PARTNER SUMMIT
Alliance for Early Success

PARTNER DIRECTORY

Tampa, FL
November 7-9, 2017
Khydeeja Alam Javid
Director of Governmental Relations
Advancement Project

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Khydeeja Alam Javid leads the Advancement Project California’s (APCA) statewide advocacy efforts where she develops and maintains relationships with elected officials, statewide agencies, and the Governor’s office. In the past, Ms. Alam Javid has worked on transforming state laws, including the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), Transitional Kindergarten, the California Dream Act and the College Readiness Block Grant. Prior to joining the Advancement Project, she worked for the California State Legislature and a lobbying firm dedicated to K-12 education policy.

Mimi Aledo-Sandoval
Policy Director
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Mimi Aledo-Sandoval is a Policy Director at the Alliance for Early Success, leading the family support portfolio of investments including child care and home visiting as a strategy for high quality infant toddler programs and services. Before joining the Alliance, Ms. Aledo-Sandoval was a Senior Associate on two Pew Charitable Trusts projects, the Home Visiting Campaign and the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative. She was a Senior Fiscal Analyst for New Mexico’s Legislative Finance Committee, where she prepared and presented annual budget recommendations to legislative committees for the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department; the Department of Workforce Solutions; and a number of other state commissions and agencies. Ms. Aledo-Sandoval is a former Policy Analyst for the Albuquerque City Council, a Mayoral Fellow with the City of Chicago, an AmeriCorps volunteer, and a Congressional Hispanic Caucus Fellow. In 2013, she was selected as an NCSL Early Learning Fellow.

Rhian Evans Allvin
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Rhian Evans Allvin serves as Chief Executive Officer of NAEYC. Before joining NAEYC, Ms. Evans Allvin was a guiding force in Arizona’s early childhood movement for more than 15 years. In 2006, she co-wrote the citizen’s ballot initiative that created First Things First (FTF) which set aside Arizona’s tobacco tax monies for children birth to five and created a state agency whose purpose is to ensure all Arizona children start kindergarten prepared to be successful in school and in life. Ms. Evans Allvin later was appointed CEO of FTF, and coordinated its efforts with policy makers, state department heads, providers, and community stakeholders. She has authored numerous white papers, articles, policy briefs, and reports on various topics.
Vance Aloupis  
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Vance Aloupis joined The Children’s Movement in June 2010, and now serves as the organization’s CEO. In 2012, Mr. Aloupis was appointed by Florida Gov. Rick Scott to serve as a commissioner on the Governor’s Commission on Community Service - also known as Volunteer Florida – which oversees much of the state’s AmeriCorps programs. In 2016, he was honored with the Emerging Leader Award from Florida International University’s Center for Leadership, the Ruth Shack Leadership Award from The Miami Foundation, and one of three “next generation” visionaries by The Miami Herald.

Debra Andersen  
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Debra Andersen serves as Executive Director for the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness, Oklahoma’s Early Childhood Advisory Council. She has extensive experience in both local and state level early childhood systems planning and coordination.

Bruce Atchison  
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Bruce Atchison is the Director of the Early Learning Institute at ECS. He brings more than 35 years of experience working in the field of early learning and education policy. He was Chief of Staff for Colorado’s Lt. Gov. and a member of Governor Ritter’s cabinet, served as the Executive Vice President of the state’s child advocacy organization for eight years, worked in Governor Romer’s policy office as the Head Start State Collaboration Director and worked as the Executive Director of the Early Learning Partnership focused on pre-K to 3rd grade alignment. Bruce has worked for Denver Public Schools as the Executive Director of the Family Resource Schools, was Director of the City of Boulder’s Children’s Services Division and was the President and CEO of a private non-profit child care facility serving low-income single parent families with children 6 weeks to pre-K. Bruce was a K teacher for three years and a Pre-K teacher another 7 years.
Leanne Barrett
Senior Policy Analyst
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Leanne Barrett is a Senior Policy Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and works to improve early childhood policy statewide, from birth through Grade 3. She is the coordinator of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council and a state leader in the early learning field. Leanne spearheaded the development of BrightStars, the state’s Quality Rating and Improvement System, managed the state’s Pre-K exploration and design process, was the director for the state’s first evidence-based home visiting grant, and crafted the Rhode Island Family Home Visiting Act. She also works to improve access to high-quality child care and advance paid family leave for working families. Prior to joining Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, Ms. Barrett was Vice President at United Way of Rhode Island and Program Manager at Work/Family Directions.

Shana Bartley
Acting Executive Director
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Shana Bartley serves as acting executive director at DC Action. She leads the organization’s efforts to ensure that the District of Columbia is a place where all children have the resources they need to thrive. She most recently served as the organization’s Director of Programs and Legislative Affairs and managed DC Action’s technical assistance projects and policy and advocacy work. Prior to joining staff at DC Action, Ms. Bartley worked in DC as a youth organizer and advocate assisting teen women in their efforts to advocate for improved access to health education and services.

Angela Bass
Deputy Director of Policy
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A native of Tunica, Mississippi, Angela Bass began her career in the classroom through Teach For America before becoming an administrator. At Mississippi First, Ms. Bass is responsible for analyzing policy and data, developing policy proposals, conducting advocacy activities, leading research projects, writing policy papers, and delivering policy presentations. She has authored multiple Mississippi First Pre-K publications including both of the volumes in Mississippi First’s State of Pre-K series.
John Bebow
President and CEO
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John Bebow is president and CEO of the Center for Michigan and Bridge Magazine. He has worked with AES and the Children’s Leadership Council of Michigan (CLCM) since 2009. During that time, the CLCM has achieved significant early childhood wins in Michigan, including a doubling of state preschool investment resulting in tens of thousands more children enrolled. The Center for Michigan is the state’s largest practitioner of nonpartisan public engagement programs. Bridge Magazine is one of the nation’s leading nonprofit public interest journalism services, having earned two straight Michigan Press Association “Newspaper of the Year” awards and nearly 100 state and national journalism awards altogether.

Joan Benso
President and CEO
PA Partnerships for Children

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Joan L. Benso is President and CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC). Since 1995, Ms. Benso has been responsible for the organization’s daily administration and effective functioning. She is directly involved in the organization’s interaction with state-level public policymakers, Pennsylvania’s congressional delegation, the news media, the children’s advocacy community, funders and service sectors. Ms. Benso has served on various state and national boards addressing health care, school readiness, youth development, college and career readiness and other critical children’s issues.

Claire Berkowitz
Executive Director
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Claire Berkowitz is the Executive Director of the Maine Children’s Alliance (MCA). Prior to taking on the leadership role in 2014, she managed MCA’S KIDS COUNT Project. Ms. Berkowitz moved to Maine in 1996 and worked at Bowdoin College for 8 years, first as the Assistant Director of Institutional Research and then as the Academic Program Analyst for the Dean for Academic Affairs. Before coming to MCA, Ms. Berkowitz coordinated an effort to bring supportive housing to her community and directed a teen center and indoor skate park.
Matthew Bernstein
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Matthew Bernstein is a Staff Attorney at Pegasus Legal Services for Children. He represents children in abuse/neglect and special education cases, and focuses on early childhood initiatives. Previously Mr. Bernstein taught English, history, and economics at Amy Biehl High School in downtown Albuquerque.

Cory Biggs
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Cory Biggs is Associate Director of ForwARd Arkansas, a partnership between the Arkansas State Board of Education, the Walton Family Foundation, and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, whose mission is to help Arkansas become a leading state in education.

Mindy Binderman
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Mindy Binderman leads GEEARS’ efforts to inspire and provide leadership for a statewide movement on early learning and healthy development for children ages birth to five. Ms. Binderman has had an extensive career in advocacy and government relations for nonprofits and corporations in Maryland and Georgia. She served as Director of Government Relations and Public Affairs for the Baltimore Jewish Council and as Vice President of Public Affairs for Planned Parenthood of Maryland before establishing her own successful lobbying firm based in Annapolis, Maryland. Prior to coming to GEEARS, Ms. Binderman served as the Advocacy Director of Voices for Georgia’s Children from 2007-2010.

Brittany Birken
CEO
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Brittany Olivieri Birken, Ph.D., leads the Florida Children’s Council leading businesses, organizations, agencies and other key stakeholders in efforts that support Florida’s children, youth and families. In her role, Dr. Birken coordinates resources and system development activities to enhance Florida’s collective efforts and ensure children are healthy, well cared for, learned, and prepared for a successful future. Dr. Birken is a developmental psychologist with more than 20 years of experience in early childhood development. She has served at every level of the early education service delivery system and has specialized in system development with a strong background and emphasis in early learning related to program assessment, child assessment and public policy.
**Helen Blank**

Director, Child Care and Early Learning
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Helen Blank is Director of Child Care and Early Learning at the National Women’s Law Center. Her work focuses on child care and early education issues. She currently leads the federal Child Care and Early Learning Coalition and the Strong Start for America’s Children Campaign. She has authored numerous reports including an annual report on state child care policies and A Count for Quality: Child Care Directors on Quality Rating and Improvement Systems. Ms. Blank served 24 years as the Director of the Child Care and Development Division at the Children’s Defense Fund, where she spearheaded advocacy on a variety of efforts to improve early learning policies.

**Ginny Blankenship**

Education Policy Director
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Ginny Blankenship is Education Policy Director for Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. Before this she served as a Legislative Analyst for the Arkansas General Assembly and was Communications Director in the U.S. House of Representatives. She recently founded The Open Book Project, a community-wide initiative to provide books, resources, and encouragement to teachers and students in Little Rock’s most disadvantaged schools.

**Carol Brady**

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Carol Brady is the Project Director for the Florida Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, an initiative of the Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions. She previously served as Executive Director of the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition and director of the Florida Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition, a statewide advocacy group.

**Ellen Bravo**

Ellen Bravo
Family Values @ Work

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Ellen Bravo directs Family Values @ Work, a network of coalitions in 25 states working for policies such as paid sick days and family and medical leave insurance. She served on the bipartisan Commission on Leave appointed by Congress to study the impact of the Family and Medical Leave Act. Among her commendations is a Ford Foundation Visionary award. Ms. Bravo has written several non-fiction books, including Taking on the Big Boys, or Why Feminism is Good for Families, Business and the Nation, as well as a novel about date rape and politics, Again and Again.
Melanie Bronfin
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Melanie Bronfin leads the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, which is a non-partisan nonprofit that is a source of data, research and information for policy makers, stakeholders and the public at large on issues related to young children in Louisiana. She has been involved in early childhood policy in Louisiana for the past 15 years. Since 2012, Ms. Bronfin has been at the forefront of policy and advocacy around the implementation of the Early Childhood Education Act, Act 3 of the 2012 Legislative Session, which mandated an overhaul of the entire early care and education system in Louisiana.

Eric Buchanan
Director Strategic Partnerships
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Eric Buchanan is the Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Buett Early Childhood Fund. He represents the foundation in working with existing Educare schools and those under development. He also leads the foundation’s efforts to attract new investors and partners to advance the foundation’s mission. Prior to joining the foundation, he worked for 16 years at the University of Nebraska Foundation. Since 2009, Mr. Buchanan served as the Foundation’s Assistant Vice President and Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations. He is the immediate past chair of the Board of Directors at the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation and is currently a member of the Board and Treasurer for the Clyde Malone Community Center.

Elisabeth Burak
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Elisabeth Wright Burak directs projects focused on young children’s development and supports the Center for Children and Families (CCF) work with national and state partners. She has more than 15 years of experience in public policy to support low-income children and families at the national and state levels. As Director of Health Policy and Legislative Affairs for Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families, Ms. Wright Burak led successful coalition efforts to expand access to ARkids First (Medicaid and CHIP for Arkansas children). She previously worked with state leaders on afterschool and early childhood programs at the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices and The Finance Project.
**Michael Burke**
Vice President
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Mike Burke is Vice President of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, where he focuses on building the coast-to-coast network of high-performing Educare schools while providing guidance on efforts to improve state and federal policies affecting young children and their families. He has more than 30 years of experience in politics, public relations and philanthropy. Before joining the Foundation, he oversaw public affairs and communications for several children’s organizations, including: Ounce of Prevention Fund, Voices for Illinois Children and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Mr. Burke managed media relations for two political campaigns in rural Illinois.

**Elizabeth Burke Bryant**
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Elizabeth Burke Bryant is the Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT since it began in 1994. She is Co-Chair of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council, serves on the board of the Partnership for America’s Children, and is actively involved in many local and national efforts including: the United Way of Rhode Island, the Alliance for Early Success and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. She is the recipient of the Florette Angel National Child Advocate of the Year Award.

**Tim Cairl**
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Tim Cairl serves as Director of Education Policy. Prior to joining the Metro Atlanta Chamber, he worked as Corporate Relations Assistant at The UPS Foundation. During his time at UPS, Tim helped develop metrics to show long-term impact of scholarship and education funding from The UPS Foundation and developed their annual Global Impact Report distributed to UPS employees, key partners and beneficiaries. Mr. Cairl has also served on staff at many non-profit organizations and healthcare institutions around metro Atlanta. In his current role at the Metro Atlanta Chamber, he works both regionally and at the state level on K-12 education policy as well as early childhood and Pre-K policies.
Andrea Camp
Sr. Policy Advisor
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Andrea Pamfilis Camp helps foundations and nonprofits align policy and communication strategies on health care, early learning, child welfare, and women’s reproductive rights. She has a background in policy and strategic communications, with experience on Capitol Hill focused on advancing women’s rights, early learning and family economic security. From 2009 to 2011, Ms. Camp was the Executive Director of the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, where she expanded its work on state-based economic information. A former senior fellow at the Civil Society Institute where she spearheaded its portfolio on education and its fiscal sponsor work for the BUILD Initiative, she now currently advises CSI on its work on Solutions Voters and civic engagement. She also serves as a Senior Policy Advisor to First Book, a non-profit that provides educational resources to children in need.

Rachel Canter
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Rachel Canter co-founded Mississippi First with Sanford Johnson in 2008. Mississippi First has passed two pieces of watershed education legislation—the Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013, which established state-funded Pre-K, and the Mississippi Charter Schools Act of 2013, which allows charter schools to open. In 2013, Mississippi First was named Game Changer of the Year for the Policy Innovators in Education (PIE) Network for their work. Ms. Canter has authored numerous papers including Leaving Last in Line and the State of Pre-K in Mississippi 2014-2015 as well as other white papers, op-eds, and policy memos on early education, charter schools, and high standards.

Beth Caron
Program Director of Early Learning
NGA

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Beth Caron has more than 25 years of experience in the field of early childhood special education and early learning, with an emphasis on policy. Prior to joining NGA, Dr. Caron worked at AEM Corp., directing the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance contract (ELC TA), which supported the 20 RTT-- Early Learning Challenge States in developing high-quality, comprehensive systems of early learning and development for young children and their families.
Mike Carpenter
Executive Director
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Mike Carpenter has a diverse background that includes politics; appointed government official; lobbyist and advocate for education reform; president and CEO of a commercial construction trade association and executive director of a private, family foundation. Most recently, Mr. Carpenter served as Executive Director of the Plough Foundation, a private, Memphis-based, family foundation. In that role, Mike managed more than $100 million in assets and the foundation granted an average $13 million annually. In 2011, he was hired by Students First, an education reform advocacy organization. Mr. Carpenter was named first state director of the nationwide group and established a solid track record of passing state legislation and winning legislative campaigns.

Kelly Causey
President and CEO
Colorado Children’s Campaign

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Kelly Causey has nearly two decades of experience in leading a large Colorado non-profit organization. She has devoted more than 25 years working with children and youth, from one of her first jobs in residential treatment to more than two decades engaged with youth conservation corps, where she also helped to launch a charter school. Ms. Causey has served as a sociology instructor at the University of Colorado at Denver. She has published on topics related to child custody and stigma. She has served on the Corps Network National Board of Directors, the Colorado Workforce Development Council, and the Denver Office of Strategic Partnerships Commission.

Barbara Chow
Program Director
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Barbara Chow is the Director of the Education Program at the Heising-Simons Foundation. Prior to joining the Foundation, she completed an eight-year term as the Director of the Education Program for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Before that, she was the Policy Director of the House Budget Committee and the executive director of the National Geographic Education Foundation. During the Clinton administration, Ms. Chow served as Deputy Director of the Domestic Policy Council, Associate Director for Education, Income Maintenance, and Labor programs at the Office of Management and Budget, and Special Assistant to the president for White House Legislative Affairs. Previously, she also worked for the Senate Democratic Policy Committee and the Senate Budget Committee.
**Cindy Cisneros**  
Vice President of Education Programs  
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Cindy Cisneros oversees a portfolio of work spanning the learning continuum. Before joining CED, she served as Director of Member Practice at Public Education Network leading strategies for improving the capacity of member local education funds to affect policy change and ensure that all children graduate ready for college and career. As a Principal Research Analyst at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), her projects involved leading state technical assistance support and implementation for college and career readiness, including as part of the National High School Center. Previously Ms. Cisneros worked as a Senior Research Associate at Education and Development Center where she evaluated school district math and science program quality and the role of teacher leaders, and provided technical assistance to school districts on administrative leadership practices. She served as a Special Assistant at the U.S. Department of Education where she managed several formula and discretionary school improvement grants.

**Gerry Cobb**  
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Gerry Cobb is the Director of State Services for the BUILD Initiative. She supports state leaders in the design and development of effective early childhood systems, designs learning community activities and leads the BUILD Initiative National Meeting and the QRIS National Meeting. Ms. Cobb led BUILD’s quality rating and improvement systems work during her first year. Before this she was at the Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center, where she assisted states in the development, implementation and integration of comprehensive, community-based early childhood systems.

**Lori Connors-Tadros**  
Project Director  
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Lori Connors-Tadros leads the work of the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) to build capacity of state early education administrators to implement comprehensive early learning systems for children birth through third grade. She brings a strong understanding of the major federal programs serving young children and has extensive experience providing consultation to state and local leaders seeking to implement system reform to improve young children’s learning outcomes.
Heather Cope
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Heather Cope is the founder and principal of Blue Otter Consulting, LLC, working with the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children. She has over a decade of experience in the non-profit and government sectors as a policy director, board member, state agency executive, and school district administrator. As an administrator with the Camden City School District (NJ), Ms. Cope directed non-instructional supports for students, project managed cross-functional initiatives, and oversaw the implementation of a citywide accountability system. Prior to that, she served as executive director of the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Before moving to Louisiana, Heather was policy director at the League of Education Voters (WA), leading policy initiatives, contributing to advocacy and communications efforts, and supporting coalition campaigns.

Craig Correll
Superintendent
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Dr. Craig A. Correll has served as an educator for over twenty years, with nearly ten years at the central Coffeyville office as both assistant superintendent and superintendent. Recently named the Coffeyville Chamber Citizen of the year, Dr. Correll’s has forged countless relationships between Coffeyville Public Schools and area businesses and organizations. By partnering with other advocates of early childhood education, he helped form the Coffeyville Coalition for Early Education. This 501c3 was responsible for raising funds to expand the Dr. Jerry Hamm Early Learning Center, raising more than $2 million. Dr. Correll has taught as an adjunct professor at Pittsburg State University, Newman University and the University of Kansas. He has also served as a board trustee on a local community college and currently serves as a board trustee for Coffeyville Regional Medical Center.

Ameshia Cross
Director of Policy and External Relations
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Ameshia Cross serves on the executive leadership team of the National Black Child Development Institute and as Communications Director for Caldwell Strategic Consulting, a D.C. based political and strategic communications consulting firm. Previously she was the Manager of Government Affairs for the Noble Network of Charter Schools, the largest charter school network in Illinois. She has deep-rooted political ties to Chicago having worked as campaign consultant and chief communications lead for several elected offices at the city and state level. Having worked as a White House fellow, editorial staffer for former VP Al Gore’s “An Inconvenient Truth” and communications manager for Gore, Ms. Cross has a passion for progressive policy and devotes her time advancing those ideals.
Cory Curl
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Cory Curl joined the staff in September 2015 as Associate Executive Director. Previously, she was Senior Fellow for Assessment and Accountability for Achieve. She has held positions for the Tennessee Governor’s Office of Planning and Policy, the Tennessee Department of Education, and Education Counsel. She is a recipient of the Kentucky Arts, Education and Humanities Award for her work on behalf of the Kentucky Education Reform Act.

Felicia DeHaney
Director
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Felicia Dehaney leads the foundation’s work focused on ensuring that all children are prepared for school and have the right support services to succeed, both nationally and in WKKF’s four priority places – Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Orleans. Ms. DeHaney joined the Kellogg Foundation after serving as president and CEO at the National Black Child Development Institute in Washington, D.C., where she worked to improve the lives of black children through education and advocacy.

Denise Dell Isola
Senior Program Officer
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Denise Castillo Dell Isola has been with the Foundation since 2013 where she advances the Foundation’s early childhood public policy and advocacy agenda in Illinois and at the multi-state and federal levels. She manages grants and initiatives around infant and early childhood mental health, early care and development, family engagement and support, and advocacy, public policy and systems-building. She also serves on the Illinois’ Early Learning Council. In partnership with public and private sector stakeholders, Ms. Castillo Dell Isola spearheaded the Foundation’s efforts to develop an action plan to better integrate infant and early childhood mental health into Illinois’ child- and family- serving systems and is currently working on a statewide mental health consultation initiative. Previously, she served as the executive director of an early care and development center and practiced law at DLA Piper LLP.
**Jerri Derlikowski**  
Research Director  
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After 13 years researching education policy for the Arkansas Legislature and three more years working directly to bring policy change for low-income students, Jerri Derlikowski shifted gears to ensure that evidence-based policies are available to all. By working individually with schools and community groups, she seeks to improve education outcomes for Arkansas students. To do this she formed Community Resource Innovations to help local leaders provide needed resources.

**Harriet Dichter**  
Consultant

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Harriet Dichter provides early childhood policy and strategy consulting to a variety of organizations: foundations, government, advocates, and national non-profits. She has served as an appointee for two governors and three mayors working on early learning, maternal and child health, and overall education and human services in addition to working in the non-profit advocacy and foundation sectors.

**Louisa Diffey**  
Policy Researcher  
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Louisa Diffey joined Education Commission of the States in July 2016 as a policy researcher focusing primarily on early learning. Prior to joining Education Commission of the States, Ms. Diffey taught middle school Special Education in Colorado Springs as a Teach for America Colorado corps member. She has also taught Special Education in Denver Public Schools. Additionally, she has worked for a member of the Colorado House of Representatives and completed a fellowship with Leadership for Educational Equity.

**Elizabeth DiLauro**  
Director of Advocacy  
ZERO TO THREE

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Elizabeth DiLauro leads ZERO TO THREE’s advocacy strategy, including the development of grassroots and communications campaigns to improve public policy for infants, toddlers, and their families. She coordinates the ZERO TO THREE Policy Network, which engages more than 60,000 early childhood professionals in advocacy, and leads ZERO TO THREE’s Think Babies campaign. Prior ZERO TO THREE, she worked with The Pew Charitable Trusts, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) USA.
Dionne Dobbins
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Dr. Dionne Dobbins leads a team of researchers that produce reports aligned with Child Care Aware® of America’s strategic goals, including our well-known reports on the cost of child care and licensing. Dr. Dobbins has over 15 years of research, evaluation, and technical assistance experience related to the well-being and stability of children and families placed at risk. She has broad experience in the areas of early childhood education, mental health of young children, child care, military families and vulnerable children and families. She also coordinates a nationwide child care licensing database, and has co-authored numerous research-driven briefs and white papers.

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Titus DosRemedios analyzes early education policy, research, data, and the state budget to inform SFC’s advocacy and communications. He also supports SFC’s Community Readiness initiative, which includes partnerships in Springfield, Holyoke, and New Bedford. Prior to joining SFC, he held a variety of in-school and out-of-school time teaching positions in Rhode Island, including life skills instructor, violence prevention educator, and second grade teaching assistant.

Catherine Dry
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Catherine Dry directs the foundation’s early childhood initiative to raise awareness in Santa Fe County about the importance of the first years of life. She also coordinates the work of the New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group, a collaborative of private and public charitable foundations from across New Mexico dedicated to improving the lives of babies, young children, and families.

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Claire Dudley-Chavez leads the policy efforts of the organization through the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership. Previously she served as the Governance Excellence Manager at Presbyterian Healthcare Services where she was in charge of all of the organization’s governance activities at hospitals around the state and led the implementation of community health activities including a grower’s market and a Day of Service with local elementary schools. From 2003 to 2010, she served as the Child and Youth Policy Advisor to Lieutenant Governor Denish. In this position, Ms. Dudley-Chavez developed and directed the nationally recognized New Mexico Children’s Cabinet.
David Edie
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Dave Edie is an Early Education Policy Analyst for Kids Forward. He worked as a lead child care administrator and planner in state government for over 20 years, an analyst for the Wisconsin Child Care. Research Partnership, and a consultant for the National Child Care Information Center. Earlier in his career, Mr. Edie worked in public elementary schools and as a teacher and director in early education programs in Massachusetts and Indiana.

Wendy Elliott
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Wendy Elliott is the Coordinator for the Alliance for Early Success, leading grant management and supporting the Leadership Team. She is responsible for supporting internal and external meetings, and internal communications. She has 14 years of experience managing a variety of federal, state and private grants. Before joining the Alliance, Ms. Elliott was a senior staff member for Youth Volunteer Corps, where responsibilities included grants management and program development for 50 sub-grantees. She has an extensive background working with diverse populations including African American, Hispanic, Somali, Burmese and Vietnamese youth and provided diversity training to various youth-serving organizations such as Volunteer Centers, HandsOn programs and Boys and Girls Clubs.

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Dale Epstein is a Senior Research Scientist at Child Trends, where she focuses on the intersection of research and policy and the role that state and national public policies play in the lives of young children and their families. She is the Project Director of the North Carolina Early Childhood Integrated Data System and the Principal Investigator for an evaluation of the Quality Rating and Improvement System in Arizona. She also works on the Child Care and Early Education Policy and Research Analysis project.

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Bruce Esterline has been the VP for grants at the Meadows Foundation since November 1983. He is responsible for a grants budget of approximately $20 million annually. In this role, he manages the grants process, provides recommendations to the CEO and Board of Directors, and manages the staff of the grants department.
Jennifer Esterline
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Jennifer Esterline is the Executive Director of the Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium, a collaborative of 35 Texas grantmakers working to protect and improve public education through state level policy and advocacy. She brings a background in public policy, philanthropy, and nonprofit management to TEGAC. She started her career in the Office of Governor George W. Bush and has spent the last 15 years building connections between public officials, foundations, and nonprofit organizations. Ms. Esterline was the head of a private family foundation in Austin for seven years and has built the largest consortium of Texas foundations to ever work together on public policy.

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Shay Everitt, Associate Director, Early Education, Center for Social Measurement and Evaluation, has worked on CHILDREN AT RISK’s early education research and policy efforts since August 2015. She is also an adjunct professor at the University of Houston-Downtown in the Nonprofit Management graduate degree program. Previously Ms. Everitt worked for former Houston mayor Bill White for six years, first on his campaign for governor and afterward in the private sector.

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At EducationCounsel, Danielle Ewen works to connect early childhood and K-12 systems. Previously, she served as the Director of the Office of Early Childhood Education in the District of Columbia Public Schools, where she oversaw the operations of programs serving three- and four-year old children in high quality, comprehensive classrooms. Before that, Ms. Ewen served as the Director of the Child Care and Early Education team at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). She also worked at the Children’s Defense Fund as a Senior Program Associate in the Child Care and Development Division and was the Assistant Director for the National Child Care Information Center.

LeEtta Felter
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Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund

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LeEtta Felter is a small business owner, and child and education advocate. She was appointed to the Kansas Children’s Cabinet by the Governor, and to the Board of Education for Olathe Public Schools in Kansas. She is a council member for the Kansas Schools Mental Health Advisory Council and the Head Start Policy Council. Ms. Felter also serves as a member of the Johnson County’s Suicide Prevention Task Force.
Barry Ford
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Barry Ford is serving as the interim chief operating officer for the Council for A Stronger America. He leads CSA’s federal policy; communications; and research efforts, and oversees state offices in California, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington. Mr. Ford brings more than 30 years of professional experience as a government official, lawyer, non-profit executive, and political candidate to this position. Previously, he served as the Director of Public Affairs and Advocacy for the United States Tennis Association (USTA). He is a board member of the Afterschool Alliance, and was Vice President for External Relations at The After-School Corporation (TASC), now ExpandED Schools.

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Dr. Lynette M. Fraga serves as the Executive Director of Child Care Aware® of America. She has over 25 years of experience as an educator, program director, and executive leader working on behalf of children and families. Dr. Fraga serves in an advisory capacity on a number of national panels and committees including the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Early Childhood (COEC), the Institute of Medicine Early Care and Education Collaborative, Healthy Kids Healthy Futures Steering Committee, NAEYC’s Power to the Profession Task Force, and the Early Care and Education Innovation Collaborative (ECE IC). In addition, she serves on the boards of Generations United and All Our Kin. She also chairs the Children’s Leadership Council (CLC).

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Katherine Freeman is the President & CEO of United Way of Santa Fe County (UWSFC) and a leading team member of the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP). Ms. Freeman led UWSFC’s change in mission to focus exclusively on early childhood investment. She also led the development of the Santa Fe Children’s Project, a continuum of early childhood programs with a goal of broadening the footprint for Santa Fe County. Previously she served as Chief Operating Officer at CHRISTUS St. Vincent Regional Medical Center in Santa Fe.
**Rita Furlow**  
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Rita Furlow is an attorney and serves as the Senior Policy Analyst at the Maine Children’s Alliance, working closely with state leaders to help make young children a top priority. Her legislative and policy experience includes working in a congressional office, in the Maine House of Representatives, the Virginia State Senate, and as Special Assistant to Maine’s Attorney General. Ms. Furlow focused on special education and disability law and advocated for children in private practice as the Executive Director of a nonprofit advocacy group.

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Ireta Gasner is an Assistant Director of Illinois Policy at the Ounce of Prevention Fund. In this role, Ms. Gasner provides leadership in the Ounce’s legislative advocacy in Illinois and with the Illinois congressional delegation, as well as its outreach work to early childhood stakeholders and advocates around the state. Previously, she provided direct services and administered programs for high-risk children and families for 14 years, including home-based Head Start. She has been active in state and federal lobbying efforts with the National Association of Social Workers and RESULTS.

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Barbara Gebhard is the Assistant Director of Public Policy at ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families. As part of the organization’s Policy Center she leads efforts to advance state policy priorities and support states in the development of policies and systems to meet the needs of infants and toddlers. She oversees the development of effective materials, tools, and technical assistance for state policymakers. Ms. Gebhard coordinates annual state policy action meetings for teams from five states on various topics relevant to infant-toddler policies. She also provides technical assistance to public-private teams in states on a variety of topics.
Matthew Gillard
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Matt Gillard has served as President and CEO of Michigan’s Children since 2014. With a history of proven leadership on key issues affecting children, youth and families, Mr. Gillard provided policy development, legislative and advocacy services to organizations focused on early childhood issues before joining Michigan’s Children. From 2002 to 2008, he served in the Michigan House of Representatives representing the 106th District where he served in a variety of leadership roles including Vice Chair of the House Appropriations Committee and Chair of the K-12 School Aid Budget Committee.

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Rebecca Gomez is a program officer for the Education Program at the Heising-Simons Foundation. Previously Ms. Gomez was an assistant research professor at Rutgers University’s National Institute for Early Education Research, where she led the State of Preschool Yearbook data collection and analysis team, and provided technical assistance to states via the Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes. She is a former board member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Raul Gonzalez
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Raul Gonzalez is a Senior Program Officer on the U.S. Programs, Advocacy, and Communications team at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, focusing on advocacy related grant making in education policy. Prior to that, Mr. Gonzalez was the Legislative Director at the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), working with Congress, the White House, advocacy groups, and NCLR’s affiliated community-based organizations to pursue NCLR’s policy agenda. He also worked on several education initiatives as the Director of NCLR’s education policy shop. Before joining NCLR, he was a Legislative Assistant in the office of U.S. Representative Major R. Owens, for whom he worked on legislation to increase the academic achievement and attainment of poor children. As a teacher in the New York City public schools, Mr. Gonzalez taught writing, algebra, and special education.
Jon Gould is Deputy Director of the Children’s Alliance in the State of Washington, where he coordinates public policy, mobilization, lobbying, communications, and outreach activities. He has an extensive history of contribution and leadership in housing, human services, and children’s issues at the local, state and national levels. His strategic leadership has contributed to major state policy victories for children, including Washington’s Apple Health for Kids universal health coverage program, major expansions in early learning including the Early Start Act, and expansions of child nutrition programs.

Rolf Grafwallner is Program Director for Early Childhood Initiatives at the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in Washington, D.C. where he works with states to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for young children. Prior to joining the Council, Dr. Grafwallner worked on early childhood policy and school reform as an Assistant State Superintendent at the Maryland State Department of Education. He has been a teacher, program director and administrator prior to joining the Department. His expertise is on large scale early childhood assessments, governance, finance, organizational leadership, and early education systems building.

Dr. Saralyn Grass is the Executive Director of the Association of Early Learning Coalitions, Inc. (AELC). Saralyn serves as the chair of Keep Tallahassee Beautiful; is on the boards of The Village Square and The Children’s Campaign; was appointed by Mayor Gillum to the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls; and is a volunteer with Guardian ad Litem and TMH’s Animal Therapy Program. She also helps manage the family business, Grass Lands Brewing Company, which she and her husband started in 2015.
Lisa Guernsey
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Lisa Guernsey is deputy director of the Education Policy program and director of the Learning Technologies project at New America. She leads teams of writers and analysts to tell stories, translate research, examine policies, and generate ideas for new approaches to help disadvantaged students succeed. Prior to joining New America, Ms. Guernsey worked as a staff writer at The New York Times and The Chronicle of Higher Education and has contributed to several other national publications, including The Atlantic, the Washington Post, Newsweek, Time, Slate, and USA TODAY. She is co-author with Michael H. Levine of Tap, Click, Read: Growing Readers in a World of Screens (Jossey-Bass, 2015) and author of Screen Time: How Electronic Media – From Baby Videos to Educational Software – Aects Your Young Child (Basic Books, 2012). She won a 2012 gold Eddie magazine award for a School Library Journal article on e-books and has served on several national advisory committees on early education, including the Institute of Medicine’s Committee on the Science of Children Birth To Age 8.

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Jeff Guilfoyle is a vice president at PSC, specializing in school finance, tax policy, intergovernmental fiscal relations, and issues pertaining to Michigan’s economy and the state budget. He has particular expertise in early childhood issues, serving as a contributor to the Office of Great Start’s Great Start, Great Investment, Great Future: The Plan for Early Learning and Development in Michigan.

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Carrie Hanlon is a project director at the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP), where she analyzes state policies designed to improve population health and advance health equity, particularly for women and young children. Her projects focus on Medicaid, cross-agency collaboration, racial and ethnic health disparities, and oral health. She oversees research about state Medicaid/CHIP performance measures and incentives for preventive services for women and children. She also has written extensively about Medicaid policies. Prior to joining NASHP in 2007, Ms. Hanlon was a planning and research associate at the Maine Quality Forum, a division of Maine’s Dirigo Health Agency.
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Theresa Hawley is Senior Vice President for Policy and Innovation. She is responsible for ensuring that the organization’s policy and advocacy work, its research efforts, and its direct services to children and families are working together in an integrated way to strengthen early childhood systems at the community and state levels. Dr. Hawley has 25 years of experience in developing programs and systems that support the school readiness and social competence of young children in poverty. She recently served as the Executive Director of the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development in Illinois, where she spearheaded the development and implementation of the state’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant and Preschool Development Grant-Expansion grant plans. Before joining the Governor’s Office, she was the founding Project Director of Educare of West DuPage and a consultant to early learning programs and community collaborations across Illinois.

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Dana Hepper is the Director of Policy and Program at the Children’s Institute. Previously she worked with Stand for Children for 9 years as a Community Organizer, Government Affairs Director, and National Director of Policy Development. Ms. Hepper started her career as an elementary school teacher and pre-K assistant.

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Pamelya Herndon currently serves as Executive Director of the Southwest Women's Law Center. She is a former General Counsel of the New Mexico Regulation and Licensing Department and a former Deputy Cabinet Secretary of the New Mexico General Services Department.
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Dorothy (Dede) Hill is Director of Policy for the Schuyler Center. In this role, Dede coordinates the Schuyler Center’s policy team and conducts policy analysis and advocacy in the areas of family economic security and early care and learning. Prior to joining the Schuyler Center, Ms. Hill was a Professor of Law at Albany Law School, where her teaching and scholarship focused on labor and employment law. Ms. Hill previously practiced law as an Assistant Attorney General and Labor Counsel for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, an Assistant Solicitor General for the New York State Attorney General’s Office, and as an associate for a New York City labor law firm.

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Lauren Hogan is the Senior Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), where she develops and leads NAEYC’s bi-partisan early childhood policy agenda with a keen focus on elevating early childhood professionals, state policy, shared leadership, innovation, diversity, and equity. Ms. Hogan previously served as Vice President of Program and Policy at the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) in Washington, DC, providing leadership for the organization’s initiatives regarding early childhood education, family engagement and literacy, while working with members and affiliates to increase their voice and capacity around a robust local, state, national and federal policy agenda. She began her career working with an after-school program in Louisville, Kentucky and later served as the director of an early literacy and family support program in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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Betty Holcomb, Center for Children’s Initiatives, oversees policy development and advocacy, to promote quality early learning. Ms. Holcomb helps lead the statewide Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for College Campaign, and serves on the steering committee of the Winning Beginning NY coalition to win new investment in and policies to support child care, Pre-K and family leave. She has written widely for national magazines and nonprofit organizations. Ms. Holcomb was founding editor of Preschool Matters, still published by the National Institute for Early Education Research. She was also named a Revson Fellow by Columbia University.
**Christine Holmes**  
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For the last nine years, Christine Holmes has served as President and CEO at Penfield Children’s Center in Milwaukee Wisconsin. Penfield provides early childhood education, children’s mental health services, birth to three early intervention and a Montessori school for children of all abilities. Previously she worked for Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, Alliance for Families and Strong Communities and Prevent Child Abuse America.

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Rich Huddleston has been with Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families since 1995. Prior to becoming Executive Director in 2004, Mr. Huddleston served as AACF’s Research and Fiscal Policy Director, directing its state fiscal and welfare reform projects. Mr. Huddleston has conducted extensive advocacy work in public policy issues impacting children, including state tax and budget issues, poverty/low income economic issues, children’s health, and early childhood education. He has been recognized numerous times for his work. He has served on numerous state and national boards and advisory committees, including the founding board of the Partnership for America’s Children, the Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Reducing Poverty and the Arkansas Commission on Children, Youth and Families.

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Jann Jackson is a Senior Associate for Policy Reform and Advocacy at The Annie E. Casey Foundation. She provides capacity building support to the national network of KIDS COUNT and child advocacy organizations in America. She led the effort to design a competency based model for the KIDS COUNT network including help designing the Advocacy Learning Lab and the Leadership Institute for State Based Advocates. Ms. Jackson has also organized several of the national KIDS COUNT conferences and training institutes. Before joining the Foundation, she served as Executive Director of Maryland’s Advocates for Children and Youth for 11 years, promoting major policy and funding advances in the areas of early care, K-12 education, health, child welfare, juvenile justice, youth development and sustainable funding for children’s services.
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Bill Jaeger is the Vice President of Early Childhood Initiatives at the Colorado Children’s Campaign, a non-profit, nonpartisan research, policy, and advocacy organization. He leads efforts to advance child care, early learning, and mental health policy efforts to support Colorado’s youngest children. Mr. Jaeger has spent more than a decade teaching, studying, and working on issues in public education and public policy.

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Cemeré James is Vice President of Policy at the National Black Child Development Institute. Before joining NBCDI this past year, she was Deputy Director of the Work Support Strategies project and Senior Policy Analyst at CLASP, where she focused on strategies to increase access to public work support programs. Ms. James was Lead Operations Specialist at the Illinois Department of Human Service and an inaugural Fellow in the Illinois Early Childhood Fellows Program.

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Christine Johnson-Staub is a Senior Policy Analyst at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). She coordinates CLASP’s state technical assistance work across teams, and provides technical assistance to state advocates, agency staff, and other stakeholders for the Child Care and Early Education team. Ms. Johnson-Staub has authored publications on CCDBG implementation, financing, comprehensive services, and other aspects of the early childhood system.

**Shannon Jones**  
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Shannon Jones leads Groundwork Ohio’s statewide advocacy effort to advance quality early care and education so every Ohio child has the best chance for lifelong success. Prior to joining Groundwork, Ms. Jones served in the Ohio General Assembly for a decade as a state representative and a state senator, where she was chosen by her colleagues for key leadership posts in both chambers. She also currently serves as a Warren County Commissioner and as a board member for the Health Policy Institute of Ohio.
**Elizabeth Jordan**  
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Elizabeth Jordan is Director of Policy Communications and Outreach at Child Trends where she facilitates the better use of research by policymakers and practitioners. Ms. Jordan also directs several projects across child welfare, early childhood, and youth development that explore how policies can support or create barriers for vulnerable children and their families. She is currently working on sharing research on public preschool and QRIS and on issues related to young children who have experienced trauma as a result of maltreatment.

**Rhonda Kaiser**  
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Rhonda Kaiser has worked in the field of Early Childhood for over 20 years. Currently she serves as School Director for Educare Central Maine where she administers a program of 60 staff and leads systems development for an integrated approach to early childhood programming and parent, family, and community engagement. Additionally, she serves as the Education Coordinator for 9 off site Child and Family Services locations; overseeing assessment and curriculum.

**David Kass**  
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David Kass is the President of the Council for a Strong America, the nonprofit parent of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, Mission: Readiness, Shepherding the Next Generation, ReadyNation, and Champions for America’s Future. Before this he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislation at the U.S. Department of Housing, managing the agency’s Congressional affairs office. Mr. Kass also worked on children’s issues as a staff member on Capitol Hill and for several nonprofit organizations.

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Katherine Kempe is Senior Director for Professional Recognition and Advancement with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) where she leads Power to the Profession, a national collaboration to establish a unified framework for the early learning profession. Ms. Kempe has extensive experience working in Minnesota’s early learning community focusing on community engagement and elevating the voices of parents and early learning professionals at the state Capitol. As Senior Policy Advocate at Think Small, Ms. Kempe served as the grassroots manager for a successful statewide campaign to increase public resources to support high quality early learning.
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Richard Kennedy has served as the associate director of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth since January 2011. He has been employed with TCCY since 2000. He first served as ombudsman and was later promoted to director of field operations before becoming associate director. Prior to joining state government, Mr. Kennedy worked with the Davidson County Community Services agency, Camelot, Hermitage Hall and the Greater New Orleans Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America. He is an inaugural member of the Tennessee Government Leadership Council. He is involved in the community and recently completed his final term on the Board of Directors for Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee, where he served as Board Chair in 2015-2016. He has also volunteered as a Big Brother with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Nashville.

Mandi Kimball
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Mandi Sheridan Kimball has been advocating for Houston children for over 13 years. In 2006, she became CHILDREN AT RISK’s Public Policy Analyst and now serves as the Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs. Her experience and knowledge of the Texas Legislature has assisted her efforts in achieving quality care and services for Houston’s most vulnerable youth.

Carlise King
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Carlise King is the executive director of the Early Childhood Data Collaborative at Child Trends, which promotes policies and practices that support the development and use of coordinated early childhood data across departments of education, social services, and public health to guide policy. Ms. King has over 17 years of experience conducting state and national level research on early childhood issues and examining the impact of state and federal policies on parents’ access to child care services, licensed child care supply, child care costs, and the child care workforce.
Lisa Klein is Executive Director of the Alliance for Early Success, responsible for leading and overseeing all Alliance strategy and investments. She has over 30 years of experience serving young children and their families in philanthropy and not-for-profit organizations. Before joining the Alliance, she spent 10 years at the Kauffman Foundation, first as Manager of the Research and Evaluation Department and then as Vice-President of Early Education. Ten years of experience as a clinical psychologist and Director of a partial hospital program helped make her a more informed and better grant maker. Dr. Klein serves on the Board of the Baum Family Foundation and is called on to consult with multiple family, community, and private foundations across the country. She combines her interests in children, social justice, and dance by serving on the Kansas City Board of Alvin Ailey.

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Amanda Manjarrez serves as the first Director of Advocacy at Latino Network. Previously Amanda worked as the Advocacy Director for the Coalition of Communities of Color based in Portland, Oregon. She spent the last decade developing campaign strategies, and advocating for progressive causes in New Mexico. Before law school, Ms. Manjarrez served as Chief Strategist at the Center for Civic Policy where she led the organization’s advocacy initiatives and developed strategy for the NM Civic Engagement Table. She also managed electoral campaigns and has consulted with a variety of candidates in New Mexico on communications and public policy issues.

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Holly Mar-Conte is currently the Vice President of Community Impact at United Way of Lane County and has been with the organization since 2007. Ms. Mar-Conte oversees the organization’s strategic direction of ensuring children in Lane County are prepared for success in school and life. She has worked on United Way’s early learning and education-related efforts. She managed the development of the Lane early learning hub, parenting education hub, and other education-related systems alignment efforts. Previously, Ms. Mar-Conte led efforts to scale the Kids in Transition to School (KITS) program in Lane County, as part of local Grade Level Reading Campaign efforts, participated in the Frontiers of Innovation project at Harvard University’s Center on the Developing Child, and assisted with Oregon’s membership in the national Help Me Grow initiative.

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Margie McHugh is Director of the Migration Policy Institute’s National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, a national hub for leaders in government, community affairs, business and academia to obtain the insights and knowledge they need to respond to the challenges and opportunities that today’s high rates of immigration pose for communities across the United States. Ms. McHugh’s work focuses on education quality and access issues for immigrants and their children from early childhood through K-12 and adult, post-secondary and workforce skills programs. She also leads the Center’s work seeking a more coordinated federal response to immigrant integration needs and impacts, and more workable systems for recognition of the education and work experience immigrants bring with them to the United States. Previously she served as Executive Director of the New York Immigration Coalition, Deputy Director of New York City’s 1990 Census Project, and as Executive Assistant to New York Mayor Ed Koch’s chief of staff.

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Jessie Rasmussen is the President of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, which promotes the opportunity for children living in circumstances of risk to have quality experiences in the first five years of life. She directs all investments in practice, policy, and knowledge development in Nebraska and nationally. Ms. Rasmussen has extensive policy experience, having served as a Nebraska State Senator and Director of the Governor’s Office of Children and Family Policy, as well as Director of Health and Human Services in Nebraska and Director of Human Services in Iowa. She was the Early Childhood Policy Director at the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, where she led a legislative initiative to establish a $60 million endowment benefiting children under the age of three.

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Grace Reef is the founder of the Early Learning Policy Group, LLC, a Washington D.C. based government relations group. Grace Reef is the Committee for Economic Development’s Senior Outreach Consultant working to engage the business community in calling for quality child care and early learning settings. Prior to working with CED, Ms. Reef served as Chief of Policy and Evaluation for Child Care Aware of America and as U.S. Senate Staff Director for the HELP Subcommittee on Children.
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Elliot M. Regenstein leads the Ounce of Prevention Fund’s national policy consultation practice and coordinates its overall state and national policy efforts. He has extensive experience in working directly with states on policy development, and is a frequent speaker and author on topics including governance, data systems, and linkages between early learning and K-12. He also partners with the First Five Years Fund to support policy change at the federal level.

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Judy Reidt-Parker has worked in the early childhood field for over 30 years in direct service, program leadership, systems development and analysis and advocacy at the local, state and national level. She uses her education and practical experience to help improve early childhood systems and increase positive outcomes for children and families, working with state policymakers across the country. Ms. Reidt-Parker works at the Ounce of Prevention as a Senior Manager on the National Policy Team and provides strategic advising and technical assistance to the Maine Early Childhood Funders Group.

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Cyndie Rice has worked at the Advocates for Children of New Jersey, serving as Senior Policy Analyst for the last 16 years. She has worked closely with members of Congress, the Governor’s Office, the New Jersey Legislature, school districts and the early childhood community to advocate for quality early learning experiences for all young learners. Her work has included identifying, monitoring, writing about and advocating for critical early childhood education issues, especially around quality preschool and its expansion, child care and linking preschool to the early elementary years. Most recently Ms. Rice has focused on reducing PreK-12 chronic absenteeism to ensure educational success for all students. Before working at ACNJ, Ms. Rice spent three years as an assistant district attorney in Bronx County, New York.
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Jessica Roach works with the Early Learning team at the Children’s Alliance and with the Early Learning Action Alliance to shrink the opportunity gap faced by low-income children and children of color by advocating for expanded access to high-quality early learning opportunities for all of Washington’s children. She also facilitates the organization’s advocacy for federal policies that expand early learning opportunities. Ms. Roach formed a deep respect for the impact that high-quality early learning can have as the daughter of a Head Start teacher, and through her own years of teaching in a preschool classroom.

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Angela Rothermel supports Children Now’s advocacy efforts to improve California’s health, education and media policies for young children (birth to eight) and their families. Her work focuses primarily on expanding voluntary home visiting programs, promoting universal developmental screenings and ensuring services to young children with developmental delays. She brings experience in collaborative strategy, and implementation of evidence-based practice at a community scale. Previously Ms. Rothermel directed a Denver Metro area public-private collaboration working to improve early childhood outcomes for vulnerable children and families, and served as project coordinator for collective community efforts related to juvenile delinquency prevention, early childhood quality improvement, and mental health systems. She has served on numerous early childhood task forces and leadership teams.
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Stephanie Rubin joined Texans Care for Children as CEO in 2015. Before this she was Senior Officer, Campaigns, for The Pew Charitable Trusts, where she coordinated state policy and advocacy strategies across Pew’s early education, health and justice policy initiatives. Previously, she was State Program Director of Pre-K Now, a 10-year national campaign to support quality pre-k across the country. Ms. Rubin led advocacy efforts to increase public investment in early education, after-school, mental health, and child abuse prevention services at Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California. She has also served as Legislative Director to a California State Senator and Counsel to the Senate Select Committee on Higher Education in Sacramento, California.

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Aaliyah A. Samuel is the Director of the Education Division of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, where she works on early childhood and K12 policies. Most recently, Dr. Samuel’s work has focused on programs and policies regarding early literacy and language development, the impact of evidenced based Family Support programs in Urban, Rural and Tribal areas, early childhood systems building, and alignment between early learning policies, program practices and education reform initiatives. Before joining the NGA Center, Dr. Samuel was the Senior Director of Family Support and Literacy with First Things First in Arizona, where she coauthored Arizona’s Family Support framework which helped to address the gaps in the early childhood system and assisted with connecting programs and resources for children and their families across the state.

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Ruth Schmidt is Executive Director of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, the state’s largest membership organization for early childhood educators and the NAEYC state affiliate. She is a registered lobbyist with extensive executive leadership experience that includes management consulting with organizations, associations, counties and municipalities. On the national level, Ms. Schmidt serves on Congressman Mark Pocan’s K-12 and Early Childhood Education Advisory Group and previously served on the Early Childhood Advisory Committee convened by former Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle.
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Karen Schulman is the Child Care and Early Learning Research Director at the National Women’s Law Center. At NWLC, she conducts research, provides budgetary and policy analysis, and writes on child care and early education issues. She is the author of an annual report on state child care assistance policies, including the recent update, Red Light Green Lights: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2016, as well as several other NWLC reports.

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Rachel Schumacher is the Director of the Pritzker Children’s Initiative at the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, where she supports the goal to provide all at-risk babies and toddlers in the United States with greater access to high quality early childhood development resources. Prior to joining the Foundation, Ms. Schumacher served as the Director of the Office of Child Care in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services during the Obama Administration. Previously she ran her own business as an independent early childhood policy consultant, and was a Senior Fellow in Child Care and Early Education at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). Before CLASP, Ms. Schumacher worked in Ohio and Massachusetts on early childhood issues.

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Eliana Shair has worked for 26 years in early childhood systems in New Mexico and Pennsylvania in the capacity of evaluation research and data management. As senior statistician, she supports various projects at Envision NM in data collection, analysis and dissemination as well as utilization of data for continuous quality improvement.

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Ken Sikkema is a senior policy fellow at Public Sector Consultants. His areas of concentration at the firm include public finance, environment, and energy policy. His background in state government and experience in the legislature are particularly useful to organizations seeking to move the state’s public policy agenda forward in innovative and creative ways. Prior to joining the firm, Ken served in the Michigan House of Representatives for six terms and in the Michigan Senate for two terms. In the House, he served as majority floor leader from 1995 to 1996 and as the Republican leader from 1997 to 1998. In the Senate, he served as the Senate majority leader from 2002 to 2006.
Brandi Slaughter, CEO, Voices for Ohio’s Children, works on developing and implementing policy that impacts children and families. At Voices, Ms. Slaughter leads policy reform and system change to maximize the well-being of Ohio’s children. As a non-profit leader, she manages Voices for Ohio’s Children to carry out the organization’s vision, mission, and strategic plan and sets programming and the policy agenda to achieve positive change for the children and the systems that serve them. She worked in the Ohio Senate as a legislative staffer and has lobbied on behalf of the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission. While at Public Children Services of Ohio, she advocated for reforms to the foster care system.

Linda K. Smith is the Director of Early Childhood Policy at the Bipartisan Policy Center. Ms. Smith is the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Early Childhood Development for the Administration for Children & Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). She served as executive director for the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), and as a professional staffer on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee under the Chairmanship of the late Senator Edward M. Kennedy. Prior to this work, she was the director of the Office of Family Policy for the Secretary of Defense, where she was one of the primary architects of the military's child care program.

Sheila Smith is the Director of Early Childhood at the National Center for Children in Poverty, where she leads policy and research projects focused on strengthening the quality of early care and education Quality Rating Improvement Systems, parent engagement, early childhood mental health, and children in deep poverty. She serves on the Advisory Board of Columbia University’s Head Start/Early Head Start Board and participates in a NYC research network that is examining the implementation of the city’s expanded Pre-K program. Before this, Dr. Smith led the Forum for Child and Family Policy and two Early Reading First Grants at NYU’s Child and Family Policy Center, and was Director for Research at the Foundation for Child Development.
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Meaghan Sprout is the Government Affairs Director for PPC. Ms. Sprout represents the organization before the Pennsylvania General Assembly, state agencies, regulatory bodies and Pennsylvania’s federal delegation. Her lobbying focuses on the state and federal budget, child welfare and early learning issues. She previously served in several positions in the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services’ Office of Policy Development and the Office of Legislative Affairs. As the Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs, Ms. Sprout led the department’s negotiations with the Pennsylvania General Assembly on a comprehensive package of child protection legislation which resulted in the enactment of 23 new laws during the 2013-2014 legislative session.

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Helene Stebbins is Deputy Director for the Alliance for Early Success. In this role, she leads the health portfolio and also provides strategic oversight for the knowledge development grants, with a focus on making the research more accessible to policymakers. Before this she worked in the Center for Best Practices at the National Governors Association as the Program Director for children and youth policy. She was a Presidential Management Intern for the Food Stamp Program in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Ms. Stebbins also ran her own consulting firm, specializing in the coordination of the health, education, and care of children from birth through age five. Her clients include dozens of state and national organizations working to improve state policies for vulnerable young children.
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Blair Taylor is the President of Memphis Tomorrow, an association of CEOs of Memphis’ largest businesses who engage collectively on civic and philanthropic initiatives to advance prosperity and quality of life in the Memphis area. Mr. Taylor also is the founder and chair of Tennesseans for Quality Early Education, a nonpartisan, statewide policy and advocacy organization committed to quality early education from birth through third grade as an essential foundation and urgent priority for a thriving Tennessee.
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Becky Veak is the Director of First Five Nebraska, a policy and communications organization that works with state and private partners on shaping effective early childhood policies based on best practices. She brings over 25 years of experience working as an aide in the Nebraska Legislature and the U.S. Senate, lobbying for the long-term care industry, and developing and administering a statewide program for the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services. Ms. Veak worked in a multi-agency effort during restructuring and redesign of Nebraska’s Health and Human Services System, and has also spent time fundraising and working in the area of strategic planning.

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Dr. Sara Vecchiotti is currently the Chief Program Officer at the Foundation for Child Development responsible for grant development, grant monitoring, and communications. Most recently, she was the Chief Operating Officer for Lutheran Social Services of New York overseeing all social service programs including: early care and education, special education, immigration services, homeless housing, foster and preventive care, juvenile non-secure detention, disaster case management, and food pantries. Previously, she had several leadership positions at the New York City Administration for Children’s Services within the Division of Early Care and Education, as Associate Commissioner for Child Care Operations, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Planning, and Analysis, and Director of Strategic Planning. Prior to joining ACS, Dr. Vecchiotti completed the Society for Research in Child Development Congressional Fellowship in the Office of Senator Jeff Bingaman working on early care and education policy and the Executive Branch Fellowship in the Office of Child Care at the United States Department of Health and Human Services in the Administration for Children and Families.

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Sarah Weber, is a Senior Program Officer for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation working in the US Program division on the Early Learning team. She works closely with state partners at the Department of Early Learning and Thrive by Five to strengthen statewide infrastructure through more effective data systems, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems and kindergarten readiness assessments. Ms. Weber also works with national and regional advocates to promote more effective policies which result in high quality early learning experiences for children ages birth to five, particularly those who are at-risk. She assisted with the development of the Seattle Educare site by creating a sustainable finance model leveraging public dollars to support both the capital development and operations.

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Joyce Weiner is a policy manager with the Illinois and national policy consultation teams at the Ounce of Prevention. On the national policy team, Ms. Weiner supports advocates, other state and local leaders, and Educare programs in building state systems that support quality-focused early learning initiatives. In her Illinois work, she has led the organization’s participation in developing the state’s bilingual preschool rules, a redesigned P–12 principal endorsement, and Illinois’ Kindergarten Individual Development Survey. Prior to joining the Ounce, Ms. Weiner worked in educational, medical and legal settings as a program developer, training director, and advocate on issues impacting the lives of young children and their families.
Renee Wessels has served as Associate Executive Director of the Buffett Institute since 2013. Ms. Wessels has more than 30 years of experience in public affairs, communications, and public policy issues. She has worked with some of the nation’s leading organizations dedicated to improving the lives of children, including Save the Children, the Children’s Defense Fund, and the National Commission on Children. Later, as head of her own public affairs firm, she specialized in child welfare, after-school, and public health issues and worked with a variety of public/private partnerships and systems improvement efforts. She also has worked in the Nebraska Legislature and Governor’s Office, and the U.S. Congress.

Kara Williams is Director of Strategic Initiatives at the Allyn Family Foundation, which is based in Syracuse, NY and focuses on early childhood and community prosperity. She has over 20 years’ experience designing and directing large, complex community health projects. Previously, Ms. Williams was Senior Program Officer at the Health Foundation for Western & Central NY, where she led the Foundation’s early childhood, policy and capacity building portfolios. Kara is a 2014 Grantmakers In Health Terrance Keenan fellow and a 2009 fellow of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Ladder to Leadership program.

John Wilson has spent the last eleven years working at the intersection of design, public health, and policymaking. He helped build the Alliance for a Healthier Generation into the leading non-profit focused on children’s health. During his time as a Kansas State Representative, Mr. Wilson worked to redefine the culture of the Legislature to make it more open and collaborative. His focus now is supporting policies that shape the lives of Kansas kids so that they can grow up to be happy, healthy and thriving adults.
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Lisa Wiltshire joined TQEE as Policy Director in April 2017, after serving two years as the Executive Director for the Office of Early Learning at the Tennessee Department of Education, a $150 million division overseeing statewide programs serving children, ages 0-5, and their families. Ms. Wiltshire led multiple strategic initiatives at the department including the creation of a comprehensive, evidence-based definition of program and instructional quality for Pre-K. Prior to her role at the state department, Ms. Wiltshire served as the Director of Early Learning Innovation for Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools where she created three model early learning centers to exemplify best practice in early childhood education and led a collaborative coalition to expand pre-k opportunities for students in Davidson County.

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Cecilia Zalkind has an extensive background in public policy advocacy for children. Her 30 years in leadership roles at ACNJ have helped produce key policy advances in child welfare, early care and education and health care in New Jersey. Ms. Zalkind has led important coalitions such as the Early Care and Education Coalition and the New Jersey Build initiative that have advanced high-quality early care and education in the state. She has argued before the New Jersey Supreme Court on preschool standards in Abbott v. Burke, the landmark educational equity case, and on the issue of permanency for foster children in several child welfare cases. She serves on various national leadership committees, including the national Children’s Leadership Council. She joined ACNJ in 1984 as public policy director and became executive director in 2001.
Corey Zimmerman is Senior Project Manager and Policy and Systems Strategy Lead at the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. She manages emerging innovation clusters that are focused on rapid-cycle learning within large public systems and interventions operating at scale for the Frontiers of Innovation project. Ms. Zimmerman has extensive experience advocating and shaping social policy on behalf of young children and families. Previously she was the Assistant Vice President for Healthy Child Development at United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley and the Director of Strategic Planning and Analysis for the MA Dept. of Early Education and Care.