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SUBMISSION FOR THE RECORD

STATEMENT OF SENATOR PATTY MURRAY COMMISSION ON EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

Co-chairs Abraham and Haskins, and distinguished members of the Commission, I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit remarks for your consideration as part of the inaugural meeting of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking.

I am very proud to have worked with now-Speaker Paul Ryan to get this Commission moving in Congress and signed into law. He and I first discussed the idea of establishing the Commission in 2013 while we were negotiating another important, bipartisan effort to make government work better, the Bipartisan Budget Act. After that work, and following the 2014 elections I texted a note of congratulations to Speaker Ryan, and in our back and forth communications, he suggested we finish and introduce the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking as a good step toward showing that Democrats and Republicans can work together even after such a bitter and partisan campaign. I was happy to take him up on this, and we got to work.

It is often noted that Speaker Ryan and I are something of an “odd couple”. We hail from different parts of the country, different generations, different parties, and, far more often than not, we support very different policies. We both, however, share a desire for government to work – and for it to work better and smarter. Ensuring policymakers have the tools to make the best possible decisions shouldn’t be a partisan issue, it should be about doing the right things for the families and communities we represent. Whether you think we need more government, or less government – you should agree that we should at least have better government. And with this Commission, we see an opportunity to take a step in this direction – and fundamentally reassess and improve the quality and availability of data and information to researchers, stakeholders, and decision-makers at all levels of government.

Pushing for greater use of evidence in policymaking is an area I’ve worked on before, having had a role in co-authoring the model for the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program with Senators Christopher ‘Kit’ Bond and Hillary Clinton, as well as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act with Senators Johnny Isakson, Tom Harkin, and Lamar Alexander, and the Every Student Succeeds Act with Senator Lamar Alexander. Each of these bipartisan laws rely on a number of evidence-based strategies and requirements to target, learn from, and improve the delivery of critical support services – in health care and early childhood development, elementary and secondary education, and workforce skills and training.

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In addition, I represent a state that is quite accustomed to using and learning from data, whether in Olympia, with *Results Washington* and the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, or across the state with its vibrant high tech industry and numerous medical research and educational institutions.

We are at an important time for the use of evidence in federal decision-making. The Obama administration has made evidence and rigorous evaluation a central part of its management agenda. And Congress, increasingly is looking to evidence-based strategies as well to help find common ground on difficult domestic issues, including this Congress in re-writing K-12 education policy in the Senate HELP and House Education and Workforce Committees with the Every Student Succeeds Act, and reaching bipartisan agreement in the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means Committees on reforming our foster care system with the Family First Prevention Services Act. But while progress clearly is being made, more needs to be done.

The Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2016 represents a unique opportunity to take an important step forward. First and foremost, our law asks you to step back, look out across the government, and figure out how best to build the architecture needed today to maximize the quality and utility of the data collected by government – the building blocks of evidence-based policymaking.

As part of this effort, the Commission is asked specifically to consider the feasibility of establishing a clearinghouse for this data and how to organize, share, secure, and keep that information private and confidential. That last piece – ensuring airtight privacy and confidentiality – is absolutely critical for the success of the Commission.

Finally, I hope the Commission can find and share some clear and compelling examples of how researchers, stakeholders, and policymakers could use the proposed infrastructure and data to meaningfully advance our understanding of public policy and in the process help transform lives and communities.

To be clear, this is a daunting and complex undertaking, particularly in a relatively short period of time. I am confident the Members of this Commission – some of the top minds in program administration, academia, and data privacy – are up to this task.

I want to end by thanking you, the Members of the Commission, for accepting the challenge and agreeing to serve on the Commission. I look forward to following your progress and learning from your recommendations.

Thank you.

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