OVERVIEW

In the course of these 10 weeks, I covered a broad scope of policy issues including but not limited to Opportunity Zone tax law, kinship care payments, and CEO-to-median pay ratios. Despite being remote, I learned a lot and built camaraderie with my coworkers over Zoom. Overall it was a great chance for me to understand what real policy research looked like.
WHAT IS POLICY MATTERS OHIO?
Policy Matters Ohio— A more vibrant, equitable, and sustainable Ohio

- Policy Matters Ohio is a non-profit, non-partisan policy research institute with offices located in Cleveland and Columbus. It focuses on state-level policy specifically.
- Their work falls into four major buckets:
  - A fair economy: good jobs, worker rights, smart training, and community for all.
  - A quality Ohio: adequate and fair taxes to support infrastructure.
  - Sustainable communities: smart solutions that create jobs and support communities.
  - Pathways out of poverty: reasonable regulations to help families build a better future for themselves and their children.
PROJECTS
Opportunity Zones

- Opportunity Zones are designated census tracts where people can invest money to build certain geographically-based projects (restaurants, shops, etc). The goal is for these investments to spur economic development in poorer districts, and in turn the investors get tax benefits.
- My goal was to 1) visualize where these projects were happening with Tableau and 2) figure out whether the projects benefitted more the rich or the poor. In fact, most of the poorest census tracts were not covered within Opportunity Zones.
CEO pay ratio data compilation

- Under the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act, companies had to disclose their CEO to median employee pay ratio in an annual report. However, this never really fully took shape until 2018.
- My task was to pull pay ratio data from the SEC website for the top 100 employers in Ohio. Then, I created visuals. Pay ratios varied widely, but in the upper extreme the ratio exceeded a thousand. An interesting question to ask, under standard microeconomic theory, is whether or not CEOs add so much more productivity to the company that it justifies the multitudes in pay?
Kinship care— D.O. v Glisson

- In the Sixth District court ruling of D.O. v Glisson, kinship caregivers were granted payments on par with foster caregivers. While this was implemented in Kentucky and Michigan, it has yet to happen in Ohio.
- The goal of this project was to help determine 1) whether or not kinship care was better than foster care for children, and 2) what the budget for kinship care payments could look like in Ohio. I contributed data that helped to estimate the cost of implementing kinship caregiver payments in Ohio.
Fiscal policy for college towns in wake of COVID

- For my end-of-the-program project, I wrote a blog about why college towns especially suffered economically from COVID, as well as what fiscal policy measures could be put in place to prevent complete economic downturn in these areas.
- TLDR: in the short term, college towns lost a huge chunk of their population (and revenue) when students unexpectedly moved away; in the long run, since this is a census year, these towns will likely experience an undercount and get less federal aid for the long term.
LIMITATIONS
Learning remotely

- The biggest challenge was being remote. It was a much more intentional experience in reaching out and connecting with staff. I did my best, and we definitely bonded significantly—however, it was still not exactly the same as being in the same physical area and being able to have spontaneous interactions.
TAKEAWAYS
Great experience! But unsure if continuing in policy

- Overall, this was as wonderful of an experience as it could be in the pandemic. The staff were incredibly friendly, supportive, and understanding. They cared incredibly about helping me learn and making this the best experience for me!
- At the same time, as much as I had fun learning about these policy issues, this helped me realize that policy research in this capacity may not be the best match for me and I should keep on exploring.
IN CONCLUSION...
What a summer

- It’s been a whirlwind summer (more like a whirlwind spring and summer and probably the rest of the year, honestly) but I was grateful to have this opportunity to work with Policy Matters Ohio. I would highly recommend this experience for people who are even a little bit interested in policy because it really shows “what is out there.” Post-pandemic, if I’m ever around the area, I really hope to visit the office and finally meet the staff person.