NCCP
National Center for Children in Poverty
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University

215 West 125th Street, 3rd floor
New York, NY 10027-4426
TEL 646-284-9600
FAX 646-284-9623
www.nccp.org

Michael C. Laracy
Coordinator for Public Policy
Annie E. Casey Foundation
701 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

June 5, 2009

Dear Mike:

I am writing to commend you for your efforts to make a case that current federal support for national data sets (e.g. through SIPP and other national data sets) be accompanied by federal support for the development of state-by-state information on child and family experiences and outcomes.

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), whose mission is to identify and promote strategies that reduce child poverty and improve the lives of low-income children and families, is committed to promoting informed policy making based on the best available data and evidence. We conduct research, we synthesize research and we work with policymakers, advocates and researchers to make research more relevant to policymakers and to promote its use. Having national data and data sets for our analyses of trends and outcomes is of vital importance.

NCCP is also a national policy research organization that has a very strong focus on identifying, understanding and tracking state-by-state variations in policies, demographics and economic conditions. During the mid 1990's through our Map and Track series, we systematically tracked variations in state policies in state early childhood policies and programs. Most importantly, over the past few years, we have developed, and are expanding, our unique 50 state-databases that enable users to compare policies across the states. (See www.nccp.org) These include state policy choices for Family Economic Security, Early Childhood and Development and Adolescent Health.

How much more powerful this database would be to policymakers, to researchers and to advocates, as well as to NCCP, if we could begin to develop research that links state policy choices and patterns with outcomes for children. Based on our experience, it is clear to us that for the next generation of policy relevant research, there is a critical need to enhance the capacity to provide researchers and policymakers with state-by-state information about child well-being and outcomes, based on the use of consistent, over-time measures.

Congress, over the years has been forward thinking in supporting the collection and analysis of national data about children and families. We believe that it is now time to ensure that the country's data infrastructure includes state-by-state information on the well-being of and outcomes for America's children and families as well.

Please let me know if NCCP can provide you with any other information that would be helpful in your efforts.

Sincerely,

Janice Cooper, PhD
Interim Director