



**Yale College  
Center for International & Professional Experience**

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**Policy Internship, Office of Governor Gina M. Raimondo**

This summer, I interned with the policy team in the Office of the Governor of Rhode Island. I met Governor Raimondo last spring when she led a roundtable discussion at Yale about challenges and opportunities for women interested in public service. I was impressed by her commitment to improving access to healthcare, education, and high-quality jobs in Rhode Island. I chose to intern in her office this summer because I admired her vision for improving people's lives, and her strategic approach to effecting change. I hoped that during my internship, I would learn how to draw on cutting-edge social sciences research to formulate government policies and test their effectiveness. I also wanted to gain an inside view of how policy is crafted and debated, and to work with people who have different views to find areas of common ground. Since I was particularly interested in health policy, I hoped to have the opportunity to do work relating to a public health issue in Rhode Island, such as the opioid overdose crisis.

During the first part of my internship, the Rhode Island General Assembly was in session. The Governor's policy team is responsible for tracking proposed legislation, working with key stakeholders to achieve the passage, modification, or rejection of bills, and providing recommendations to the Governor about whether to sign bills that have passed. I reviewed proposed legislation in areas such as criminal justice reform, public safety, immigration, healthcare, and environmental protection. I briefed my boss, a policy analyst in the Governor's Office, on dozens of bills and their hearings. For several bills, I wrote policy memos that were circulated among senior policy staff in the Governor's Office. These memos evaluated bills in light of best practices established by academic research, as well as in comparison to laws in other states, and provided recommendations about whether the Governor should sign or veto the bills.

During the second part of my internship, after the legislative session ended, I worked on several public policy projects. One of my main projects was leading a team of interns in doing research for the Governor's Working Group on Diversity in Construction. Public infrastructure is currently one of the major areas of government spending in Rhode Island, and because of a history of discrimination in the construction industry, that spending has benefited different groups of people unevenly. Governor Raimondo established the working group to identify ways to increase the participation of women-owned and minority-owned business (W/MBEs) in public construction contracts. I did research on topics such as access to capital, mentorship, construction bonds, and project labor agreements, which are areas in which W/MBEs tend to be disadvantaged. I evaluated Rhode Island's laws and programs in comparison to those of neighboring states, as well as national best practices, and I presented recommendations to the working group on how the state government could reduce barriers to W/MBE participation. The working group will use some of my recommendations as the basis for their final recommendations to the Governor.

Another one of my projects was doing research for the Governor's Overdose Prevention and Intervention Task Force. My research focused on media campaigns for opioid abuse prevention. Since such campaigns are fairly new, not much research on them has been completed. Therefore, I examined published

studies on the efficacy of different types of smoking prevention campaigns, and developed recommendations for how some of the results of those studies could translate to inform opioid abuse prevention campaigns. I presented this research to the task force. The task force will draw on some of my research when they oversee the development of an opioid abuse prevention media campaign for Rhode Island this fall.

In addition, this summer I had the opportunity to draft several policies for state agencies. For example, I drafted a policy for state employees to participate in a flexible work hours schedule that will allow them to alter workday start and finish times. The policy is intended to enable state employees to better manage both work and home responsibilities.

This internship experience has deepened my academic interest in public policy. I am still particularly interested in health policy. However, this summer, I also really enjoyed learning about criminal justice reform initiatives, since a package of criminal justice reform bills was one of the major items in Rhode Island's legislative session this year. I have started to explore the possibility of writing a senior thesis on an issue at the intersection of public health and corrections, with a focus on interventions for infectious diseases like HIV and Hepatitis C. My former boss in the Office of the Governor of Rhode Island put me in touch with people who will be excellent resources if I decide to take my thesis in this direction, such as the medical director of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections, and the director of the Center for Prisoner Health and Human Rights at Brown University.

This internship experience has also reinforced my desire to pursue a career in public service. I found it incredibly rewarding to know that the work I was doing this summer had the potential to increase the opportunities people have and ensure that they have access to the services they need.

I am so grateful to the sponsors of the Heinz Government Service Fellowship for making this internship experience possible. Thank you!