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PANEL 3: ENGAGING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH VOUCHERS AND OTHER CHOICE MECHANISMS

MR. MEDEFIND: Okay. For our third and final panel this morning, we're going to be talking about choice mechanisms. Now, if I can ask you to just close your eyes for just a minute. Let's imagine something. Close your eyes. And imagine yourself walking onto a car lot, maybe CarMax, or something like that. And all around you, you see the full array of American cars, foreign cars, all the car options that we have. And there are long cars and short cars and fast cars and big cars and four-wheel drives and there are cars with electric locks and windows and sun roof and driver side air bag, and there's anti-lock breaks and all of that. And now, erase that image for a moment, and imagine that there's only one car company in the whole country that makes cars for you to choose from. And imagine what that car lot would probably look like. There would maybe two or three different kinds of cars. They'd all probably look a lot the same. You probably wouldn't have a lot of those technological advances and options because there wasn't enough competition to drive the company to make them because they knew that you were going to buy them from them whether you liked it or not. Okay, so we'll go ahead and open those eyes if you haven't already.

But of course the tragedy at times of American compassion has been that that later story has often been America's Government's way of approaching human need. It's been large. It's been in bulk. It's been largely one- size-fits-all. It's been dreamed up by individuals within government and then presented to people without very much choice or say in the matter whatsoever. And part of the driving energy of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative has been towards saying, we've got to expand those options. We've got to work through the local organizations that are creating all kinds of innovative ways to solve problems, and allow individuals real choice in the different ways that they receive help. And when we're able to do that through vouchers or other mechanisms, it has a lot of different advantages. First of all, it expands the range of options. Because when the Government's doing something itself, or perhaps it has one grant to one large organization, you simply just have one option there, and it's kind of a take-it-or-leave-it proposition for the individual. But as soon as you start expanding beyond that and you say to an individual, we're going to let you choose an organization that's best equipped to meet your distinctive needs, then suddenly proliferating all around are different models and different options and different designs of programs. And so it creates a much more diverse range of opportunities.

United States of America  
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative  
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

It also deals with church-state issues that can sometimes be complex in more direct grant opportunities. In normal direct grant opportunity, if a faith-based group receives the funds, they have to keep separate any religious privately-funded activities from the publically-funded activity. They need to be held at a different time and location. But if it's a voucher situation, where an individual client has a legitimate choice among different options, then that isn't necessary. The Government doesn't have to police that. Because if a person wants to choose a faith-based program that has faith elements in it, that's fine. That's their own choice in that. And so it relieves that situation and kind of takes it off the table. And finally, perhaps more importantly, it allows an individual to choose a program that's best suited to meet their own personal needs, their own personal situation and it makes them and that process more engaged in their own process of recovery or education or the path towards a new beginning.

And so what we're going to be talking about in this panel is various innovations that are seeking to create choice mechanisms through vouchers or other models that move that forward, and thereby empower local social entrepreneurs that are providing these creative outside-of-the-box services to be a part of our nation's systems of dealing with these complex issues. And so to begin this, we're going to have Virginia Walden Ford, talk about her experience with the D.C. Opportunity Scholarships. The D.C. Opportunity Scholarships are the first Federally-funded scholarships for K-12 students. And it's been piloted here in the Nation's Capitol for low-income families in struggling schools to allow the families to choose among a range of both public as well as private school options for the students. Now, Virginia, was a single mother of three. And two of her students went through the public school system, but the third was facing great challenges with safety, as well as the quality of education. And he was given a private grant and a choice in schools. And out of the tremendous benefits that came to him through that opportunity, Virginia decided that she wanted to fight for other families to have that same tremendous option and opportunity that she has. And so she's been deeply involved with this D.C. opportunity scholarships program. So, she's here to tell us more about that. (Applause)

MS. FORD: Thanks Jedd. Good morning. Well, Jedd's told you a little bit about the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. It's the first Federal program ever in the United States. It is a program that provides \$7500 per student to attend a school of the parent's choice. We, D.C. Parents for School Choice, which is the organization that I founded after my son received a scholarship to go to a private school, and I saw how they could change ones' life, we founded the organization to support parents in D.C. And we were

United States of America  
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative  
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

privileged to be able to be a part of the legislative effort to get the scholarship program passed. So, we invested a lot of time and energy. Once President Bush signed the bill into law, and he was really supportive. I mean, he came out to our programs, touched hands with our parents, so he was really involved in it. Once that was signed into law, we decided that we wanted to continue to be a part of that effort. So, we partnered with the organization that is implementing the education, which is a grant through the Department of Education, which is Washington Scholarship Fund, to do outreach into the community in order to make sure that every child that deserved this grant, that was eligible for this scholarship, would be able to access it. And you know, as we got started and did this, we thought, we bring the parents downtown, we have them sign the applications and we'll get hundreds and thousands of people involved. And what we found is that it is a -- it is difficult to get low-income parents downtown. It requires money and trying to get kids down there with you, bringing materials, not having the opportunity to go home and pick up those materials.

So, we realized that what we had to do was go out into the community. Well, our organization had worked with charter school parents also. We knew charter schools. We knew something about the community, but we were talking about going into areas of D.C. that were very challenging. But you also have to be there, if the families live, we're going to go there. And some of these people just were reluctant to take their teens and go into and serve. But, we did. And we found that the way to do that, that the way that we could link with the community was faith-based organizations.

So, we began to work with about 40 faith-based organizations to get them to set up meetings for us in the community to talk to parents and to get parents to sign up for these applications. With these organizations, because they had a relationship with the parents, and these were parents that we went into the Community of Hope, it's the homeless family shelter, the House of Ruth, which is a women's domestic abuse shelter. We went into -- we worked with Martha's Place, we worked with churches, and they had a relationship with those families. So they were able to give our team, we have a traveling team of about six or seven, that go into different parts of the community and actually sit down with parents and have them fill out the applications. We're on their turf, so they can go to the apartments, or go home and pick up information that they need to bring for the application process. But not only, it also gave us, our little team credibility because they had already built a trust relationship with those, with the people that they worked with, and who were we coming into the communities offering anything? Unfortunately, in the communities that we serve, there's not a lot of trust of government programs like this. And there have been an awful lot

United States of America  
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative  
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

of controversy about the program. So, before we got into the community, a lot of times the families had been told that this was not real. So, we had to build a relationship. We had to build trust. In the course of the program, the program -- we did over 300 community meetings. We went into every sector of D.C. where parents might be eligible for the scholarship program and served those families per the instruction of Congress. I mean, one of the problems with this particular kind of program, this is the first Federal voucher program, but there are other voucher programs. Milwaukee has one, Florida has one. So, one of the problems has been that it would -- sometime the departments say that it doesn't get to the people that need serving the most. So it was really important to us that we went to families who would be eligible. This program served families with income of 185 percent below the poverty level. So, these are poorest of the poor families in D.C. These are the kids who would not have access to programs otherwise, whose parents have so many other things that they're dealing with that trying to figure out how to pay for their child to go to a school of this kind of, a private school, was just unthought of.

So, we went and talked to parents that -- whose children were incredible. And so I want to tell you a little tiny bit before my time runs out about these kids. Pam Battle, is a single mother in D.C. with three children, one daughter who graduated from DCPS and was scared to go to school every single day of her high school life. Two sons, one was in junior high one elementary school when this program started four years ago, who she feared for every day. One of the son's went to empty the trash one day and was attacked and beaten. And that's the environment she was living in. So it was really vital to her that she get her boys out of this kind of environment. She signed up for the scholarship program, and happily, I can report to you that Carlos is a 15-year-old, finishing his sophomore year, going into his junior year at Georgetown Day, which is a prestigious school here in Washington, is on the honor roll. Right now as we sit here -- (Applause)

Right now as we sit here, he's in Mexico on a school mission, you know. Her other son Calvin, is also on the honor roll, will be going into the seventh grade at St. Gabriele's, a Catholic school, next year, and is doing incredibly well. You know, we have other kids in the program who have just grown beyond expectations. They've done so well, and I'm not short, but I have to lean a little bit, so we're so excited that this program has been these children. But, as I close, I want to tell you one story really quickly. Because I think it just kind of tells what this is all about. We served a family in an area of D.C. that was really, really difficult. A father came in who wanted his son to be in the program, but he didn't read, the father didn't read. He was clearly high. And I mean, you know, he just was struggling. But he told me, he said, I really want

United States of America  
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative  
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

my son to be in this program. So, my team set and helped him fill out the application and his son got into the program. A year later, I ran into -- we ran into this same father, who we didn't recognize. He was sharp as a tack. He was, you know, just incredible. And he told us that his son had done so well in the scholarship program, at some point, he decided he didn't want to embarrass his son, so he thought he better get his act together. (Applause)

Yes, that's right. So, he went to a substance abuse program and finished that. He went to an employment program and finished that. He was currently working on his GED. And he said to me, Virginia, he said, you don't understand. This program doesn't just serve children. It helps families and it saved me and mine. Thank you.

MR. MEDEFIND: Thank you, Virginia. Once-size-fits-all programs have one advantage. They are simple. Very easy to administer. You just create one product and when people come in the door you give it to them, and that's pretty straight forward. As soon as you start trying to inject choice into that, real options, working with front line groups that each have their own little quirks, it becomes more complicated. And so the work of shifting the way that government deals with this, and finding creative ways to add choice without making it too complicated is a policy challenge of the first order. And so one of the innovations that has been launched by the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in the last year has been a hybrid between something a little bit more like vouchers and a more traditional government contracting method. And it's called Beneficiary Choice Contracting. And it's in its early stages. We don't know if it's going to work. That's the nature of true innovation. But someone who is in the very thick of that is Karri Schultheis. Karri is a ten year veteran of the Department of Corrections in Arizona. But now she leads a program that is advancing this, testing this, trying it out, and seeing if Beneficiary Choice Contracting can help individuals who are coming out of incarceration and allow them to choose among various options on that path towards job and new life, new hope. So, Karri, welcome. (Applause)

MS. SCHULTHEIS: Thank you, Jedd. I have some slides prepared for you today as well if we can get those going, please. Good morning. Arizona Women's Education and Employment, or AWEE, has been changing lives through the dignity of work since 1981. In recent years through continued analysis of participant profiles, AWEE has observed a steady increase in the number of female and male formerly incarcerated individuals walking through the doors desiring workforce development service. Next slide please. The

United States of America  
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative  
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

prison population as a whole continues to rise. According to the "One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008" report by the Pew Charitable Trust Center on the states, the national prison census at the end of 2007 was over 1.5 million adults. Add to that the population in the jails, and you have a staggering total of over 2.3 million adults. In this report, Arizona was ranked in the highest fifth of the states.

Next slide please. In response to the growing need for prisoner re-entry services, AWEE applied for the Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative grant, and was awarded in 2005. Based on the U.S. Department of Labor analysis of the PRI project for the last few years, a specific age range was identified to be missing from the participant demographics, 18 to 29 year olds. Shifting from a traditional drug client service model, Department of Labor released an SGA challenging faith-based and community organizations to develop a program Utilizing a Beneficiary choice Contracting model. Awarded in July 2007, AWEE was one of five recipients nationally. The Beneficiary Choice model utilizes the grantee as a service coordinator, or administrative entity and opens the door for faith-based and community organizations to deliver the drug client services. The model allows clients to review information on each specialized service provider, or SSP, during a program orientation facilitated by AWEE before they make an informed choice of which provider best suits their individual needs or circumstance. The provider may or may not have faith infused services.

Next slide. The specific rules and responsibilities are illustrated here. After eligibility is confirmed through our criminal justice partner, recruitment, intake and assessment is completed by AWEE. After the participant chooses their provider, there is a baton-exchange between AWEE and the SSP. After enrollment occurs, the SSP is responsible for delivering comprehensive services to overcome any participant barriers to employment. The AWEE case manager works in tandem with SSP case manager to ensure the participant is receiving the appropriate level of service based on their identified needs. After the participants secures a job, and is stable, the SSP remains in contact with them to provide supportive services geared toward job retention. AWEE supports the SSP with a variety of technical assistance -- excuse me -- from enrollment through retention. AWEE has extensive experience working with formerly incarcerated individuals, and we continually share our best practices with our SSPs to ensure overall project success.

Next slide please. The idea of performance-based contracting was new to some providers. Even those who had experience with the concept had initial concern over the benchmarks AWEE had established. However, AWEE found the balance between attainable benchmarks to ensure monthly cash

United States of America  
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative  
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

flow and more difficulty benchmarks with established time frames. All benchmarks align with long-term project goals. The Beneficiary Choice model emphasizes the participants ability to choose their provider. As such, there's no guarantee for work for the SSP. When the project launched, all the SSPs devoted part of a case manager to the program. Therefore, case managers were split between two or sometimes three different projects. This obviously created a hardship for the case managers to adequately serve the participant and maintain the appropriate level of documentation. After the SSPs began to increase their enrollment numbers, they decided to devote one full time case manager to this project. AWEE elected to provide the SSPs equal opportunity for work by requesting the SSP at a monthly limit of enrollments to their contract. Once the SSP reaches their monthly cap, they're removed as a choice, therefore allowing other SSPs to be chosen. In the beginning, there was a period of relationship building between AWEE and the SSPs. Each SSP is its own stand- alone agency. It was difficult to adjust to individual cultures. Since AWEE's administrative lead, the providers had to adapt to our methodology of service delivery, protocol and documentation. As the SSPs encountered challenges, they were hesitant to share any concerns or issues with us. After we established monthly program manager and case manager meetings, trust began to build between the agencies, and we slowly became a team.

Next slide please. The greatest success of the project thus far is a true sense of collaboration between team members. The agencies have seen the advantage of working as a whole instead of in silos. Since participant employment is a high-dollar benchmark along with one of the key measures of project success, the SSPs were reluctant to share their employer relationships. However, this has changed. We have combined forces, and next month, we are hosting an employer breakfast. Each SSP has been actively involved in the planning process and has assigned tasks. We are all inviting key stakeholders, partners, employers we currently work with, and reaching out to new employers to educate them on the benefits of hiring formerly incarcerated people. We have a goal of establishing 20 new employer relationships from which all agencies can utilize, and we hope to have this kind of event on a quarterly basis. AWEE service providers include some faith-based grassroots organizations, along with long-standing community-based agencies. Since the project encompasses a variety of people in the community, the number of stakeholders was increased. Through the SSP's internal and external relationships, the awareness of service population has been amplified. The grant stipulates the grantee is supposed to increase capacity among the SSPs. This is an easy accomplishment when speaking about my faith-based providers. However, through our technical assistance, key learnings have been shared with our long-

United States of America  
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative  
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

standing organizations as well. With frequent monitoring and concrete protocol, SSPs have been able to think differently about how they serve people and document their outcomes. The unique success thus far has been the creativity of my faith-based providers. Since they do not have a traditional company policy to adhere to, they have the most flexibility and out-of-the-box approaches. It is refreshing to see these providers alter hours, procedure, or find new services in an effort to better serve their participants. This project has given faith-based providers an opportunity to help people they may not have known if the project had not connected them.

Next slide please. The first program year ends this November. I look forward to sharing the benefits and lessons learned with working with this new model. Overall, so far we've had success with the reduction of recidivism, with only two people going back to prison at our six-month mark out of 137 enrolled. (Applause) Thank you. Thank you for your continued partnerships and for your attention. (Applause)

MR. MEDEFIND: Okay. For our final panelist, we're going to be now looking from -- at a program that's a bit more mature, that we've experienced the lessons of years and seen what transpires. We're talking about Access to Recovery, which you heard about some yesterday from Drug Czar Walters, from the President himself. And it's the largest scale voucher program ever attempted, and it's focused on the addiction recovery area. And it was launched by the President at a State of the Union address. And initially, the grants were offered and through a competitive process, 14 states and one Tribal Authority, won those grants in order use the funds to start their own voucher-based system. So, we're talking about 15 different unique test zones, where these states could create these systems and enlist large numbers of nonprofits to provide both clinical recovery services as well as supportive services that help people walk the road from addiction to recovery. And so one of the most interesting and effective programs was the State of Connecticut. The individual whose lead that is Commissioner Tom Kirk, Dr. Thomas Kirk, who is a clinical psychologist. He has published a number of papers, very respected in his field around the country. And he also serves on the National Advisory Council for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. And so please welcome Dr. Kirk. (Applause)

DR. KIRK: Good morning. I'm the director of a healthcare plan in Connecticut. Connecticut's got a population of three and a half million people. This healthcare plan that I'm overseeing treats 80,000 people a year. What do I want in that healthcare plan? If you go to a healthcare plan or a healthcare service

United States of America  
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative  
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

provider, what do you expect? What do you expect? What do you want? You want to get better. You want to get better. That should apply for people of psychiatric illnesses as well as people with substance abuse disorders. I want the people who get that service have an expectation and the hope that they will get better. I want them to have accessible services, easy to reach. I want them to have faith in themselves that they can be resilient, and confident that they can be renewed. This lead to the need to move toward what we call social entrepreneurs. These are community, faith-based groups and providers essential to the above.

Let me give you a listing, just run through some names, go back to my point about hope, expectation of recovery, better lives: New Beginning Ministry, Taste and See Outreach, Believe in Me Empowerment, New Leaf, New Life Outreach Ministries, Faith Lives, Stepping Stones, Solid Rock, Community of Hope, Ministries of Love and Hope, Right Now Ministries, Repairing the Breaches Ministries, Turning Point, House of Healing. All of those names are names of organizations that we've partnered with as part of this particular effort. So, if some one is going to those, those organizations basically are their choice, I want them to feel there's hope, they're going to get better, their lives are going to be improved.

Can we go to the slide? I'm actually going to -- There are many past recovery, many past recovery. Now, some would say, after this guy got on that horse, he fell off. But isn't that what life is about? All of us in our lives have disappointments, we lose our jobs, hopefully we don't lose our family. But we have tremendous challenges, but we go on. And that's the same for here also. But I wanted to go to those folks and say, what is it that -- what are paths that you need to have? What kinds of services do you need? Where do you want to get it? And this gets to the choice.

Go to the next one please. This is a really, really important slide. I'm a psychologist by background. That's what I did for a long period of time. But the guy that's at that center, that poorly designed stick figure, that's what it's all about. It's about people. It's about what they need. And so, with the person at the center, not the organization, not my story, so this is what we're about. I have to also work under the premise that people will seek or accept assistance from people they know and trust. Right? You will seek assistance, accept assistance from people you know and trust. That being the case, with my background, I would say that if I had a particular problem with my family, my wife would probably go to a faith person to say, Thomas, having a problem, this family needs some help. That's her orientation, that's what we're about. So, what we tried through Access to Recovery Committee, is that we wanted to improve access, a larger number, 19,000 people were service in our Access to Recovery program. That was 2,000 more than we ever imagined would be done. Seven thousand of those persons selected faith- based agencies to get their

United States of America  
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative  
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

services from. Forty percent of those persons had never had any involvement with our system at all. Forty percent of those person were person of color. That is twice the number of persons representative in our service system. Access, outreach, it was working. How to engage -- one other point. I have a strong belief in culture. Culture, I describe as the lens in my eye that I interpret who you are. It's the filter in my ear that when you and I talk, do I feel comfortable with you. It's the membrane in my hand when we shake hands or hug, do I feel comfortable with you. People are at the center, one must respect the culture of that individual in terms of what it is they want.

How do we engage as social entrepreneurs? One of the best investments I ever made was in 1999, committed \$20,000 to a person at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford, a gentleman named Rev. Marcus McKinney. He's a minister as well as a commissioner. And what he had is a faith-based pastoral counseling session. The community was heavily impacted by 9/11. And the Governor established an executive order to partner with the faith-based communities. They developed what are known as faith-based crisis networks. This evolved over the years. So, when 2004 came, and Access to Recovery was announced as a grant, I could go to over hundreds of those faith-based providers and say, What is it you think we need in terms of Access to Recovery. They helped to do that. How to engage in social entrepreneurs? One, real simple, this is my terms: Listen and Learn. We went to these various organizations, peer based organizations and say, what is it you do? What have you been doing for all these years and never got paid for, but you found to be effective. And so we were going to define the services, how they would make it a success and paid for it.

So they talked about recovery support groups within great faith and recovery. They talked about how a new way to forge community relationships. We want people to live in the community, that's where they're going to be and we talked how they mentored and guided people in recovery. All right, fine. Those are the services, let's put them in, let's put an amount of money on them, a time that they can be provided, and furthermore, just how they will be provided. We talked to people in recovery, extraordinary force. What do you need, how do you do it and so on. We came up with similar types of pieces. They learned from us. We said, you can't charge us ten bucks on a Sunday for 200 people in the church. That's not a group service. How do you manage this in such a way that's a reimbursable service, and furthermore, how do you document, how do you follow the procedures in terms of care? In my state, in this case, you got \$22 million to use over three years, I've got an accountability. I can't simply throw the money away, paid attention to that. On site visits, go into these different groups that we have, double the number of faith-based providers

United States of America  
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative  
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

we began with, and help them to understand what's going on in your services, how we can help you to understand how to provide them.

Another group, Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery. They've set up some programs that we're funding, what you have to do, so you want to set up a sober house. How do you do something like that? Houses? The vouchers. Two types of vouchers that we came up with. One of them was actually a paper voucher, it was like a check, and the other one was a virtual voucher where the organization would be credentialed, they could provide services to the individual, the client. They get their voucher so-to-speak, and they could go any of the providers that they want. They could change providers at will. Provider agreement, rate schedule, authorization guidelines. It is now web-based, so we try to get away from all the paper that was driving them crazy in the beginning first A2R, we're in second A2R now. What's the important piece about choice? You know the guy that was at the center, that little diagram, he or she is the one that should be able to choose what it is. Why? Because he or she is responsible for managing their own recovery. If they do not feel empowered, then they would be depending upon the system for ever and ever. People are not born with mental illness. People are not born with substance abuse problem. They had lives before that, and our responsibility is to help them to renew their lives to recognize their strengths. (Applause)

Forty-two seconds. What work? You heard Director Walters talk about the other day about the statistics. And I can give you the statistics. When a person in recovery, when a faith-based person comes before our legislature, talks about what it is that has happened to them, I can tell you, it's extraordinary. They have the face of a person in a faith-based program that their faith, they're a person in recovery. Seven thousand people selected faith-based providers. Nineteen thousand people were served. Forty percent of them were never seen in the service system before they were brought in. Forty-four percent of all recovery support services were provided by a faith-based provided. Over 100,000 different services were provided to the 19,000 people, four or five persons to serve. We committed 85 percent of the \$22 million in recovery support services. I'm a clinician, but I truly believe the recovery support services were the difference that made the difference. What's the mechanism for success in this? Respect for the individuals you're working for, listen to what they have to say, and learn from them. As we go into A2R, which is the second one, the focus is on the criminal justice system. Our legislature and our governor said, we will not build new prisons. All right? We're not going to build new prisons. (Applause)

United States of America  
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative  
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

If you're not going to build new prisons, and Connecticut has, we're with the tops of the nation for X number of years, in slowing the growth of its prison population. Then you have to make sure that they're diverted from the front door. If they cannot, they get tied up with services. So, our whole focus i Access to Recovery II, is totally based upon the criminal justice population, people on probation, people who are coming out of the prison system, diverted from them. And one of the best things that we learned from the first one, 40 percent of the persons that were on probation who were return to prison before -- I'm sorry. Forty percent reduction in the number persons returned to prison after they've been on probation because of a technical violation, 40 percent. Each day in Connecticut, there are 57,000 people on probation. You talk about a 40 percent reduction in violations, that's an extraordinary measure. I go back to something that one of the individuals before mentioned. This is about money, this is about organizations. Never forget what it's about. It's the person at the center of that. That's the mission. That's the value. What you and I do every day, is help people to recover their lives. It's all about the lives of people and what a great legacy to have in terms of a career and work and what we do. When all is said and done, one of the things I've learned from all of this is that, yes, I've had my training. I've done this for a long period of time. The whole service system that I operated, that's a \$650 million system, I run it to convert it to something that mirrors Access to Recovery. Thank you for your attention. (Applause)

MR. MEDEFIND: All right. That is inspiring. Thank you, each of you. And it's work that's on-going, as we said earlier. Innovation by definition is on-going. And that's what so many -- here in the final year of President Bush's term, we have, we're launching these new things like Beneficiary Choice Contracting, the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program just added a voucher element that's being tested right now and just getting off the ground, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship program, and Access to Recovery II, as Dr. Kirk mentioned, just the new round of grants went out. Now, it's I think 19 states and four tribal authorities. I think that's the number. Building on all the learning of the first three years, to a whole new round of things and listing new nonprofit partners in addiction recovery and so many other things. So, let's give a final round of applause to these great panelists. (Applause)