we're doing right now is actually key. We have to have the conversation, so it becomes more normalized as something that we need to think about and plan for.

Ai-jen Poo (01:58:29)

Beautiful. I'm so glad that we are able to show a clip. I hope everybody goes to the Man Enough site to watch the series, and so many of the amazing dinners that Justin hosts.

Justin Baldoni (01:58:46)

We should put it in the chat for people, I guess.

Ai-jen Poo (01:58:47)

We did. We'll put it one more time to make sure everybody has it. But I just wanted to close by saying that each of us are a part of this story, this new story that we're writing about care in America. And so many of the policies we've talked about today, childcare, paid leave, home and community-based services for people with disabilities and the elderly, good care jobs. These are essential building blocks to the future and the economy that we deserve in this country.

And thank you, Justin, for helping-

Justin Baldoni (01:59:24)

Wait, Ai-jen, before you sign off, you got to tell us what's happening with the policy. What's happening with everything that you've been fighting for? Are we getting closer? Don't leave us hanging.

Ai-jen Poo (01:59:36)

We're getting so much closer, like we've just leaped decades ahead. And there's been a big investment in childcare and the rescue plan, and there's going to be more to come, hopefully in the family plan, the American families plan. And the president announced an American jobs plan that includes a big investment in home and community-based services and good care jobs. And we are doing it. And we have to keep on organizing and mobilizing and sharing our stories because that is how we will actually achieve these.

Justin Baldoni (02:00:11)

And what's the main thing that each of us can do right now to help get these things passed?

Ai-jen Poo (02:00:16)

Great question. You can call your Member of Congress and ask for a meeting to share your care story and why care matters to you. And honor the caregivers in your life, sharing their stories, doing those meetings with them, celebrating them the way Justin did in the acknowledgements of his book. There's a lot to do right now and it's all-hands-on-deck.

Justin Baldoni (02:00:45)

I'm so grateful for your work.

Ai-jen Poo (02:00:48)

Likewise, and your book is coming out. Everybody should get the Man Enough book. It's so exciting that that's happening.

Justin Baldoni (02:00:55)

I'm nervous. But thank you for ... God, I can't even imagine what our world would look like if this stuff can get passed. And we can also get these caregivers way above minimum wage because they deserve it. And the more attractive it is economically, the more people will come in. The more we can dismantle the myth that caregivers are women, as we know 40% of family caregivers are men. And we got to also make it masculine too for them to see that, you know what, it's a beautiful thing. It's a gift. It's a masculine thing to caregive. And especially if we can start to make money doing it with all the work that you're doing-

Ai-jen Poo (02:01:36)

That's great.

Justin Baldoni (02:01:36)

... the economy is going to flourish because of that.

Ai-jen Poo (02:01:39)

That's right. That's a game changer. And so with that, I want to thank you, Justin. It's been great catching up with you. And I want to hand it back over to our colleague, Maureen Conway, the amazing Maureen Conway at The Aspen Institute. Thank you so much for having us today, Maureen.

Justin Baldoni (02:01:56)

Thank you for having us.

Maureen Conway (02:01:57)

Thank you. Thank you, Ai-jen. Thank you, Justin. That was amazing. What a beautiful conversation. And thank you for all you're doing to really elevate the issues of care, get more people to care about care. It's really essential.

Thank you to everybody for joining us today. This was just an amazing conversation, really appreciate everybody tuning in. Thank you to Senator Romney, to Dr. Boushey, to Dan Porterfield, to Abby McCloskey, Adria Powell, Tina Tchen, Dorian Warren, Erika Beras. What a day. Thank you so much to my amazing colleague, Natalie Foster, who did so much work in organizing today's event.

And thanks to you for your great participation for sharing your questions and comments and resources in the chat. Please do take a moment to respond to our quick feedback survey as you sign out. We really value your comments and try to respond to them. You can also send us an email and let us know what you think at eop.program@aspeninstitute.org.

And we hope to hear from you and please do join us again for another Opportunity in America conversation. Thank you.