

CLASP / CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY
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OPERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, I now give you Jodie Levin-Epstein of CLASP, the host of this audio conference.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Welcome, everyone. This audio conference, “Job Schedules: The Facts” is hosted by the Center for Law and Social Policy, CLASP. We are pleased to, to co-sponsor with our colleague organizations, the Center for Popular Democracy and the National Women’s Law Center.

Job schedules are in the news. Wal-Mart, following demands and organizing by members of our Wal-Mart, now has a program so that part-time workers can try to get full-time schedules. Starbucks announced improved practices, following a “New York Times,” story about Starbucks employee, (Janette Navarro), who lost her boyfriend and her housing because of her volatile work schedule.

Coverage in the “New York Times,” “The Boston Globe,” and other outlets is gaining fresh public attention to something low wage workers have struggled with for too long. Volatile work hours, inadequate hours, little schedule notice, and a deep fear of retaliation, just for asking for some kind of accommodation.

To tackle the problems, the Schedules That Work Act has been introduced in Congress. It provides all workers with the right to request a schedule change, and some workers, those with child care, second jobs, schooling and caring needs get more. They have the right to request and receive a change, unless the company has a bona fide business reason for denying their request.

In addition, workers in some occupations with high schedule volatility are provided protections related to reporting time pay, split shift pay, and advanced notice of work schedules. In this call, we are looking at the facts. The research that propels the legislation. We are honored that we are joined by Massachusetts Senator, Elizabeth Warren, nationally recognized as a populist champion and a sponsor of the Schedules That Work Act. Senator, welcome.

SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN (D-MASSACHUSETTS): Thank you very much. It’s good to be here.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: First, you know, you’ve got a full plate, Senator. What prompted you to do add on to it, and to sponsor the Schedules That Work Act?

WARREN: Well, it’s a great question, and I, I do want to say, I’m so glad we’re here today to have chance to talk about this. So, thank you for doing this, and I want to say thank you to Olivia Golden, who’s the Executive Director at CLASP. I’m a big fan of CLASP, and the Center

for Popular Democracy, and the National Women's Law Center. And I'm grateful to everyone for hosting this call, and for everyone being here.

I also understand that later on this call, we're going to have Maureen Perry Jenkins, who is with UMASS Amherst, and so I want to give her a special shout out. Amherst, where only the h is silent, we like to say in Massachusetts, and also that we're going to have Susan Lambert, with University of Chicago. So, this is a great group of people to have together.

Yes, yes, you start this in the right place by saying why, why get involved in this. For me, this is personal. You know, I, I think all mothers know how important a work schedule can be. When I was a young mother, and just getting started, and just getting started in my first real full-time job after I had babies, I was very lucky. I had my Aunt (Bea), who came to live with me. I had my mom and dad, who moved to be nearby. And they really helped out when I was a working mother. But, I understand that not everyone can make those kind of family arrangements.

And that an unpredictable work schedule can make it a real struggle for parents to try to care for a child. The planned child care, the planned after school pickups, to try to plan a second job, to make any other commitment. And, so, the way I see this, any worker, but in particular a single mom, should know if her hours are being cancelled before she arranges for day care, and drives halfway across town to show up for work. Any worker deserves that basic respect.

You know, this is a significant issue that has a real impact on many families, and I've heard from people all across the country about the scheduling challenges they face. Now, you mentioned about unpredictable scheduling, and it is an important part of what we're talking about here, and a big part of why I got involved in this. But unpredictable scheduling is just one of the many challenges that working families are facing around this country.

Low wage workers are getting squeezed in many ways. Minimum wage workers haven't had a raise for more than seven years. The U.S. is one of the only countries in the world without paid maternity leave, or paid sick days. Many people want a full-time, nine to five jobs, but one of the fastest growing parts of our economy is part-time work in retail and service.

So, families are really getting squeezed by this. The, the Schedules That Work Act is about having some basic fairness in work scheduling, so that both employees and employers have more certainty and can do their jobs. I understand that this bill will be a hard lift in this Congress. But, I guarantee that if we don't start pushing it, we'll never get it. You get what you fight for. And we're going, and we're willing to reintroduce the bill next year, and to keep pushing it to ensure that workers are better protected from unfair scheduling practices.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Senator, you nailed it. You said you get what you fight for. Some folks might wonder, though, whether research actually matters in Congress. What's your take?

WARREN: Well, Jodie, you, you may not know this about me, but I am a former social science researcher myself. Gosh, 30 years ago, as a baby law professor, I received a National Science

Foundation Grant to support an extensive empirical research project on the causes of consumer bankruptcy.

And my co-authors and I constructed a massive data set of U.S. bankruptcy filings, and analyzed that database, to determine what was pushing families over the edge financially. Over time, we expanded and developed that project so that today the result of that grant, the Bankruptcy Data Project, is still up and running, and still collecting new data.

You know, it isn't always recognized, but social science research is a compass for policy makers. When policy makers face a public policy challenge, thoughtful, high quality research helps point us in the right direction. As a result, our economy improves, our society improves, so when we have rigorous social science research.

I understand in this case it's not going to be easy to get protections for workers against these bad scheduling practices. But we can win. We can win because the things we're fighting for are the things that matter to working Americans.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, Senator Elizabeth Warren, I want to thank you on behalf of everybody who's getting a chance to hear you, for taking the time today to add to your plate for this year, and next, in promoting and pushing the Schedules That Work Act. And I think we all want to thank Aunt (Bea) as well. So, thank you so much for joining us, and for your leadership.

WARREN: Well, thank you, and thanks for doing this. Thanks for helping pull people together. Thanks to everybody on this call. The next time somebody tells you we can't get anything done, just say, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. We worked hard. We made something happen. We can do it again, and again, and again. People are counting on us. We're counting on each other. We're going to make real change. We're going to do it together.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: In the spirit of transparency, I want everyone to know that I got a chance to interview Senator Warren on Monday. It was not today, because she wanted to be sure that she could be part of this audio conference call, and that's when her schedule permitted. There's a fuller interview, and you all will be sent a link to that interview, and it will also be on the archived page.

Today, I'll be interviewing, especially if they unmute themselves, Susan Lambert at the University of Chicago. Hi, Susan.

SUSAN LAMBERT: Hello.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Great. You did unmute. And Maureen Perry Jenkins at the University of Massachusetts, pronounced Amherst, I understand ...

MAUREEN PERRY JENKINS: Yes, yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ...according to the senator.

PERRY JENKINS: Yes. Hello.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Hello. And Olivia Golden, at the Center for Law and Social Policy. Hey, Olivia.

OLIVIA GOLDEN:: Hi, Jodie.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Great. This call is the first of three audio conferences, and it is designed to set the stage for the rest. We're off to a great start with registrants from 43 states and our neighboring nation, Canada. Today, we will zero in on the nature and extent of the job schedule issue broadly. And about the facts that propel the legislation. Susan Lambert will give us the latest on the scope of the issue. How many people face challenging job schedules and what those challenges are?

Maureen Perry Jenkins will detail how job schedules contribute to, or thwart, family stability when a low wage worker becomes a new parent. Olivia Golden will provoke us to think through how facts can best be deployed in moving policy makers.

Next week's call, that's going to dig into the provisions of the Schedules That Work Act, and what it will accomplish for employees in all companies with 15 or more workers. Our November call will tackle the intersection of job schedules and child care, particularly child care subsidies. We're beginning to think about our audio conferences for 2015, so, really, just shoot us a note to let us know what topics are tops for you. A format note, please immediately send in your questions as any time to me, as soon as they occur to you, just send them to me at audioconference@clasp.org and I'll then ask them of our guests.

First, Olivia?

GOLDEN:: Hello.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Hi. You've worn a bunch of hats prior to taking the helm at CLASP, including running a city agency, and running part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Could I ask you to riff off of the senator's points about research? To help kick off our conversation now, not only about what the facts are, but also about how to deploy them.

GOLDEN:: Sure. And, thank you, Jodie, I just want to note that Jodie and her team here at CLASP are experts in deploying facts, credible, real, serious facts to, to inform the policy debate, so I'm honored to be asked to do this. And, also, thank you to (Senator Warren). Like her, I'm a past social science researcher, among other things. And I want to comment on two of her points, particularly, that social science facts, research, can be a compass for policy makers, and her completely different point that this is personal for her.

And I just want to note that one of the really important ways that facts affect the debate, and that I think you'll be hearing today from Susan and Maureen is that they provide information about the scope, the impact, how many people are affected, how much it affects adults' economic security, parents' ability to raise their kids. You, it offers you facts that don't depend on your

own personal situation, because one of the key things I think is that only, for those who, who experience this issue personally, it may feel as though it's an important policy issue, but it may also feel very much as though it was their fault. They didn't succeed in making the arrangements they should have made.

That's kind of a long history of how Americans sometimes see work family issues, and it's the facts and the research that show how widespread that can, that can help you with that. I also think that facts can help stimulate ideas about solutions, if the problems are bigger in some settings and smaller in others that helps policy makers think about solutions. Researchers aren't usually the best people to come up with all the particulars of the solutions, but they can stimulate it.

And then I think research can be extremely helpful in developing and understanding of a problem that can reach multiple allies. So, for example, as CLASP we try to think about how might young adults or youth or people who care about youth connect to these issues. How might particular communities or particular groups, or particular states connect to these issues?

So, evidence and facts, I think, can be a compass by helping to frame, by giving a sense of scale, by giving a sense of who has a stake in the issue. And, ideally, by stimulating our creativity about solutions.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Olivia, that's very helpful for kicking us off. If you're golden on this, I'm going to ask you to be a bookend, and also help loop us back at the end, with different observations.

GOLDEN:: absolutely.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Can you stick around?

GOLDEN:: Of course.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Great. Great. Excellent. Excellent. Susan, we're going to dig into your report, but just not yet. You've been working on this topic extensively over the years, and you've actually had the chance to work directly with companies. So, you do things like crunch numbers, and we're going to talk about those, but you actually get to talk to workplace managers. Can you fill us in a little bit about working, and understanding the manager perspective? And what that tells you and helps inform the data?

LAMBERT: Yes. That's right. A lot of the research that I actually do is to take a very close look at what drives scheduling practices in firms, and how they, they're implemented in every day practice. And, then, also, how they affect everyday life for workers. And one of the key things that I have learned in observing workplaces and gathering detailed data on them is that it sure looks as though there's a lot more stability in many businesses than are commonly thought.

If you just take a second to think about it, in retail, for example, every day someone has to open the doors, and close out the cash registers. And that has to be at least a minimum number of

employees around. And the variation that there isn't consumer demand is actually fairly predictable, especially with the new analytics and the new technologies that at least major employers now use. So, when you look closely workplaces, it seems quite feasible to increase, at least, the predictability and the stability of worker schedules.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: All right. Well, that's a really important takeaway on, from your conversations. Now, talking more about your recent data analysis, the precarious work schedule analysis. What's new about this data?

LAMBERT: Well, what's new about the data is that it's really the first national data where we can look separately and together at three different dimensions of work schedules: advanced schedule notice, fluctuating work hours, and schedule control. And this is actually the first time we've ever asked a question about how far in advance workers get their work schedules. So, that's what's new.

A limitation is that the data are representative of a sample of U.S. residents who were born 1980 and 1984, and they were between 26 and 32 years old when they answered the scheduling questions. So, this, the survey is a portrait of young adults in the workforce who are in the thick of really building careers and forming families. But that age group is about a third of what is called the Prime Age Workforce.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, we have new data, but it's not about everybody, OK. So, let me ask you, Susan to do something a little funky and begin at the end. What do you view as the key takeaway from this new research that you've done, and number crunching, that advocates should deploy early and often to convey the breadth of this issue, and, and why, and why it needs to be in the public policy front burner?

LAMBERT: Well, what these data show is that, really, across the labor market, large proportions of these early career adults experience unpredictable, fluctuating work hours over which they have little, if any, control. It is most marked at the lower levels of the labor market, but large proportions of professional and technical workers are also experiencing very precarious work schedules. These schedules create stress for workers, they undermine family economic security, this is something that is affecting all of us, really.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK, and I'm, I'm going to interrupt for a moment, because we have a question here from (Ami Durfee), who's in California, and she asks: will the scheduling researcher a summary be available online. And the answer is, yes, we will in, our follow up note to everybody, send Susan's research back out to you. It's also available at CLASP on our national repository of job scheduling resources.

So, Susan you mentioned there are three dimensions. Let's take up each, and get to some of the key elements. On schedule control, what do you mean, or what does it mean when one talks about schedule control? And what finding sort of pops out at you about that?

LAMBERT: Well, in this particular survey, the question asks workers, who decides the time you start and finish work? You know, you or your employer, or something in between? And what is

most intriguing here is the really large proportion of workers who say that their employer decides the timing of their work without their input. 44 percent of workers overall. 50 percent of people paid by the hour, and over 50 percent of workers of color say that their employer sets when they start and when they finish work, and they don't have any input into it.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And you've got a bunch of new data on advanced schedule, or schedule notice. But can you first, before you get into the numbers part, pull out for us how important advance notice for families and workers?

LAMBERT: Well, I think (Senator Warren) actually summarized it quite well, that when you don't know when you're going to work, or how much you're going to work, it makes it very difficult to do much of anything. It's hard to set up child care. It's hard to, you know, to take a class if you don't know when you're going to be scheduled to work, to hold a second job. We find in our research that unpredictability creates stress for workers, and it can make it very difficult for parents to participate in the kind of these intimate family routines that child development experts say are very important for children, like regular bedtime routines and monitoring homework. You know, I'm sure that (Maureen's) going to say a little bit more about this later.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: We're counting on her to. So, in terms of advanced schedules, you did get to break this down into different kinds of occupations. What's a highlight out of that analysis?

LAMBERT: Well, first of all, overall about 40 percent of early, these early career adults say they have little advance notice of their work hours, that's one week or less. And the rates are very high ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Wait. Can you say, say, say that again? One week or less?

LAMBERT: Right. One week or less. And that was the lowest category. So, we would like in future studies to break that open more. Because that's as low as you could go in, in these ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes.

LAMBERT: ... responses.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Meaning you think some people get, and you know that some people get, less than a week?

LAMBERT: Yes. Some people know their schedule the day before. Some get two days. And we don't know how large that proportion of workers is, you know?

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK.

LAMBERT: In some lower level jobs what we see is that there are even higher levels, of course, and on average, so, for example, 64 percent of food service workers, and 55 percent of home care workers, you know, reported that they know their schedule a week or less in advance.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, disaggregating this advance notice data for hourly workers and others, is that, you parsed it that way, as well, right?

LAMBERT: Yes, and, and what we find is what us researchers call stratification in the labor market around this. That while, for example, 50 percent of workers in jobs that are like in the service and production industries, they, you know, they know their schedule a week or less in advance. It's half of them. But 60 percent of elite professionals and technical and business staff say that they get four weeks or more advance notice, so there's real bifurcation on this in the labor market.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I want to remind the audience to send in your questions now, as they're occurring to you. You can ask them of Susan, or anybody, and just send them in as they occur to you. Again, where you send them is audioconference@clasp.org. Susan, switching to that work that you did sort of hands on with companies, when you got to work with them on advanced scheduling, those companies that didn't give much or any notice must have had their reasons, for goodness sakes. I mean, they, they had this practice in place. They must have put in place for a reason. Do those reasons make it impossible for companies to give advanced notice? I mean, really? Help us draw out their rationale.

LAMBERT: Well, you know, I always think it's important to recognize the difference between having a rationale and having a rational reason. Now, a lot of ... right?

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes.

LAMBERT: We all have rationales for ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes, yes. Well done. Well done.

LAMBERT: ...for everything we do. And a lot of what goes on in firms is because it's always gone on that way. When I worked at Sears during college, we got our schedules the Thursday before the start of the workweek, too. And some of these ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Oh, well, prison, this was great to do this call because now I know you worked at Sears. I never knew before.

LAMBERT: Yes, yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: All these years you've been holding back.

LAMBERT: No, no. For six years.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Whoa.

LAMBERT: I think it was. Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Oh.

LAMBERT: Yes. But, you know, as I mentioned earlier, when you really step back and you're able to take a look, and this is one of the contributions that researchers can make is that we can step back, out of the thick of things, and look at what's going on. And when you do that, what you realize is that there are actually a lot of very smart business analysts out there, who are very good at predicting the majority of variation in consumer demand. And predicting staffing needs.

And that really, we just have to have some more confidence in, in our managers, who are smart and imaginative as well to find ways to deliver the predictability and the stability that's really already in the businesses, and deliver that to employees. And that, you know, that they can do that, and they can still exceed or at least meet current business goals, and some firms already do that.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: This audience is about to make a liar out of me. I promised our guests that I would be getting so many questions, I wouldn't be able to ask all of them. But some, for some reason, this audience is, is not typing away. I encourage to you, because I know there's a lot going on that you'd love to ask, and someone's just done so. So, keep piling on. This is great.

Susan, we're going to talk, turn now to this other issue area, which is fluctuation of work hours. So, if you could define what's meant by that? And then also fill us in on what you learned when you compared hourly workers with others around the topic of fluctuations of work hours?

LAMBERT: So, how it was defined in this survey is that we look at fluctuations in a one month period in this survey. So, we asked people what's the greatest number of hours you've worked in a week in the last month? And what's the fewest number of hours you've worked in a week in the last month? And what, what's your usual hours? And I think what really surprised us is that in just this one month period, three quarters of employees in both hourly and non-hourly jobs reported at least some fluctuations in work hours.

And the range between the greatest and the fewest weekly hours amounts to, on average, eight, at least eight hour work day for all the different kinds of groups that we compare across race, across, you know, hourly, salaried status. Across occupation and, if you're an hourly worker, eight hours of pay is quite a bit. And one of the things that we were able to do is that, of course fluctuating hours is not necessarily bad.

If, you know, workers control that fluctuation, then we call that flexibility, and which is what most of us want. And so by combining these different questions on fluctuating hours and then who's, you know, decides your work schedule, what we find is that fluctuations in work hours look a lot more like desired flexibility at the top of the labor market. But, at the bottom of the labor market, among, especially among low paid hourly workers, it really looks like unwanted instability.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Susan, turning to a theme I know you've struck, which is that fluctuating work hours contributes to inequality. For those who have not heard you on this point, please share that observation and how you get there?

LAMBERT: Well, you know, there is growing income inequality in the U.S., and most people get their income by working. And in this country what we see is if there's a very strong relationship between having a stable, full time job, year round, and poverty. And, so, for example, in working families, which are defined in, as families in which at least one adult worked in the last year, and there's at least one child, 18 or younger, the poverty rate was 3.8 percent last year. It's at least one adult worked full time year round.

But it was over 27 percent, that's almost seven times higher, in families in which an adult worked, but no one worked full time year round. And the poverty rate was 47 percent in African-American families, where one parent worked, but no one enjoyed full time stable, year round employment. In hours.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Susan, we've covered a lot of ground, in a short amount of time. What are the three facts you think advocates and others should remember and repeat to make the case that job schedules matter?

LAMBERT: All right, this is a hard one to keep to three. Well, I think one is that during a single month, three quarters of these early career workers experience fluctuations in their work week, weekly work hours that average at least a full eight hour day of work and pay. That's a lot. That makes a difference between whether you can pay your bills or not.

Another one is that 40 percent of early career workers, almost half of all part-time workers, know when they're going to need to work one week or less in advance. That's so little advance notice for such a large proportion of our workforce. And then, finally, only a minority of workers across the labor market control the timing of their work. 50 percent of these early career adults in this survey, this nationally represented, and survey said that their employer decides the timing of their hours without their input.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, I want to stop for a moment and compliment the audience, because questions are beginning to come in. And Susan, we're going to have a chance to race through a few. Let me just mention that we have a reporter on from Bloomberg BNA's Daily Labor Report, and I will, (Michael Rose), put in you touch with the staff for Senator Warren, you asked about that and I will do at the end of this call. We also have a question about clarification about the proposed legislation. So, what I want to mention is that next week's call, if you haven't signed up for it yet, please do so, because that's going to drill down into each of these provisions.

But, for you, Susan, we have a set of really on point questions that you know more about probably than anybody, which, and you're going to love this question, and it comes from (Jess Jacobson), who's in Maryland, at the Universities at Shady Grove, and he asks: what do you think of the application of scheduling software? A recent article suggested that retail employees were being scheduled for as few 15 minutes at a time, based on this micro-analytic software programs. Something you know a lot about. Take it away.

LAMBERT: Well, the technology can be used for good, not just evil. They, and so it, the problem is not in the technology, but certainly what the, the new technology does is provide a lot

more detailed information in terms of tracking ongoing demand and allowing managers a way to very much trace, you know, look at it in real time and, to see how many staff you have on the floor, for example, in retail.

And, and how much traffic you're getting in, in the door, and to look at that in real time and then to start thinking about, well, maybe we should send some people home? Maybe we need to call some more people in? But it doesn't have to be used that way. It could, it could be used in the way that I suggested before, which is to predict demand and then go with those predictions and make, maybe, a few mod, you know, adjustments along the way.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: We have a question here from (Jane Zender-Merrill), who's with Kids Count in Michigan. And she asks: is there data linking single parents to advanced notice availability?

LAMBERT: You know, we have not broke that down yet, in these national data, in terms of, in terms of single parents. We have information on parents, but we haven't broke it down by parents, but just, you know, looking at mothers, for example, of, who have children less than 13 years old, about a third of them have one week or less advanced notice and almost half of them say that their employer decides the, their, the timing of their work.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And, when you say you haven't done that with the data, does that me the, the data points are there, but that analysis hasn't been done? Or the questions haven't yet been asked of workers?

LAMBERT: No, we, we could do that among this sample.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Ah.

LAMBERT: We just have not broke ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Ah, OK.

LAMBERT: ...it down yet by, by single parenthood.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, well, (Jane), should get, you know, an advanced copy so she be the first to know. Excellent. Excellent. So, I'm going to ask you a question that will help us segue to the questions I'm going to be asking Maureen about, because (Richard Schuer) has written in. He's with Children's Health Watch in Boston. And reminds us all that if we haven't already seen, they recently published a policy brief on the health outcomes of mothers with young children who, themselves, are experiencing job loss and reduced hours. And I encourage anybody who hasn't seen this to go to their website at Children's Health Watch, to check it out.

(Richard) is asking about what's known about the body of research out there about work schedules affecting worker and family health? And I'm not asking you here, and I'm sure he's not asking you to give us a bibliography, but your sense of how much is out there? And we'll also ask Maureen the same questions. And whether or not, in your mind, given your orientation

of this work, whether or not there's a piece that pops up as, as something that must be on everybody's must read list?

LAMBERT: There, a lot of the, most of the research on scheduling to date has really focused on non-standard timing, and so working hours outside of the nine to five standard workday, at least it used to be standard. So working times in the evening, and working, you know, on the weekends, and that body of research is very strong in terms of, of presenting a complicated picture of the relationship between working those non-standard times and child health, and also parent health.

And, Maureen can probably say more about that, but some studies show that it, you know, makes it very challenging for, again, for parents to participate in these intimate family routines that are, you know, that research does show is important to healthy child development. But, other ones show that, you know, there are ways that parents implement, you know, those schedules in a way that allowed them to take, do some tag team parenting and that mitigates some of those potentially negative effects. So, as a researcher, it was my duty to make things very complicated, and I think I just did that.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, we'll turn to another researcher, Maureen Perry Jenkins and hope that she will as well illuminate us all. You're, you're too hard on yourself, my dear. Maureen, hi, how are you?

PERRY JENKINS: Hi, I'm good. Thank you for having me.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: absolutely. And we're really excited that you could join us since you have a particularly interesting inside view of how job schedules can play out in, in some workers lives. You're involved in a longitudinal study, the Work and Family Transition Project. Could you just, briefly, fill us in on the aim of that project?

PERRY JENKINS: Sure. I've been studying low wage workers at a very particular time in the life course, is when they're having their first baby. So, we've been looking at how the work conditions and workplace policies of low wage workers across the transition to parenthood are related to their mental health outcomes, which is very important for parents and kids, and relationship quality for both parents and their children.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, that's kind of a tall order. Again, briefly, can you fill us in on how you went about getting those answers?

PERRY JENKINS: Yes. So, as opposed to sort of broad surveys, we went, we have been following now, for 10 years, 360 low wage families, and we go ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Wait, wait, wait. Did you say 10 years?

PERRY JENKINS: Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Whoa. OK. I didn't realize that.

PERRY JENKINS: So, yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Wow. All right.

PERRY JENKINS: So, we've gone into their homes, when they're pregnant, actually, and get a lot of information from them. And then we interview them five times in their homes, across the transition to parenthood, and then we've gone back when the children were six years old to see how they're doing, and also how the families are doing. And then now we're doing a follow up when the kids are about eight.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And who are parents? Any characteristics in order to be part of the study?

PERRY JENKINS: So, all parents, yes, a, a good question. All parents, and this is, you know, we could spend a whole hour talking about how you define low wage workers

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I won't let you. I won't let you.

PERRY JENKINS: And social class. But, basically, we wanted all families that were primarily high school education. Education was our key variable. So, you could not have more than an Associate's Degree. The majority of our sample had high school and/or less than a high school degree. So, we were really interested in groups that didn't have a lot of trajectory in terms of their work options, given their educational levels. So, all were in low income jobs.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And, and, were they were single parents? Single parents? Single parents?

PERRY JENKINS: So, about a third of the sample's married, a third of the sample is single and a third were co-habiting. But, as I say that, since we've been following them now for so long, that's been all mixed up. So, there's many people that split up and divorced. And people that got together. So, it's very variable.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: All right. So, could you share a story that captures, for you, particularly, the story that you tell your neighbors when you're trying to convey to them the scheduling challenges for new parents ...

PERRY JENKINS: Right.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ... working at low wages.

PERRY JENKINS: Well, you know, listening to Susan talk, I just, you know, I have, like, a list here about 20 I could tell you. But I, I think linking it back to this issue. One big issue for them is advance notice. And advance notice can work in a couple ways.

So, one of my moms actually worked a, a seven to three job as a nursing aide, and took, took eight weeks off to have her baby, and assumed when she went back to work she would have the

same work schedule. So, she scheduled her childcare around the seven three job and got a call the day before she went back to be told she would be working 11 to seven. Which ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Whoa.

PERRY JENKINS: I know. You could imagine.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: The day before?

PERRY JENKINS: Yes, the day before. So, she called me, and I'm a researcher, but she called me and said, is this legal? And I thought, I didn't know if that was legal. But it is. You, you're guaranteed your job back, you're not guaranteed your schedule back. So, that's one ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, this is under the Family Medical Leave Act.

PERRY JENKINS: Yes, yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: The unpaid leave program.

PERRY JENKINS: Exactly.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Which she was covered by. OK. Sorry. Keep going.

PERRY JENKINS: Another, and perfectly with (Susan's) story, you know, a number of moms would get their schedules on Thursday. So, you have a, you know, baby, you have to figure out child care. You get your schedule on Thursday.

So, she would literally get her schedule on Thursday and spend the weekend filling in her childcare with her grandmother, her mother and her cousin. And, so, each weekend she would sort of get a different, and she worried about, is this good for my child to have multiple caregivers? And it keeps switching and I don't know what she's eating on this day.

A lot of questions come up about sort of the child's experience when parent's schedule is so irregular. So, that's a huge concern for someone like me, who's interested in child development outcomes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes. OK. Well, now let's go to your findings. We've heard these really compelling stories. What did you find out about income for the family during a leave?

PERRY JENKINS: OK, well, this is really interesting, because we first looked at our data, about a third of our sample received no income during their parental leave, which, given the other statistics I've seen, actually that didn't as bad as I expected. But what I realized is the way you ask the question really matters, because we basically had them tell us, week by week, how their leave was covered.

And what happened is the majority of the mothers used sick time, vacation time, any time they can, save time up for their leave, because it's unpaid. And, then, when they go back to work, they have a new baby, who's going into childcare, and they have no sick time, they have no leave, they have no way to take care of that baby when the baby gets ill.

So, another variable we started collecting in the course of this data was how many times they got written up after they went back for, you know, not showing up for work, or taking sick time when they didn't have it. And how many people lose their jobs as a function of that. So, even, it's, it's not an option to just ask how much leave and whether you're paid or not, but it's how they, how they're using, what they're using for that pay, and then what happens after they go back to work.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, you just teased me with a statement that you collected data about when a company would call out an employee because they took time off, after they came back.

PERRY JENKINS: Right.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Because they had no paid time left.

PERRY JENKINS: Right.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: For those who were lucky enough to have paid time.

PERRY JENKINS: Exactly.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: To begin with. Can you recall roughly what you've discovered in that area?

PERRY JENKINS: Yes. About, about a third of our moms, over the course of the first year of parenthood, received some sort of, you know, every company does it differently, black mark, letter, letter in their file, whatever about, about having taken time when they didn't have the time. And within that third, another about 10 percent of that third just lost their jobs.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Wow. OK. I'm, I want to ask you a question about mental health of parents, but I'm ...

PERRY JENKINS: Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ...little bit worried about my own right now. The, these numbers are really so distressing, Maureen.

PERRY JENKINS: Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK. So, tell us what you've found about the mental health of parents, please?

PERRY JENKINS: So, I mean, a big, a big piece of this, and actually, there, to answer the other question for there, there, you know, a lot of data on health and sick days, and that sort of thing. I think mental health, for me, was a particularly important because we know parents' depression is significantly related – and I can tell you all the ways – to sort of children's' developmental outcome.

So, it's important in its own right that, that people are coming depressed from their work schedules, but especially for young parents, the transition of what happens to their children is huge.

So, in our data, a, a number of things end up predicting, but in terms of scheduling, we, we did a paper on shift work, and shift work, especially shift work where mothers work the evening shift, the three to 11 shift, we saw the most negative outcomes in terms of their mental health. In terms of depression, in particular.

So, their depression over the course of the first year, when they were working afternoon shifts, was, was the highest and stayed the highest. And, also, moms who had rotating shifts. So, rotating, you know, each week, one week you're three to 11, the next week you're seven to three, so you can just imagine the disruption of that when you're trying to figure out child care, and those were our most depressed mothers across the board.

But interestingly, the same, not as strong, but we got similar findings for fathers. So, shift work for fathers, especially shift work for fathers, night shift was the worst, but night shift has been related to mental health outcomes before, but night shift depression increased across the first year, when they were doing night shift.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: A reminder to the audience, please send in your questions to audioconference@clasp.org . Turning to the children, Maureen ...

PERRY JENKINS: Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: You, you mentioned you'd followed them for, now, about 10 years or so.

PERRY JENKINS: Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: What are the implications of job stress on the children? The parents' job stress ...

PERRY JENKINS: Right.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ... on the children.

PERRY JENKINS: This is, this is really interesting and complicated. I'm going to try and just sort of give you the highlights, because there's questions about whether it's early job experiences, or job experiences at the, so, if we're following kids up when their six, which is where we have most of our data, you know, the question is, is, is what's happening in the first

year having long-term effects on kids? Or is what's going on at the concurrent time? And both questions are important.

But, really, interestingly, in a paper we're, we're just about ready to put out, work conditions in the first year of life, when the baby's an infant, so disruptive schedules, shift work, unsupportive supervisors, all of those things are related six years later to significantly more behavior problems in kids. But, on the positive side, when those things are good, we found significant reports of kids' increased social skills. And the important thing about those outcome variables is they were reported not by parents, because parents are swayed of course, in their images of their kids all the time but by ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Really? But by, I'm sorry. By the teacher? These are reports from the teachers?

PERRY JENKINS: These are teachers' reports of children's behavior. So, completely unrelated to sort of what's been going on in that family. They don't know what's been going on in that family, you know? But that this is how this child is behaving given, you know, in their, with their year with them in school. And we're linking early behavior of parents in terms of their work conditions to kids' developmental outcomes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Wow. Now, you've made the point to me that a little change in scheduling practice and policy ...

PERRY JENKINS: Right.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ... can make a big change in worker well-being. Could you give us some illustrations of those little workplace changes that make a big difference?

PERRY JENKINS: Yes, so we asked, and we originally had all these fancy dancy questions about flex time and flex, and workers looked at us like we were crazy. And then we realized we just needed to say, you know, when your baby has a health care appointment can you take time off to go? I mean, little, we're talking, and what happens? Can you leave early if your babysitter calls? Can you, you know, those sorts of questions.

So, I call them basically tweaks. They're not necessarily, basically supervisors saying, sure, if you need to, or, or the other possibility, and we have a scale that I could show you, but whether you're able to swap your schedule if a worker's willing to cover for you so you can go deal with a family issue.

And, what we found, again, with this, and this is with our longitudinal data, if you had even that little bit of flexibility, we saw levels of depression stay level. If you didn't have those, in, in some cases go down, and that's more complicated. And then if you didn't have any of that flexibility, what was most interesting was the rise in depression levels across the first year.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes. So, Maureen, when we did catch up earlier, about your research ...

PERRY JENKINS: Right.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ... and how it translates into some important messages that both the public policy arena and the public need to hear, you mentioned several, and I want to run through each of those.

PERRY JENKINS: Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: First, we talked about stability, especially across the first year of life. And that was, you described the issue of switching housing, jobs, partners, and it's all related to more negative outcomes.

PERRY JENKINS: Right.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: What fact policy recommendation should advocates make sure is heard?

PERRY JENKINS: Well, given that, sort of the time life I study, parents need to be able to have time off to take care of their children, because one of the things that created the instability is if they didn't have the time, or if they got in trouble because they, you know, took time and they didn't have it, they would just quit their job. And then try and find another job, or quit their job ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Because they felt they didn't have a choice?

PERRY JENKINS: Right. And, or, and then wait a while, go on aid for a little bit and then try and get another job. And then, and all those little blips in stability just wreak havoc for the family and, ultimately, wreak havoc for the child. So, we need to come up with ways of making that first year as stable as possible. All these changes are just not good. And so, one, and one of the things that precipitates all these changes is not having time off when your baby's born.

So, if you can't afford unpaid leave, I have mothers in my sample going back to work two weeks after having their babies. At, that's insane. And so the effects, it's not surprising that they get depressed and we see all these, and their children are, you know, they're putting them in childcare where it's a dollar an hour, because it's all that they can afford. So, we have children in low quality care. We have parents who are stressed out because they're physically not ready to go back to work, and then that creates all this instability in that first year.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And is then those same children who show up in kindergarten and are acting out?

PERRY JENKINS: Yes. So, basically, so our findings in that first year, if you add in all these other stability variables. So, it's, so the work challenges that work create other levels of instability. So, the minute you quit your job, you might end up going, you might end up moving in with your mother. And then your partner might leave. And then, and so it's, and so as those things accrue, the more instability there is, the more negative outcomes you see for children both concurrently at the same time, and as you follow them over time.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, on the flip side, you've also mentioned to me the theme of awareness.

PERRY JENKINS: Right.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And that's supervisors, and employees don't even know about the good policies that may be on the books, but aren't getting lifted up in practice. What, what should we all hang onto here from your research?

PERRY JENKINS: I am just amazed at the number of, first, moms and fathers who don't what the Family Medical Leave Act is, and don't know even know how to ask for it.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: The unpaid, this is again the unpaid program.

PERRY JENKINS: The unpaid, but just even that. But then going back and, and when their supervisors or bosses will go that doesn't apply to us, and in some cases it doesn't, if they have under 50 employees, but in many cases they'll say it doesn't apply to us without knowing that if you're part of a larger organization, like McDonald's, it does apply to you, even though there's not that many workers at your site. And so this issues like that where they're just a complete misunderstanding of the policy, and so it doesn't get enacted.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I want to do something that's really not fair, Maureen, I'm, I'm going to quote, I'm going to quote something you said to me. And I want to quote it because I think it is a good bumper sticker. And, and you, you said to me a job guarantee without a schedule guarantee is a problem. You've thought about this a lot. You're seeing it in your work. What policy recommendation are you promoting? Or think ought to be promoted in addressing this?

PERRY JENKINS: I, I, and I'm totally in line with Susan here, in terms of parents need to have advanced notice and need to understand their own rights around these own policies. I mean, I think part of this intervention needs to be at the worker level to just say these, these are what's actually there for you. And I think some education of work, worker, you know, managers should have to know this stuff. And I'm not sure why they don't, but they don't.

So, I think at both levels if, if what's on the books it doesn't even get enacted, then everybody's losing, and that has to change. They have to know about this stuff. And I think we also just need to, I mean, I haven't even gotten to the majority of my workers want full time work, and many are kept at, you know, 32 hours, so there's no benefits that have to be connected with it. So, that's another whole piece of stability, just desperately needing full time hours and not being able to get full time hours.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, I'm going to throw the same question from (Richard Schuer), with Children's Health Watch that I just asked a moment ago with Susan, which is your take on research on work schedules and how they affect worker and family member health. Clearly, there's your work.

PERRY JENKINS: Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Are you aware of any place which has some emerging research coming out? Of course, we're going to get, as soon your report comes out, we'll publish it on the CLASP ...

PERRY JENKINS: Right.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ...national repository. We'll send it out to folks on this audio conference call, but are there emerging pieces we should be looking towards, coming out in the next year or two that you know of?

PERRY JENKINS: In terms of physical health, you're talking about?

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, if you know of others, mental health as well.

PERRY JENKINS: I mean, here, I mean, the most work that's come out is, is around shift work, and variable work schedules and that's been (Harriet Presser) has just done ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Right.

PERRY JENKINS: ...years and years of work on the effects of that sort of thing. In terms of my own work, you know, depression is also whoppingly related to all sorts of physical health problems.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes.

PERRY JENKINS: So, we do have data on health and sickness, and so the same findings you find with depression we also find in terms of health outcomes. We're very interested, and I have a student right now who's looking at how pre-natal health and depression, along with work conditions, affect both infant health. So, we're looking at sort of birth weight, and problems with pregnancy, and, and failure to thrive babies as a function of maternal stress, which is a function of work. So, that, that work is starting to come out.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Great. I, I have a question here that may be best directed at Susan, but anybody can jump in. It comes from (Alison Wise) and she's at the Rockefeller Foundation, and she asks: is there research that explores the level of awareness among employer managers around the Family Medical Leave Act? There was a relatively recent update of the Family Medical Leave Act uptake and utilization that was released by the government, and it asked a set of questions which indicated by inference that, that some employers were not aware of rules that applied to them, but, but Susan, anybody aware of explicit questions of employer managers?

LAMBERT: Well, I don't, I know that the national study of the changing workforce, I'm pretty sure, their employer portion of that ...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes.

LAMBERT: ... asks questions around that, but I am not familiar with the results. Maybe Maureen knows?

PERRY JENKINS: I don't know, but I need to find out. It's a huge problem with my sample. Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And we'll also do a little bit of a dive and see, see what we, we can find. We have a question here about whether we can talk a bit more about child care arrangements. Again, our third audio conference call in November is entirely about child care, and particularly about the subsidy program and intersections when jobs are volatile. But, I, I do think Maureen, if you could give us another story about another angle, if you have one? I know that when we talked you said you had so many, so ...

PERRY JENKINS: I know.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ...if there's another aspect of child care ...

PERRY JENKINS: Right.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ... or another illustration ...

PERRY JENKINS: Right.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ...that would be very helpful here.

PERRY JENKINS: Well, you know, I'm, I study families that, at such a particular, at least across the transition to parenthood and the majority of my families have very negative perceptions of center care, or a group based care of child care.

And, so, even in cases where actually they would get some support, there was one company that actually had child care on site that you could use it with, it was costly ,but they refused to use it. So, 89 percent of my families, across the first year of life, don't use center care. They use family, and they use split shifts.

So, that, it gets very complicated because they're doing things like having multiple family members, at different time points, and, you know, a third of them are doing she works seven to three, he works three to 11, if they're a married couple. And then others are using all sorts of deals they're making with other people who work, who will watch their children.

GOLDEN:: Jodie? This is Olivia.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes. Yes.

GOLDEN:: Do you want one more comment on that topic?

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Sure.

GOLDEN:: It's just the commercial announcement, which, of course, you know, Jodie and her team have co-written with CLASP's child care team a piece on child care and schedules, and I just want to highlight the implications for children when, when complex and changing, and uncontrolled schedules interact with limited availability and rigid rules, right?

You get children in tons of different settings, going from one person to another, which we know is bad for kids. You get wonderful investments in things like pre-K, totally unavailable to those who need them most because the particular hours of the program have no relevance, to what apparent needs. And, so, the, the interactions and the policy challenges on both sides are, I think, a key feature.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I'm going to throw out a question here about the future of work. Susan, I think it might fit best with you, but if others want to join in as well. This comes from (Rachel Bergenfeld) who's at the Rockefeller Foundation. (Rachel) writes a key trend at the moment is workers being not tied to a corporation, but coming together, aided by technology, to work on specific projects for short periods of time. Models range from open source consulting to task rabbit like shared economy interfaces.

How can we think about these shifts alongside scheduling instability? Do workers have more or less power in addressing scheduling instability given these changes? Can we push for scheduling stability while acknowledging that the very nature of work in the U.S. and around the world is changing rapidly? Susan, you want to take that one?

LAMBERT: Yes, you know, I think that that is an important question that we want, want to see, you know. One of the things we need to understand is the changing nature of work. And, part of it is the number of hours.

But there's, one of the things that's important to do is to unpack all of those jobs, and unpack the different scheduling challenges. It's one thing, you know, if your hours vary and you're controlling them. It's another thing, if your hours are varying and you have no control over it at all. And, so, these new, you know, pods or where people are collaborating, the extent to which they have control over them is going to be incredibly different experience, you know, compared to somebody whose hours vary in the same way and they have no control over them.

And, so, I think that, I think that we need to be very careful, in, in two ways. One is to think of the different dimensions, and the ramifications. And, the other thing, is not to assume that what is going on in certain sectors of the economy and among maybe the more knowledgeable workers that those forms, new forms of working are going to be affecting the person who's cleaning your room in a hotel. So.

GOLDEN:: And, just, can I build on that Jodie?

LAMBERT: Yes.

GOLDEN:: One sentence, just to say that that number that you gave, Susan, that 55 percent of home care workers have less than a week of advanced notice. When you think about the low wage work areas that are growing, and you think about health and you think about an aging population, I think that really illustrates your point. That one of the risks is that schedule instability contributes to inequality because the people in these growing, low wage sectors also have the worst conditions in other respects.

LAMBERT: Yes, and to take the home care workers, for example, and that one month's time, you know, 71 percent of them reported that they, you know, their hours fluctuated by as much as 62 percent of their usual work hours. Those are huge fluctuations in their earnings. And they're paid by the hour. And, you know, 40 percent of them said that their employer completely decides the timing of their work. So, it's, it's the configuration.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: We are nearly at the top of the hour, and Olivia Golden, I'm going to hold you to promise to bookend our conversation with some new observation about the directions here.

GOLDEN:: OK. I'm going, I have to be very short, because this has been so exciting. So, the first thing is that I said at the beginning that in a new policy area like this, a crucial role of research is to convey the scale, the importance, that this is a problem that matters. It's not just about a few people having trouble, and I think our researchers did that very powerfully. Both with data, with facts that are astonishing.

And with stories, and both of those matter and both of them can come out of rigorous research. There's lots more I'm dying to say, particularly about the implications for children. Some of it's in papers on our website, but I'll just say I think this has been a really powerful way of highlighting the role in research in noting scale.

A second thing I didn't mention at the beginning is the role of research is myth busting, when there are commonly believed facts or ideas that turn out not to be true. I think we've just been talking about whether unpacking the types of jobs helps you think about whether the idea that, you know, distinguishing flexibility that's good from flexibility that's not.

Another example, from my perspective, would be that sometimes people say it's only a problem for single parents, if they got married it wouldn't be a problem. And one of the things I remember from past research, which I'd love to see now, is the issue of effects on marriage and relationships of coping with child rearing as well as these jobs. So, I think there's a myth busting function for the future.

And the last thing I would say is that Senator Warren, when she gave her example of research, it was about research she did 30 years ago that came to fruition in the last few years. So, obviously, everybody knows this, but persistence is key and both persistent advocacy, and partnering of research with that advocacy. Because monitoring and tracking and figuring out is it getting better? Is it getting worse?

Is anybody getting a handle on it? So, there's one state or one city? I think that kind of partnership can help move the agenda over the period of time that it will take to get to the solution that we all wish to see.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Wonderful. Well, I want to remind everybody that if you have not registered yet for the September 17th audio conference on policy and advocacy strategy, that's where we're going dig into the bill and Congressman George Miller will be joining us for that call. And he plans to be on live if he possibly can. So, that's 2:30 to 3:30, Eastern Time, September 17th, Wednesday, a week from today.

I want to thank each of my guests, Susan Lambert, from the University of Chicago. Maureen Perry Jenkins at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. And Olivia Golden, from the Center for Law and Social Policy. Thank you everyone, as well, in the audience for joining us today, and for your interest in this issue. And we'll hear from you next week. Have a great day. Bye-bye.

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