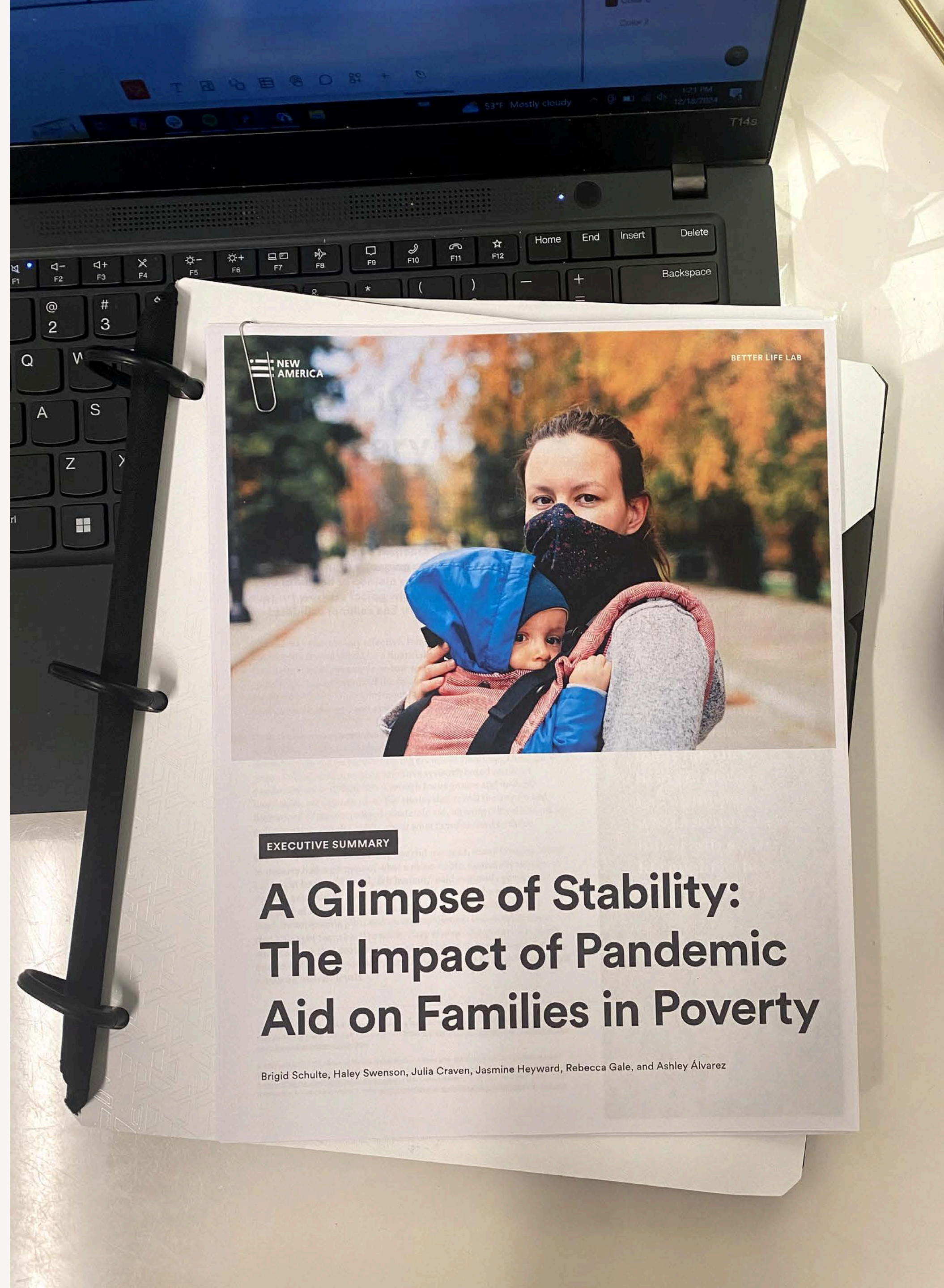


2024 Impact and Research Report

Better Life Lab at New America



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Glimpse of Stability: The Impact of Pandemic Aid on Families in Poverty

Brigid Schulte, Haley Swenson, Julia Craven, Jasmine Heyward, Rebecca Gale, and Ashley Álvarez

The Better Life Lab works at the intersection of policy, journalism, and popular culture. We tell stories and help develop and support storytellers to shift paradigms, paint a vision of what's possible, and advance work-family justice, gender equity, and care.

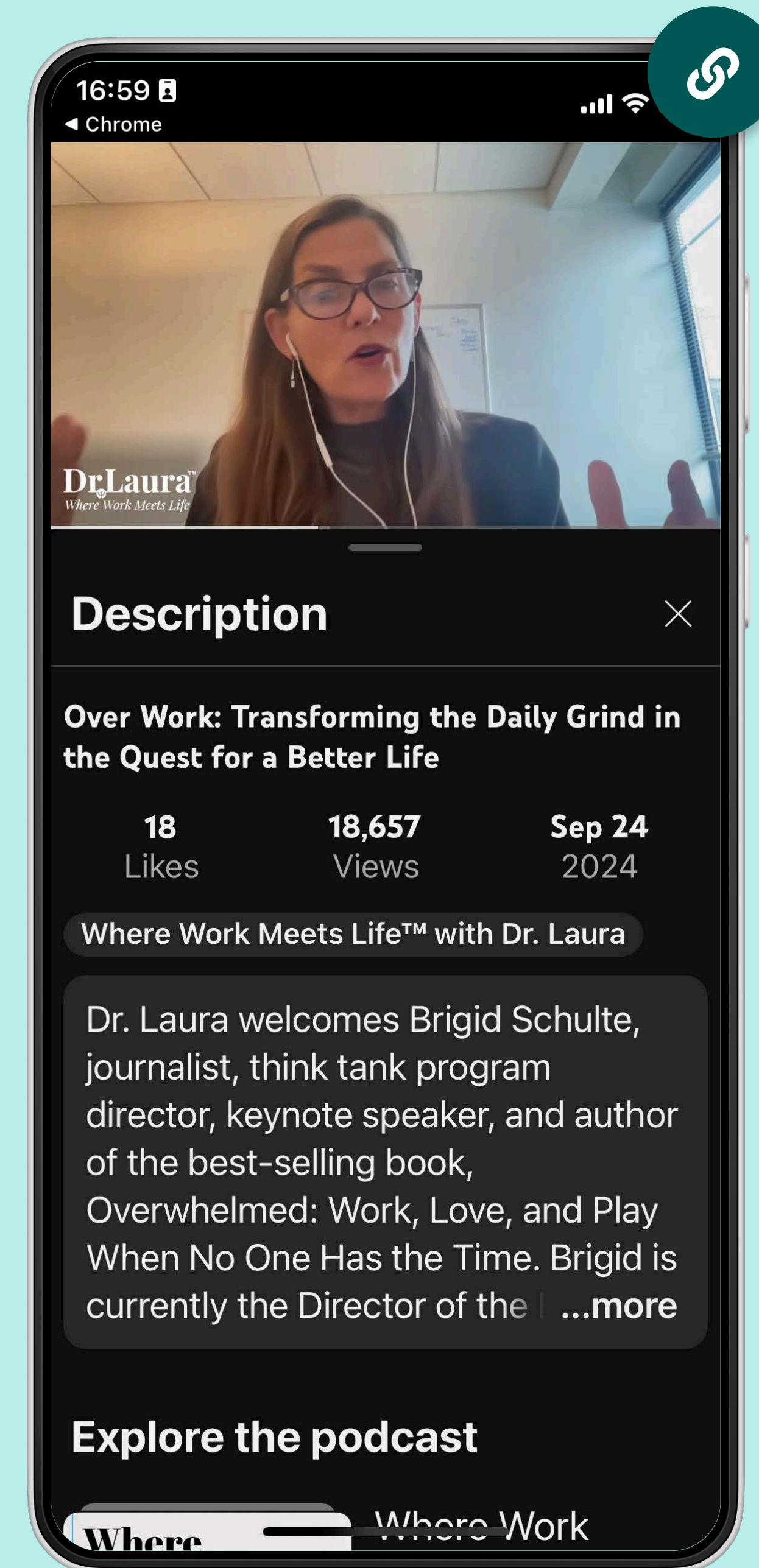
We measure our impact in three ways.

Overall Reach

Psychologist Dr. Laura Hambley Lovett on Episode 92 of her podcast, *Where Work Meets Life™*, with BLL Director Brigid Schulte:

The video of our episode on YouTube had 17,000 views – a record number so far! I hope your book is doing marvellously well, Brigid!

Learn more about how we measure impact [here](#).

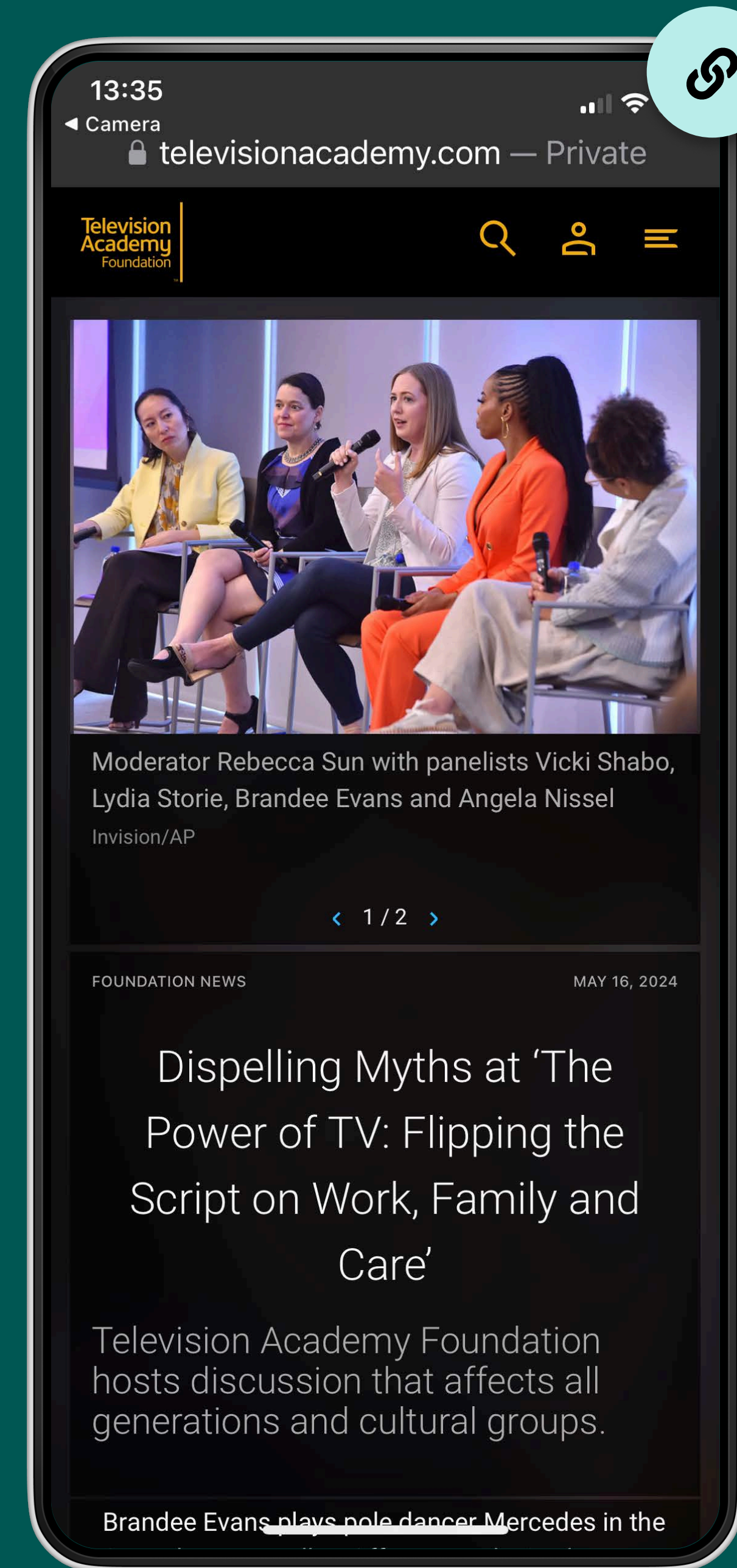


Influence on Cultural Discourse

LA-based actor and writer Jung Park following a Television Academy Foundation event that we co-conceived:

Thank you so much for the breakout [group]! It was not only enlightening; it was inspirational...As a result, I have decided to follow my heart (rather than strategy) and refocus my pilot.

Learn more about how we measure impact [here](#).

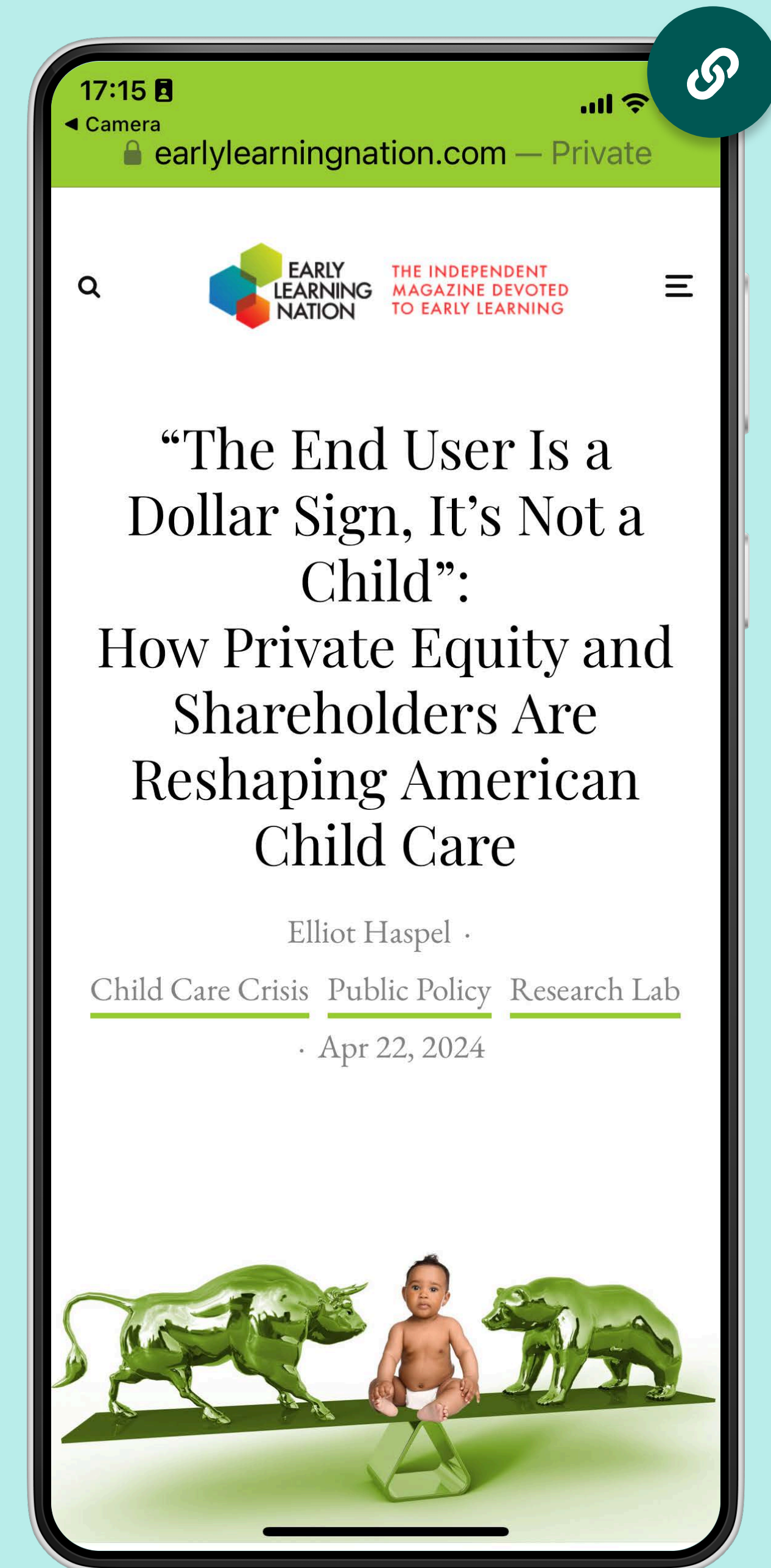


Effects on individual action and societal structures.

Mike Bauday, Senior Legislative Assistant for Rep. Pramila Jaypal, on Reporting Grantee Elliott Haspel's article:

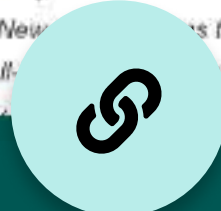
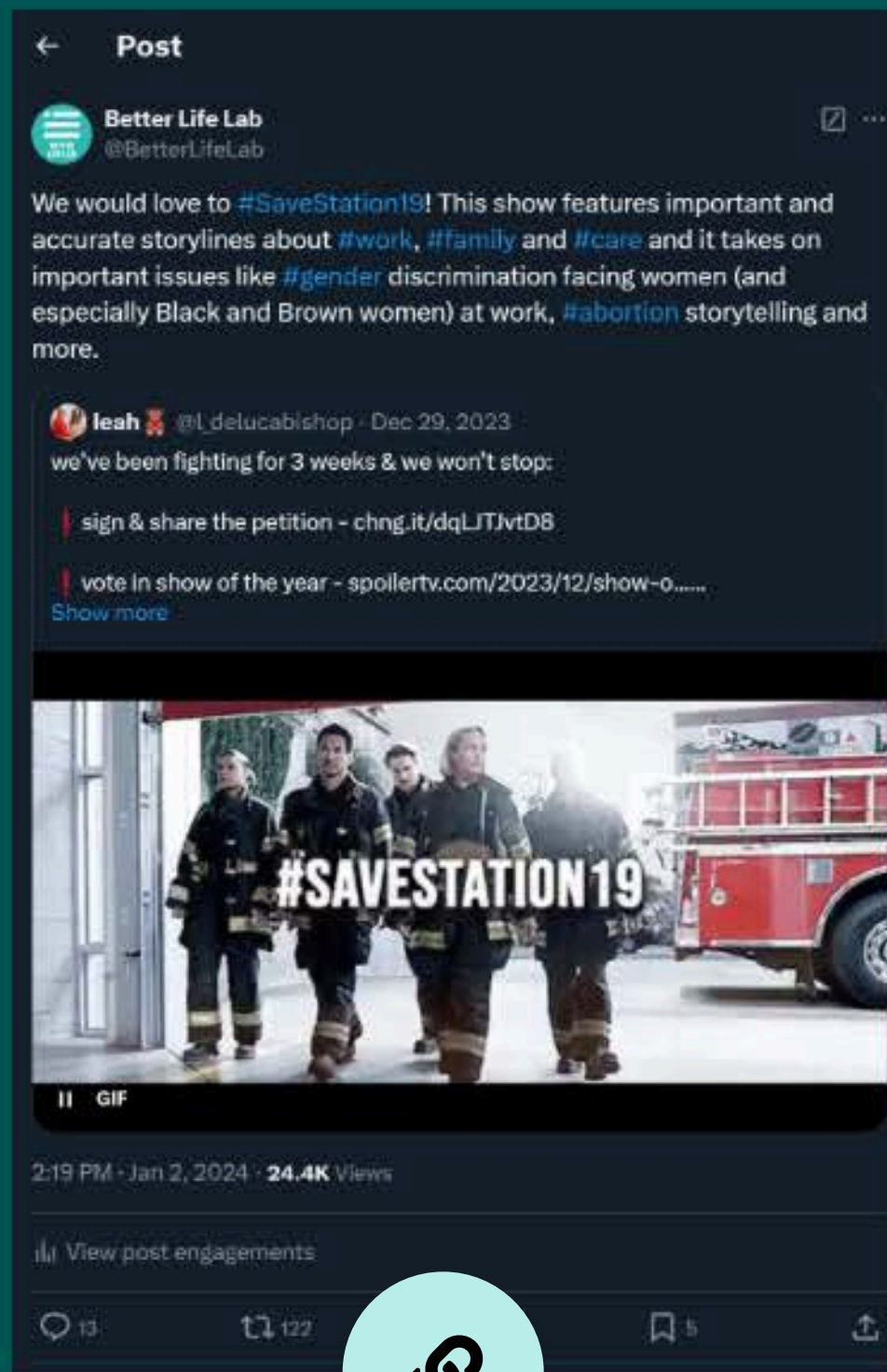
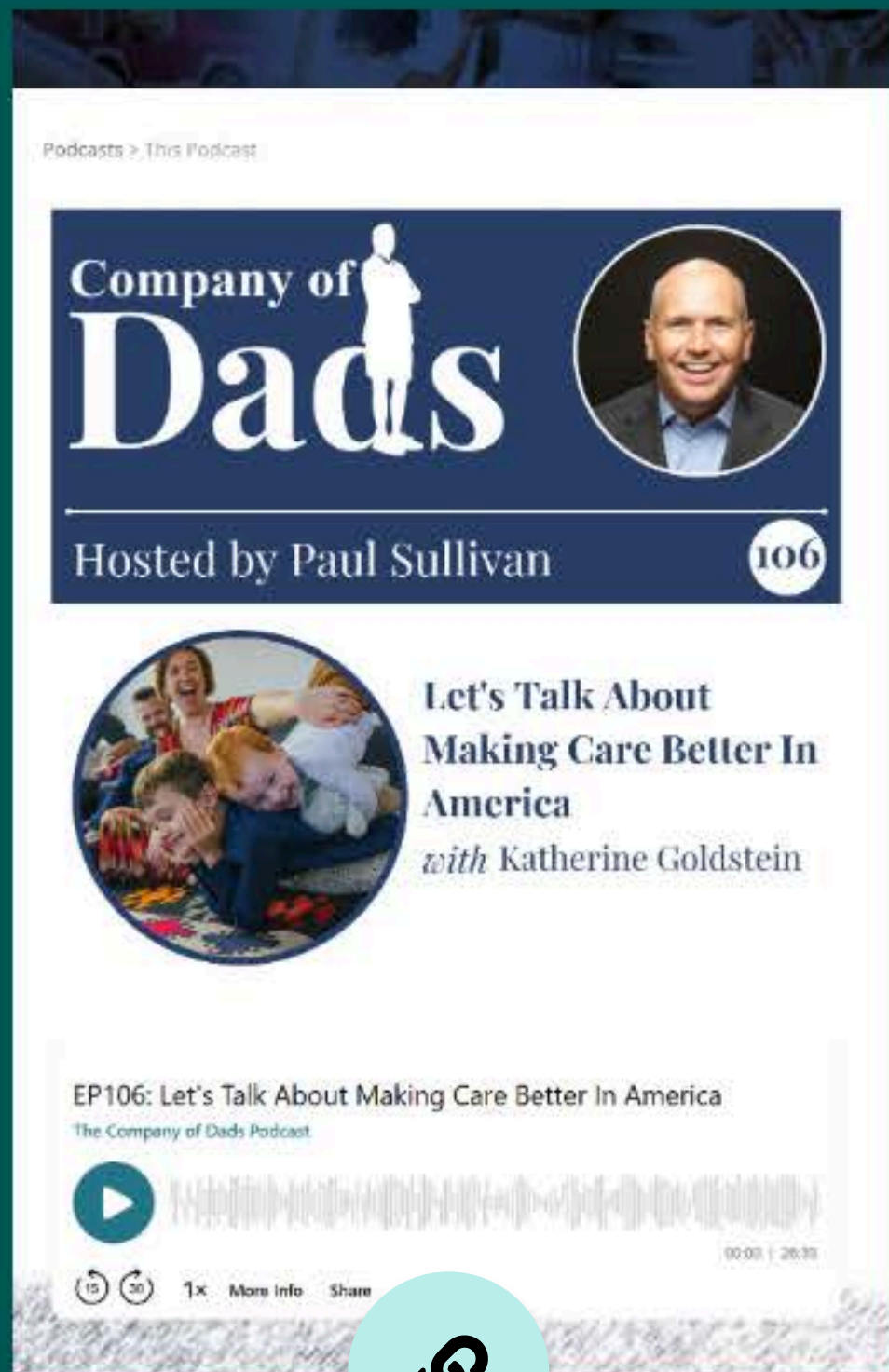
...We are working on a bill that's inspired by Elliot's article.

Learn more about how we measure impact [here](#).



We're committed to engaging with diverse audiences.

This year, our work reached everyone from dads to online fan communities to local news readers to business readers to Congress.



Our Reach

62

articles
from the BLL team

71

citations
in others' work

7

newsletters
from our team

1

book
published by Holt

56

event
appearances

4

reports
and guides

Our Reach

92 publications

featured our writing and ideas, including:



SLATE



EdSurge

THE 19th*

POLITICO

The Washington Post



Bloomberg Law®

We make change through storytelling that challenges flawed cultural narratives.

Our work includes quantitative research, original reporting, opinion writing, and multimedia projects.

NEW AMERICA **A Glimpse of Stability: The Impact of Pandemic Aid on Families in Poverty**



Chantel Valdez's two children, Zoe and Jaxxon, smile for a photo with their Uncle George, whom they called "Papa," atop Cahone Mesa on the Navajo Reservation in Southeast Utah.
Source: Photo courtesy of Chantel Valdez, used with permission.

Both kids started becoming fearful. They'd gone from being active, confident, outgoing kids to being afraid of almost everything, from unexpected noises to unexpected phone calls. They started sleeping with Valdez in her bed.

Ordinarily, it was George who would handle the funeral arrangements for a family member, but he was in the hospital, and his condition was not improving. Valdez and her Aunt Judy, Mary's daughter who lives in Salt Lake, took over planning for Grandma Mary's burial.




IDEAS • ECONOMY

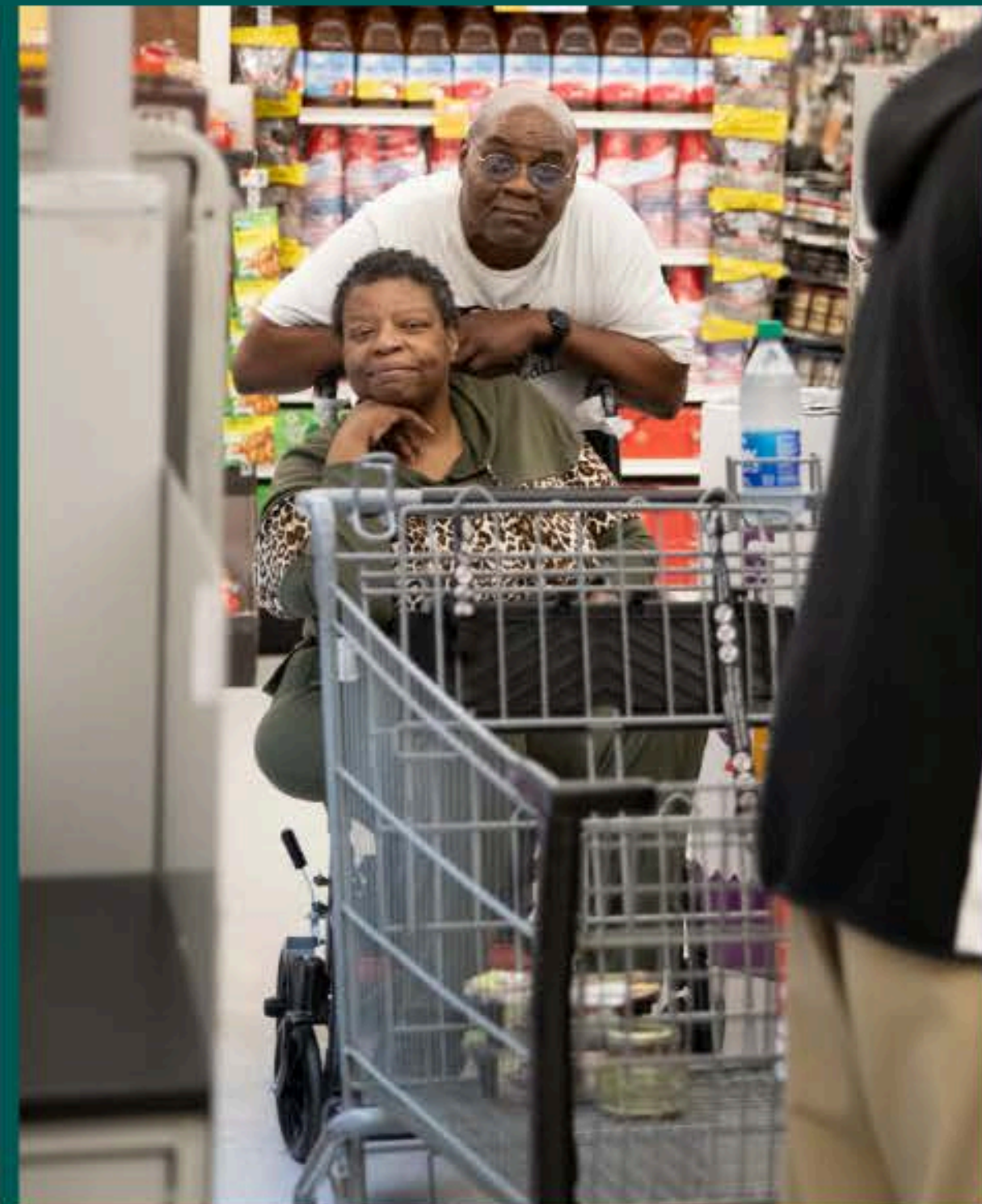
Positive Economic Data Is Still Hiding Bleak Reality for Families

6 MINUTE READ



Sihem Fekih-Solbinet, 39, prepares a snack for her son Isaac Solbinet, 1, in their home on Thursday, Dec. 14, 2023, in Spring. Sihem and her husband have been juggling working remotely from home and caring for their 1 year old son after his daycare recently closed abruptly. *Raquel Natalicchio—Houston Chronicle/Getty Images*

BY **KATHERINE GOLDSTEIN** APRIL 24, 2024 10:53 AM EDT
Goldstein is Care Reporting Editor at Better Life Lab at New America. Her report, *A Playbook to Transform Housing*, is out October 24. She's also a speaker and

We brought critical attention to family voices and disrupted harmful poverty narratives.

After more than two years of research, reporting, writing, and design, we completed our qualitative study on the impact of early pandemic-era aid. We found that many families living in poverty briefly experienced more stable and financially secure lives before the end of COVID-specific aid sent them back to where they started.



In the U.S., 30 percent of pregnancy-related deaths happen between 43 days to 365 days after delivery, according to a [report](#) from the CDC.

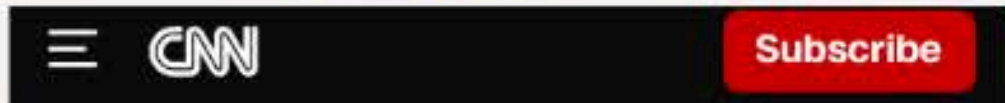


A Day in the Life of Vilma Cabrera



To share her story about the impact pandemic-era federal aid made in their lives, Vilma Cabrera invited writer Brigid Schulte and photographer Jasmine Heyward to spend time with her and her family on April 26, 2024.

BLOG POST

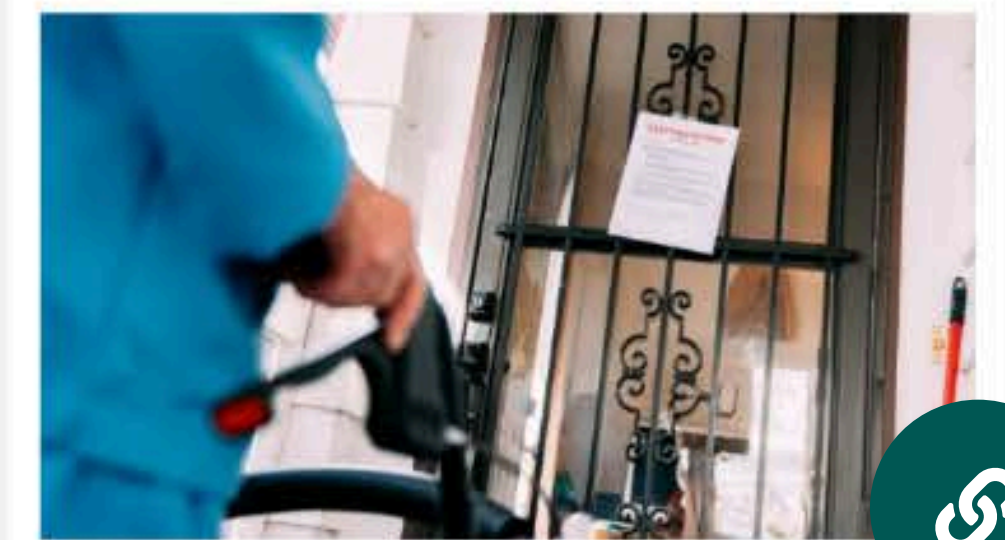


Opinion: The true victims of the US eviction crisis

Opinion by Brigid Schulte and Yuliya Panfil

9 minute read

Updated 5:19 PM EST, Wed February 14, 2024



The project includes:

4	22	8	5	8	2
case studies	articles and op-eds	facilitated stories	multimedia works	events	reports

and, most importantly,

the perspectives of **more than 10 families** who took the time to share their stories with us.

Read the [executive summary](#).

Check out the [full project](#).

Helped make the care crisis a campaign issue.

Through our writing, convenings, and thought leadership, we joined a coalition of storytellers and advocates putting the spotlight on care as a policy issue.



This week, Better Life Lab Care Reporting Fellow Katherine Goldstein reports from the Care Can't Wait bus tour stop in North Carolina. Welcome to Your Life, Better for September 27, 2024.

Katherine Goldstein
Better Life Lab Care Reporting Fellow

Taking the Care Movement's 'Big Tent' on the Road



Group photo in front of the Care Can't Wait Bus



We created conversations on the importance of universal care through our storytelling, thought leadership, and events.

Highlights include:

Three stories by staff and one by a reporting grantee were in Early Learning Nation's top ten most read of 2024.

We discussed potential policy and community solutions to the care crisis in more than 100 articles and event presentations.



We helped strengthen the care movement through CareForce, in partnership with the Fair Play Policy Institute.

The CareForce is exactly the community I have been searching for. I am so passionate about this work and it feels incredibly inspiring and uplifting to be in community...I truly believe this community is going to be one of the things that gets me through the next four years of a second Trump administration.

- Shannon Amspacher, Marketing Professional and Family-Friendly Policy Advocate



We led the national conversation on how redesigning work is critical for gender equity, care, and work-family justice.

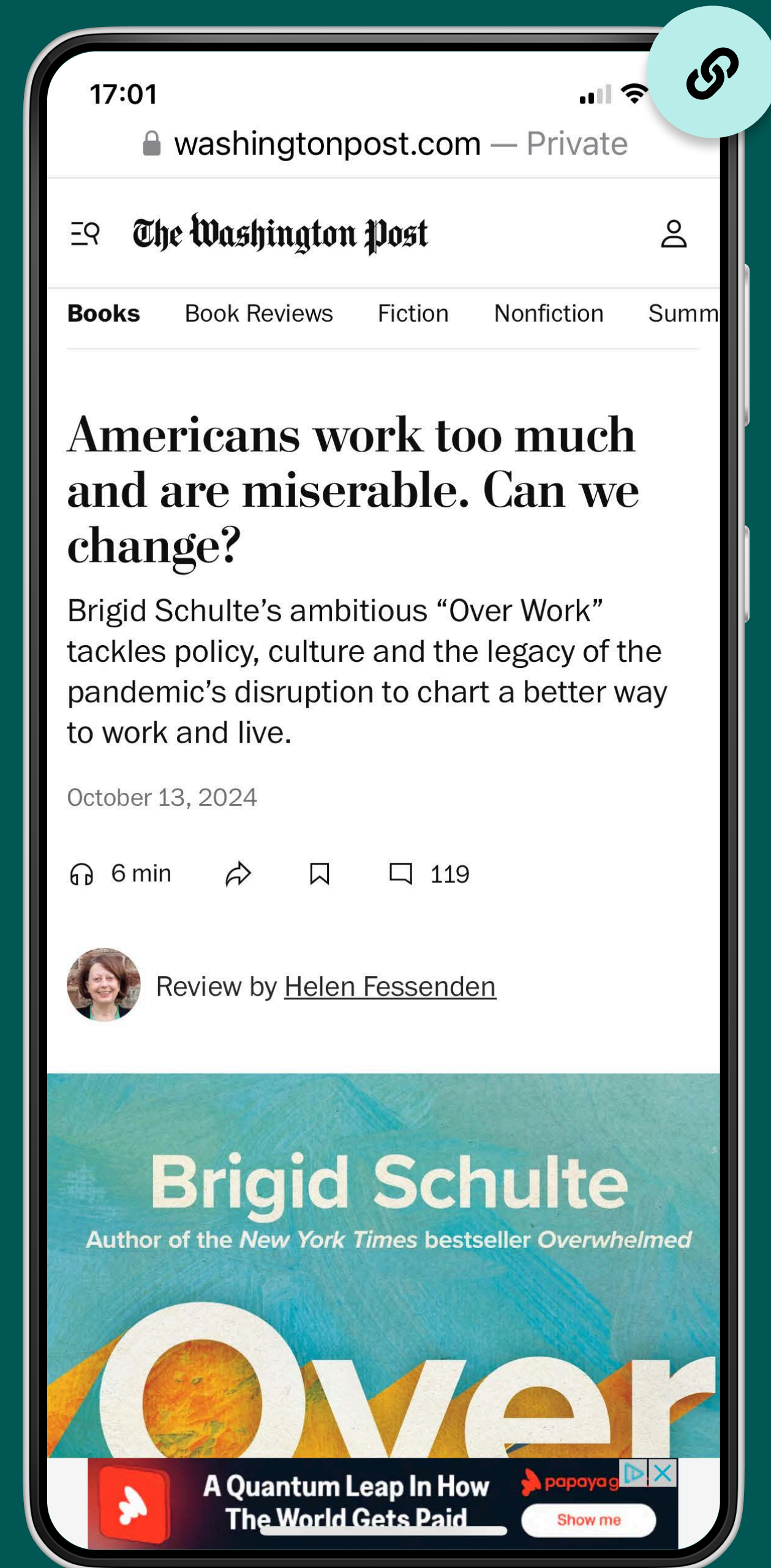
Brigid's new book, *Over Work*, makes the case that work doesn't work, particularly for those with care responsibilities, and shows how it can, and why we all benefit as a result.



Over Work was selected as a top 2024 read by several organizations that shape policy and cultural conversations.

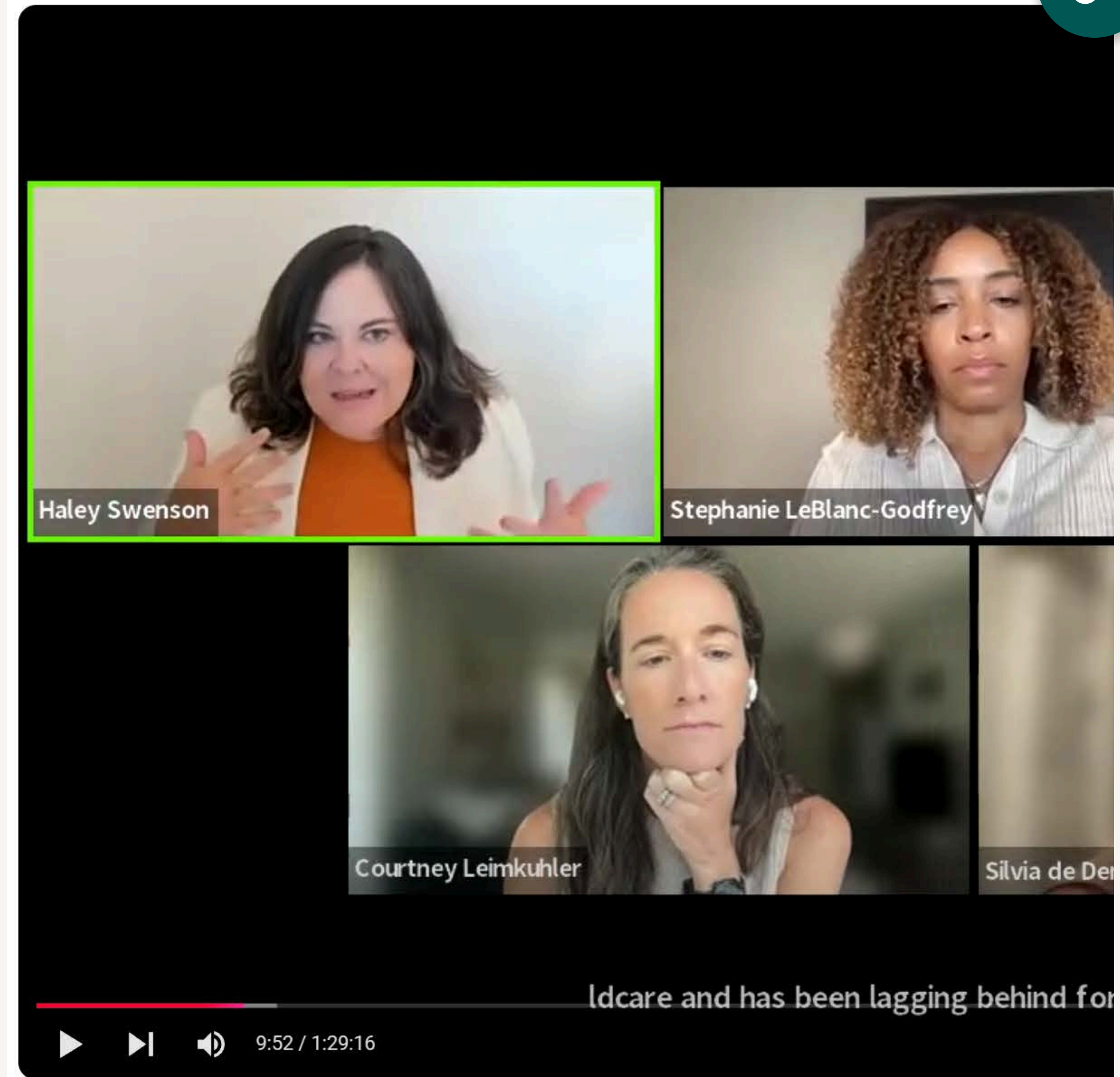
Highlights include:

- Appearances on NPR's The 1A, C-Span's After Words, Minnesota Public Radio's Big Books and Bold Ideas, among others
- **Excerpt** in Behavioral Scientist magazine was one of the most read articles all year
- Reviewed by the Washington Post, Financial Times, and others



We brought continued attention to the need to address the unfair gendered division of unpaid labor.

Our BLLx initiative continues to draw attention to the unfair gendered division of labor at home and the mental load that disadvantages women, and provides a platform to raise awareness, build community, and offer families practical solutions.



AI, Apps, and the Mental Load: Can Tech Create Gender Equality at Home?

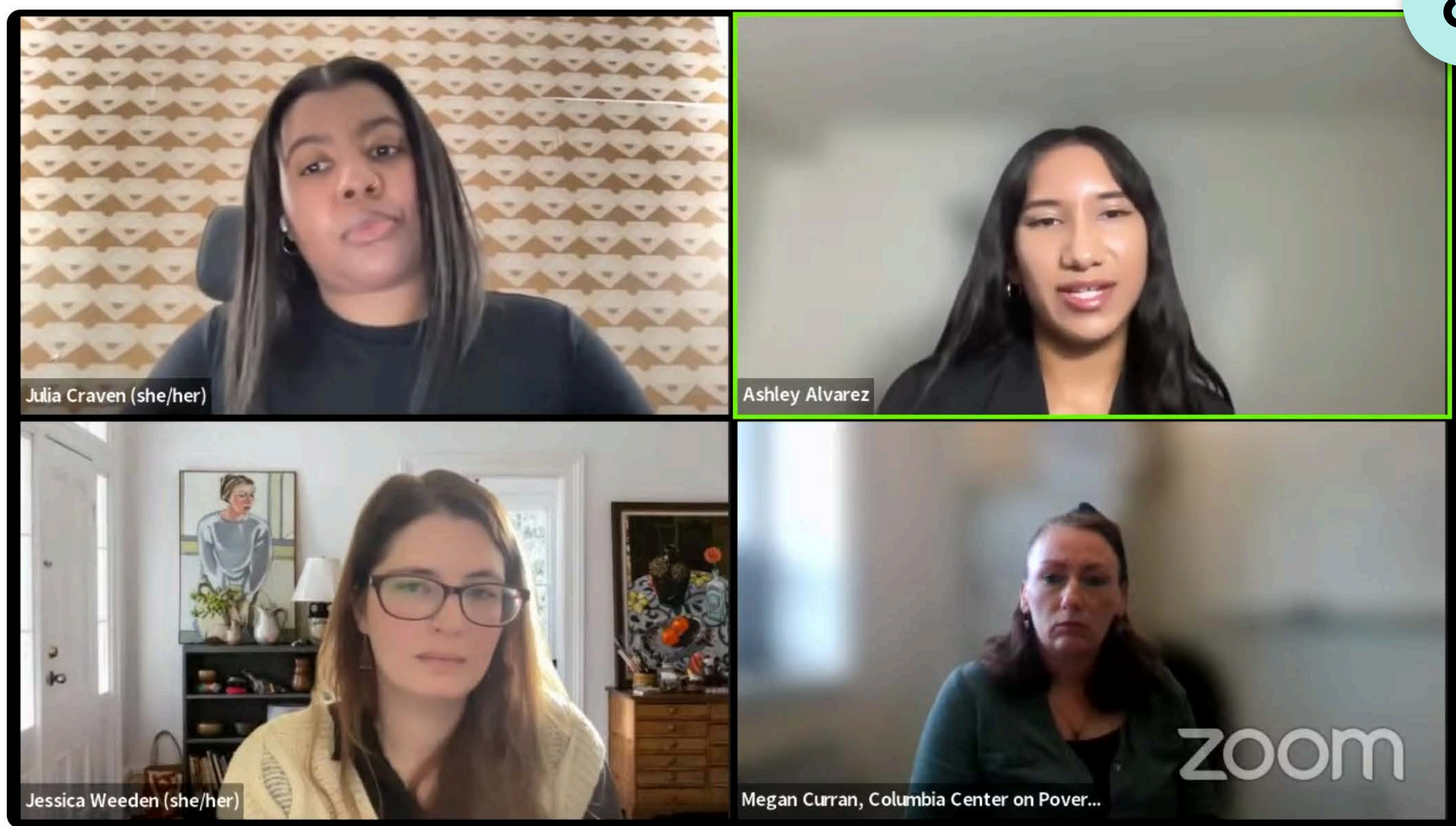
New America 28.6K subscribers Subscribed

186 views Streamed 4 months ago

We are dedicated to renewing the promise of America by continuing the quest to realize our nation's highest ideals, h

Alongside the work we produce, we're committed to developing new voices.

This year, we supported more than fifteen storytellers with mentorship, editing, and reporting grants. We also presented five opened and storytelling workshops to policy experts and advocates.



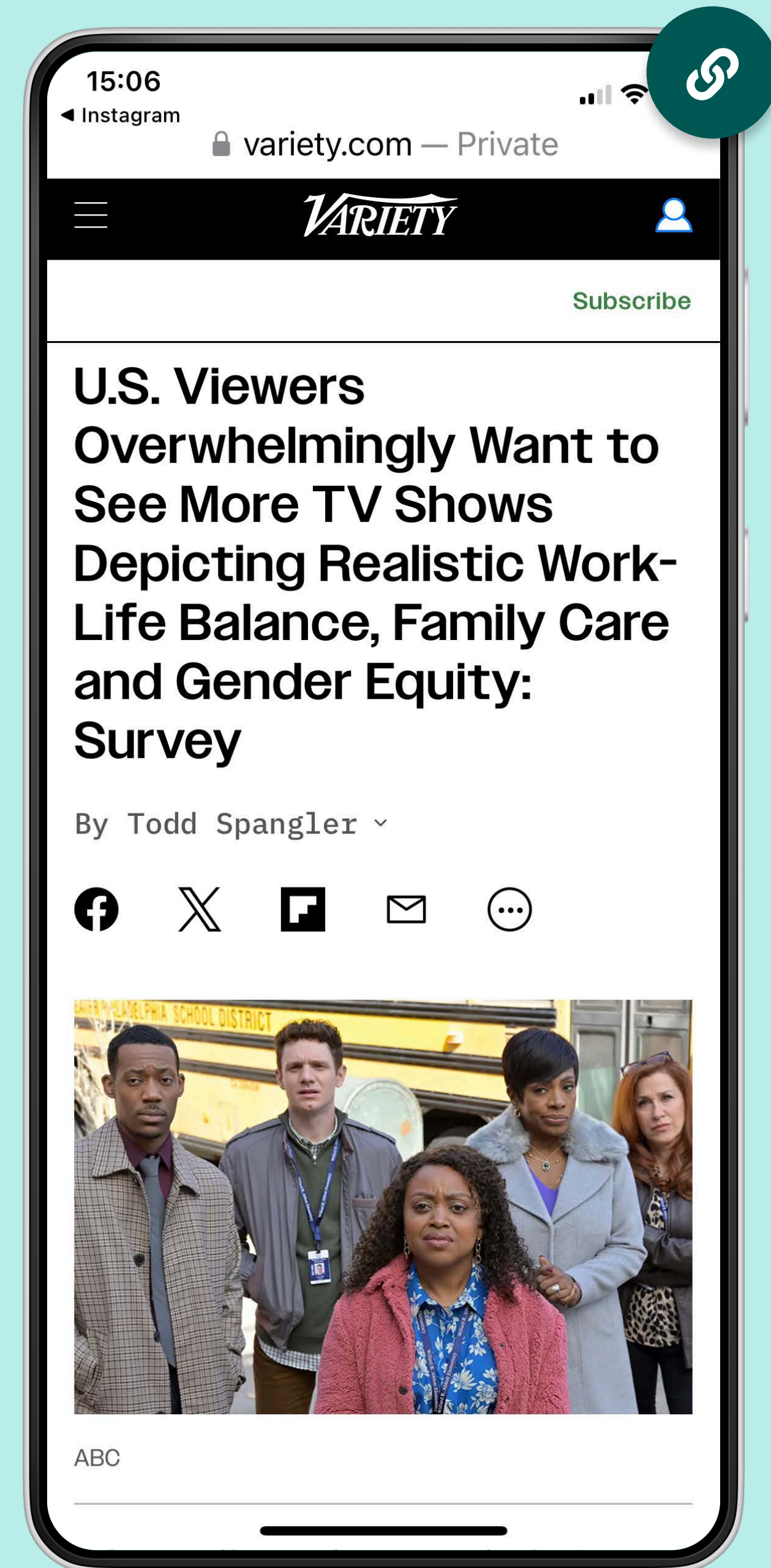
A Glimpse of Stability: The Impact of Pandemic Aid on Families in Poverty



Audience research helped inform entertainment media narratives.

Our *Rescripting Gender, Work, Family, and Care* initiative commissioned the media research firm MarketCast to study U.S. television audiences' own experiences with work, family, and caregiving and interest in representation on screen, and found:

- 84% of U.S. television audiences are interested in seeing more stories about gender, work, family, and care on screen. An estimated 47-49 million viewers want to see specific aspirational depictions.
- Shows with work-family content generated above-average online engagement, with viewers expressing intent to share and recommend these shows to others.



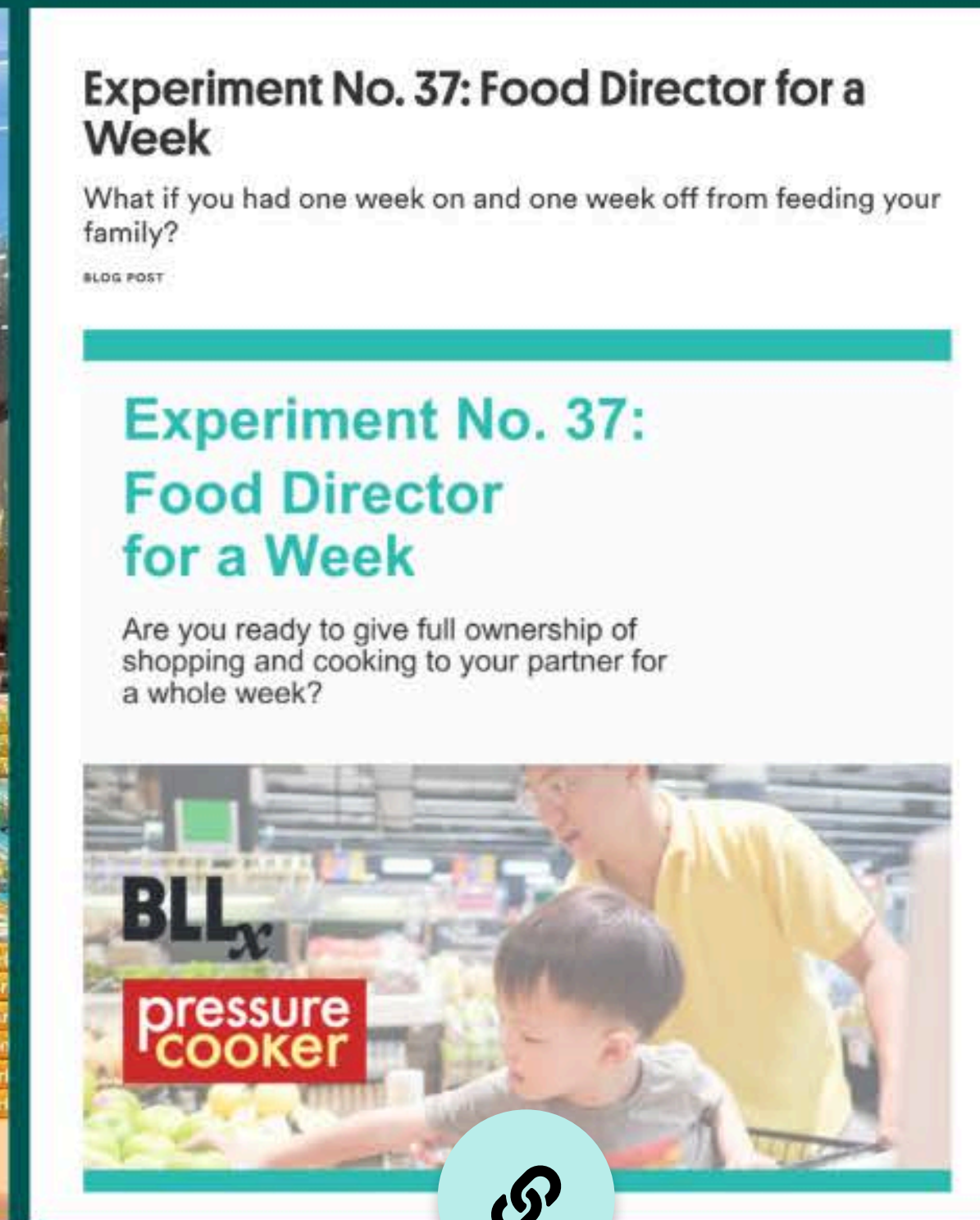
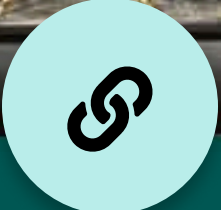
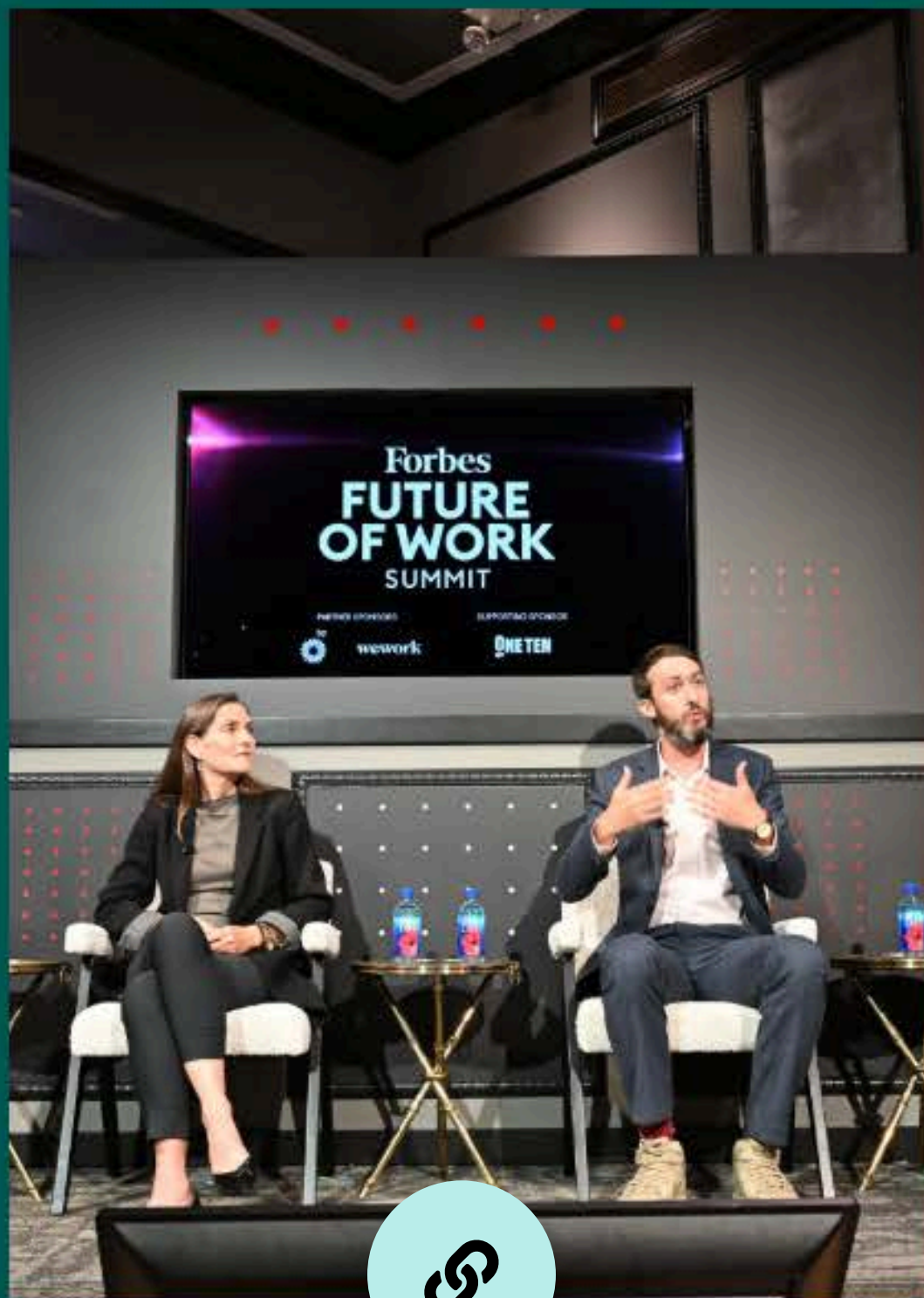
Our research and expertise opened the door to briefings with entertainment insiders.

We secured coverage in *Variety*, a leading trade publication, and were invited to speak at a range of industry events, including with the *19th News* during SXSW, two different Television Academy events, *The Wrap* Power Women Summit, the Writers Guild Foundation, and in private briefings with television executives.



We also make change through our direct engagement with leaders and our practical tools for families and workplaces.

Our engagement includes thought leadership, sharing expertise with policymakers, engaging with corporate leaders, and designing convenings and guides.



A Note From Our Director

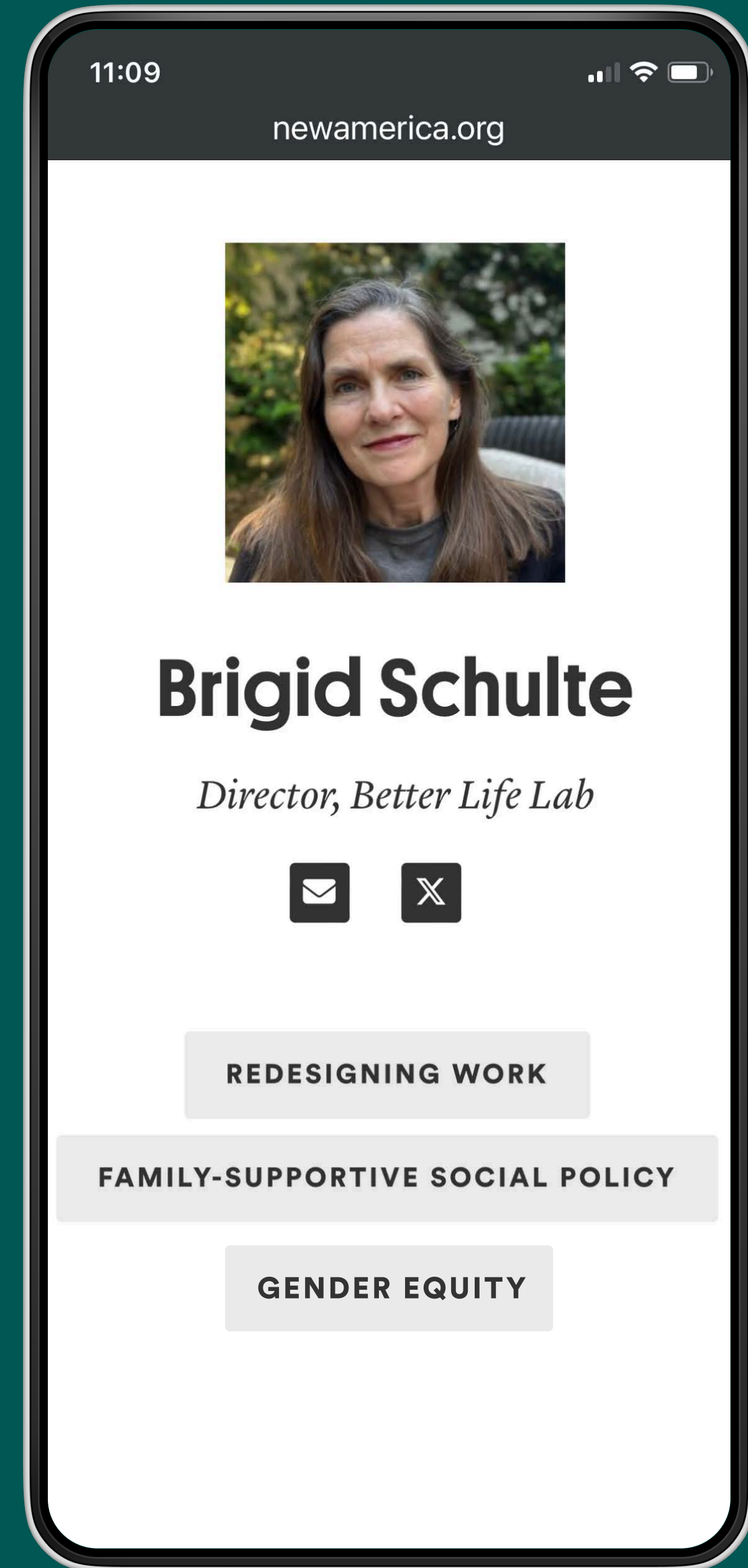
The stories we tell shape the world we live in.

At a time when so many people and policymakers in the United States feel divided, and when there's so much noise in the media about what's true, our narrative change work at the Better Life Lab is more critical than ever.

Our work transcends the politics of the moment. We are guided by our north star vision of a future where work-family justice, gender equity, and the value of care—both paid and unpaid—are not just ideals but realities. By telling the stories of Bright Spots and solutions, we help people see how we can transform public policy, workplace practice and cultural norms and inspire action.

Because when families and caregivers thrive, we all benefit—strengthening our communities, our economy, and our shared humanity.

Onward.



Our Team

Staff



Julia Craven

Senior Writer & Editor, New America's Better Life Lab



Rebecca Gale

Staff Writer, Better Life Lab



Jasmine Heyward

Communications & Research Associate, Better Life Lab



Brigid Schulte

Director, Better Life Lab



Vicki Shabo

Senior Fellow for Gender Equity, Paid Leave & Care Policy and Strategy, Better Life Lab

Keisha Dixon

Finance & Operations Manager

Fellows



Katherine Goldstein

Fellow, Better Life Lab



Haley Swenson

Research & Writing fellow, Better Life Lab

Our Advisory Council

Adrienne Penta | Brown Brothers Harriman

Andrew Solomon | Award-Winning Author and Activist

Christy Johnson | Artemis Connection

Erin Cohan | Amazon

Eve Rodsky | FairPlay Policy Institute and Bestselling Author

Joan Williams | Former Founding Director of the Center for WorkLife Law

Linda Delaney | Delaney Stafford LLC

Sam Saperstein | JPMorgan Chase

Susanna Samet | Deloitte