

July 17, 2024

## **Political Economy Research Institute Awarded \$2.7 Million to Improve the Accuracy and Accessibility of Data on the U.S. Care Economy**

AMHERST, Mass.—Nancy Folbre, University of Massachusetts Amherst Professor emerita of Economics and Director of the Program on Gender and Care Work at the Political Economy Research Institute, has been named Principal Investigator of a grant from the [Alfred P. Sloan Foundation](#) for \$2.7 million to improve U.S. data infrastructure related to both paid and unpaid care provision.

The grant will support two projects, one exploring possible improvements in national statistical surveys and another enhancing a website currently under construction to present data on the care economy in a user-friendly format that will encourage public engagement.

Many forms of care provision have traditionally been located outside the market economy, rendered invisible within national income accounts. Unpaid child care and elder care are still not officially considered “work” and people providing unpaid household services are still not considered part of the “labor force.” Transfers of money within families, such as expenditures on children, receive little attention in official measures of consumption or investment and government transfers are categorized as mere redistribution even when they represent productive investments in human capabilities. The growing number of researchers exploring issues relevant to U.S. care policy are hampered by shortfalls in existing data.

The new grant will provide support to the [Committee on National Statistics](#) (CNSTAT) of the National Academy of Science to convene an interdisciplinary panel of experts to critically examine existing national surveys and reach a consensus on recommendations for change. The Care Board website project is headed by economist Misty Heggeness at the University of Kansas, drawing on her extensive experience with the U.S. Census Bureau.

While the CNSTAT and Care Board projects are independent, there are valuable synergies between them. Folbre explains, “Researchers, policymakers and care providers can all learn from each other. I hope that anyone with specific suggestions growing out of their efforts to find relevant and useful information on the care economy will contact me personally.”

Misty Heggeness summarizes the larger vision: “This grant is transformational because it provides critical support for the continuation of enhancements to care economy statistics while, at the same time, harnessing national expertise to develop a roadmap for the federal government in thinking about how to incorporate these enhancements into official statistics. The end result will be improved policies and programs driven by easily accessible data at the intersection of economics and care.”

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