Mandy Ableidinger
NC Early Childhood Foundation
Policy and Practice Leader

Mandy serves as NCECF’s Policy and Practice Leader. She convenes NC’s early childhood stakeholders to collaborate on a world-class birth to eight early childhood system for North Carolina through her work leading the Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Initiative and facilitating state and local coordination using the Every Student Succeeds Act. Mandy has more than 15 years of experience in the nonprofit and public sectors, focused on children’s issues. She holds a B.A. from Duke University and a Master’s in Public Administration (MPA) from Princeton University. She lives in Raleigh with her husband and three children.

Ruqiyyah Abu-Anbar
DC Action for Children
Director of Early Childhood

Ruqiyyah Abu-Anbar is the Director of Early Childhood at DC Action for Children. In her role, Ruqiyyah works with community partners to elevate the needs of the District’s young children so that all have equitable access to opportunity to meet their full potential.

Mimi Aledo-Sandoval
Alliance for Early Success
Policy Director

Mimi Aledo-Sandoval leads a portfolio of investments focused on policymaker leadership, candidate education, and grassroots advocacy. She also focuses on policy areas that impact the early years, including Paid Family and Medical Leave and prevention strategies. 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, 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.
Kelly Allen
WV Center on Budget and Policy
Director of Policy Engagement

Kelly is Director of Policy Engagement for the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy. She is a native West Virginian who resides in Morgantown. She holds a B.A. in political science and communications from West Virginia University and a Master of Public Administration from Penn State University. Kelly is focused on building coalition power around federal safety net issues and health and family policy. She manages the Summer Policy Institute and WVCBP’s Advisory Committee.

Debra Andersen
Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness
Executive Director

Debra Andersen is the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness, a state-level organization established to improve the quality and coordination of early childhood systems in Oklahoma.

Bruce Atchison
Education Commission of the States
Principal

Bruce has been at ECS for 7 years and brings more than 35 years of experience working in the field of early learning and education policy. He was Chief of State 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 for another 7 years.

Nikki Baldwin
Wyoming Early Childhood Outreach Network
Director

Nikki Baldwin has spent the last 20 years working in early childhood education in Wyoming. She has had a wide range of experiences as a kindergarten teacher, early childhood special educator, Head Start curriculum coordinator, preschool center director, pedagogical leader, private consultant, and member of the University of Wyoming early childhood education faculty. In her time at the University of Wyoming Nikki’s research interests and consulting efforts have focused on program leadership, professional learning and development, inclusion, family-centered practice, functional assessment and embedded intervention, creating learning environments, adult facilitation of play-based learning, culturally relevant teaching practices, and international preservice teaching experiences. Nikki’s current role in the UW College of Education includes leading the Early Childhood Special Education program, and directing the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative.
**Carl Ballton**  
Alliance for Early Success  
Board Member

Carl Ballton is the retired President and CEO of MUFG Union Bank Foundation. Ballton joined Alliance for Early Success board in August 2018.

**Melora Balson**  
Commonwealth Children’s Fund  
Partner

Melora is a partner at the Commonwealth Children’s Fund, a Massachusetts foundation established in 2018 whose mission is to ensure the best possible start in life for the state’s youngest residents, ages 0-5. CCF has a place-based approach to funding, providing individual MA communities with resources to help them build a coordinated and easily-navigated system of care for all families with young children. CCF also invests in academic research and public policy.

**Cassie Barber**  
SC First Steps  
ECAC Program Manager

Cassie Barber joined the SC First Steps staff in February 2017 as a program officer and was named as the inaugural program manager for the Early Childhood Advisory Council in January 2019. Cassie also supervises First Steps’ responsibilities in fulfillment of the $3.5 million federal Preschool Development Grant awarded to the SC Department of Social Services in December 2018. Before joining the SC First Steps staff, Cassie was Executive Director of the SC School Improvement Council and a faculty member at the University of South Carolina. She was also a state coordinator of the SC Education Policy Fellowship Program, an initiative of the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. Cassie holds a BA in Theatre from William Paterson University and a master’s in Human Behavior and Conflict Management from Columbia College. The mother of four and grandmother of one, Cassie was honored as Child Advocate of the Year by the SC Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

**Leanne Barrett**  
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT  
Senior Policy Analyst

Leanne Barrett is a Senior Policy Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and works to improve early childhood policy statewide (Birth – Age 8). 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, and was the director for the state’s first evidence-based home visiting grant. She was the architect for the state legislation establishing tiered quality rates for child care and the Rhode Island Family Home Visiting Act. She has been a strong advocate to establish Rhode Island’s paid family leave program and earned sick leave policies. Prior to joining Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, Leanne was Vice President at United Way of Rhode Island and Program Manager at Work/Family Directions.
Angela Bass
Mississippi Early Learning Alliance
Executive Director

Angela Bass is the Executive Director of the Mississippi Early Learning Alliance (MELA). MELA was established through the vision and support of the Tallahatchie River Foundation. The organization was founded in 2019 to drive collective impact with diverse stakeholders to achieve systemic change leading to the holistic development of Mississippi children in their first 8 years of life. Prior to becoming the ED of MELA, Angela was the Deputy Director of Policy at Mississippi First. Angela received her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of Mississippi, Ed.M. in Education Policy and Management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and her B.A. in Comparative Women's Studies from Spelman College.

Madeleine Bayard
Rodel
Senior Vice President

Madeleine leads Rodel’s policy, programmatic, government affairs, and communications initiatives. She is chair of the state Early Childhood Council, chair of the School Readiness Teams Advisory Committee, and a Delaware Commissioner for the Education Commission of the States. She serves on the board of St. Michael’s School and Nursery, Delaware Historical Society, Delaware State Arts Council, and Wilmington Mayor’s Scholarship Committee. Previously, Madeleine worked at the National Governors Association and The Alford Group. Madeleine earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Wake Forest University and a Master of Public Policy from Georgetown University.

Stephanie Berglund
thread
CEO

Stephanie Berglund is the Chief Executive Officer of thread, Alaska’s Child Care Resource and Referral Network. She oversees a network of partner organizations helping to strengthen access to quality early care and learning in Alaska. She has experience working on social public policy, creating innovative partnerships, and improving the quality of program services in Alaska. Ms. Berglund holds additional leadership positions around advancing early care and education. Her leadership positions include member of the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council, member of the Alaska Early Childhood Advocacy Group, United Way 90% by 2020 and ARISE leadership steering committees, and Child Care Aware of America Board member. Ms. Berglund holds a Master’s degree in Social Work and a BS in Psychology, and is deeply committed to improving the quality of life for children and families in Alaska.
Kristin Bernhard
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Sr. Vice President, Advocacy & Policy

Kristin leads the advocacy and policy strategy at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, where she oversees the national policy team and the Illinois policy team. Prior to joining the Ounce, Kristin served as the Deputy Commissioner for System Reform at the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, where she led the implementation of the state’s Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, Quality Rating & Improvement System, Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Grant, Early Childhood Integrated Data System, and other initiatives to strengthen the state’s early learning system. Her career has also included serving as the Education Policy Advisor to Governor Nathan Deal and time in the policy office of Governor Sonny Perdue. Kristin holds bachelor’s degrees from the University of Georgia and a juris doctorate from Georgia State University’s College of Law.

Jon-Paul Bianchi
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Program Officer

Jon-Paul Bianchi is a program officer at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan. As a member of the Education & Learning team, Jon-Paul’s work focuses on young children and their families and local, state and national early care and education systems. Jon-Paul also leads an interdisciplinary national program team focused on early education, employment equity and children’s health. Prior to joining the foundation in 2010, Jon-Paul was the Early Childhood Initiatives Director at the Colorado Children’s Campaign focusing on statewide early childhood policy and systems and a project assistant at the Infant-Parent Interaction Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin, Waismann Center. Jon-Paul began his career teaching in child care and elementary school.

Cory Biggs
ForwARd Arkansas
Associate Director

Cory is Associate Director of ForwARd Arkansas, helping lead overall organizational development. Cory previously served as attorney specialist and coordinator of special projects at the Arkansas Department of Education. Here he oversaw the drafting of rules on a variety of topics, including distance and digital learning, educational options, innovations in curriculum, school finance, school nutrition, and special education. He also helped guide a multi-agency push to upgrade the Arkansas Public School Computer Network, resulting in Arkansas becoming one of only six states to deliver secure, high-speed broadband to all public schools. Cory holds a master’s degree from the Clinton School of Public Service, a doctorate in law from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s William H. Bowen School of Law and a bachelor’s degree from the University of Arkansas.
Mindy Binderman
Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students
Executive Director

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.

Brigitte Blom Ramsey
The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
Executive Director

Brigitte has worked in policy, research, and advocacy on issues related to education, poverty, and state taxes and budgets. Before joining the Prichard Committee, Brigitte was director of public policy for United Way of Greater Cincinnati focusing on state policy in Kentucky related to early childhood education. Ms. Ramsey spent a decade as an elected member of the Board of Education in rural Pendleton County, Kentucky and served as a governor-appointed member of the Kentucky Board of Education for six years.

Laura Bornfreund
New America
Director of Early & Elementary Ed Policy

Laura Bornfreund is the director of early & elementary education policy with the Education Policy program at New America. Bornfreund has authored the reports “An Ocean of Unknowns: Using Student Achievement Data to Evaluate PreK-3rd Grade Teachers,” “Getting in Sync: Revamping Licensing and Preparation for Teachers in Pre-K, Kindergarten, and the Early Grades,” and was lead author on the reports, “From Crawling to Walking: Ranking States on Birth-3rd Grade Policies that Support Strong Readers” and “Beyond Subprime Learning: Accelerating Progress in Early Education.” Before joining New America, she worked with several policy organizations in Washington, D.C., including the Institute for Educational Leadership, The Forum for Education and Democracy, and Common Core (now known as Great Minds).
Melissa Boteach  
National Women’s Law Center  
Vice President, Income Security and Child Care/Early Learning

Melissa oversees NWLC’s advocacy, policy, and public education strategies to ensure that all women and families have the supports they need to thrive. Prior to joining NWLC, Melissa spent nearly a decade at Center for American Progress (CAP), where she founded and led the Poverty to Prosperity Program, establishing projects to center the voices of low-income families; leading the team’s narrative change work; overseeing advocacy campaigns; and developing bold ideas to expand opportunity that resulted in new legislation, executive actions, and other progress. Previously, she worked at The Jewish Council for Public Affairs, where she led interfaith organizing campaigns. She has testified before Congress and frequently serves as a media spokesperson on issues relating to economic opportunity.

Sara Bradley  
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children  
Learning Policy Director

Sara Bradley joined Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children in September 2018 as the Learning Policy Director. In this role, Sara will use data and research to proactively develop public policy platforms ensuring all children enter school ready to learn and that all children have access to high-quality public education. Prior to joining PPC, Sara served as the Associate Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Head Start Association. She has more than 15 years of experience working at all levels of early learning advocating as a teacher, director, and champion for families and children in Pennsylvania.

Amy Brady  
Voices for Vermont’s Children  
Policy Associate

Melanie Bronfin  
Louisiana Policy Institute for Children  
Policy Advisor

Melanie Bronfin is the founder of 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. Ms. Bronfin has worked on child policy issues in Louisiana for the last 20 years. Since 2012, she 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. Ms. Bronfin is a lifelong resident of Louisiana.
Elisabeth Wright Burak has worked for two decades on public policies to support low-income children and families at the national and state levels. She leads Georgetown CCF projects focused on Medicaid’s role supporting young children’s development. Elisabeth’s most recent reports detail federal and state actions in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) that can aid young children’s development. Before joining Georgetown in 2011, she was Director of Health Policy and Legislative Affairs at Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families, where she led coalition efforts to improve access to Medicaid/CHIP (ARKids First), school health, substance abuse, and afterschool programs. Elisabeth previously served as the Director of Policy and Planning at the Arkansas Department of Human Services and began her career working with states on early childhood policies at the National Governors Association and The Finance Project.

Mike Burke 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 has served as Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT since it began in 1994. A native of Providence, Rhode Island, Elizabeth received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Vermont and a law degree from the George Washington University Law School. Previous positions include Policy Director for the City of Providence, Housing Court prosecutor, and consultant to Rhode Island Housing, The Rhode Island Foundation, and the Women’s Prison Mentoring Project. Elizabeth 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 organizations and efforts including the Alliance for Early Success, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the United Way of Rhode Island. She is the recipient of the Florette Angel National Child Advocate of the Year Award.

James Buscher
Zero to Five Montana
Communication Strategist
Jared Busker  
Children’s Advocacy Alliance  
Associate Director

Jared is passionate about combating systemic poverty throughout Nevada. Before working at the Children’s Advocacy Alliance, he served as an AmeriCorps VISTA where he developed his passion for combating poverty. He received his Bachelor’s Degree in Economics from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and his Master’s in Urban Leadership at the same institution. Jared has served as the Treasurer of the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network of Southern Nevada and as a Board Director for the Nevada Council on Economic Education. In his free time, Jared enjoys hiking and camping with his dog.

Vanessa Butler  
Groundwork Ohio  
Policy Associate

Vanessa Butler joins Groundwork to provide support toward the development and implementation of Groundwork’s policy agenda, priorities and strategies through effective communication, advocacy, research and data analysis.

Katy Butterwick  
Episcopal Health Foundation  
Program Officer

Katy is a program officer in the grants division of the Episcopal Health Foundation. Over the last three years, she has focused her learning on issues surrounding the Foundation’s strategic priorities in early childhood brain development and women’s health. She brings 18 years of experience in the non-profit arena where she has worked in operations, communications, program management, fundraising, and leadership development. Katy received her bachelor’s in Art History from Trinity University in San Antonio and her MSc. in the same from the University of Edinburgh in Edinburgh, Scotland where she studied as a Rotary International Scholar. She loves music, food, gardening, being outdoors, and exploring the “wilder” parts of Houston with her naturalist husband, Jaime, and five-year-old son, Diego.
Megan Campbell
Bipartisan Policy Center
Associate Director, Early Childhood

Megan Campbell is associate director for the Bipartisan Policy Center’s Early Childhood Initiative. Prior to joining BPC, she was a child care program specialist and Presidential Management Fellow in the Office of Child Care at the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, where she worked on policy development and implementation for the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Campbell holds a Master of Public Policy from American University and a Bachelor of Arts in political science and women’s studies from Boston University.

Rachel Canter
Mississippi First
Executive Director

A Starkville native and Starkville High School graduate, Rachel holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a master’s degree in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. After college, Rachel was a certified teacher in Greenville, Mississippi, through Teach For America. In 2008, Rachel co-founded Mississippi First. Rachel played a prominent role in drafting and passing the Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013 after five years of developing the concept and advocating for it. She was also heavily involved in drafting and passing the Mississippi Charter Schools Act of 2013. In 2013, Mississippi First was named Game Changer of the Year for the Policy Innovators in Education Network for this work. Rachel is on the national board of the Policy Innovators in Education Network and was named one of the Clarion Ledger’s Top 35 and Under Politicos in 2018.

Betsy Carlin
Wyoming Kids First
Consultant

Betsy Carlin, MS-ECS spent the first 25 years of her career as a public school teacher and an early childhood program administrator. Currently she splits her time as an on the floor teacher/facilitator in a toddler classroom and as an Early Childhood Consultant specializing in leadership development. This combination allows her to have fresh stories from her classroom to share as she works to promote and raise the status of the early childhood field. She is a dedicated volunteer leader with experience on multiple boards of directors, including The Children’s Learning Center in Teton and Sublette Counties, Wyoming; the Wyoming Early Childhood Association in the roles of President and VP of public policy; and chair of the NAEYC Affiliate Council. She is also an elected Teton County School Board member. Betsy grew up in Ohio and now resides with her family in Wilson, WY where she loves to hike, bike, and ski.
**Beth Caron**
National Governors Association  
Director, NGA Education

Beth and the NGA education team provide information, research synthesis, policy analysis, technical assistance and resources to governors and their staff on education topics spanning early childhood through college and career. Beth 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, she 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. Her experience ranges from direct service provision in home-based and center-based early intervention settings to serving for nine years the U.S. Department of Education.

**Mike Carpenter**
Tennesseans for Quality Early Education  
Executive Director

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.

**Tim Carpenter**
Council for a Strong America  
State Director

Tim Carpenter joined the organization in 1998 to establish the Illinois office, and currently serves as the State Director for Council for a Strong America and Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. Tim brings more than two decades worth of experience in issue advocacy, public education, and public relations strategies at the state and national levels. For 11 years, he was the executive director of the Metropolitan Tenants Organization in Chicago, a nonprofit citywide coalition devoted to promoting tenants’ rights and the availability, affordability, and quality of rental housing in Chicago. Tim received a bachelor’s degree in natural resources from the environmental advocacy program at the University of Michigan.
Helen Carroll
The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
Senior Fellow

Helen Carroll retired from Toyota Engineering and Manufacturing after a 27-year career, having worked in Community Relations at several of the automaker’s Kentucky locations. Her engagement in roles in the community led to a passion for education. After retiring, and using the project management skills she developed at Toyota, she decided to focus on her passion and put her energies there, in a consultant role for various non-profit education organizations in her community and state. Helen has been a part of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence for many years, and today is Senior Fellow with Early Childhood and Family Engagement. Her focus is on supporting and advancing the programs of Parent Leadership, the Strong Start Coalition, Business Leaders for a Strong Start, and the Expanding High Quality Home-Based Childcare in Kentucky initiative. Helen also serves as Program Coordinator for Kentucky’s statewide leadership program, Leadership Kentucky.

Anna Carter
ICF
State Systems Specialist, Region IV

Anna Carter is the Region IV Child Care State Systems Specialist as of October 2019. Prior to that she was the Director at the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education (NCDCDEE) from 2017 to 2019. Prior to 2017 Anna was the President at Child Care Services Association from 2013-2107. Anna left CCSA in June 2017 to return to NCDCDEE as the Director. Prior to 2013, Anna worked at DCDEE in various roles including as the Deputy Director. Anna received her MSW from the UNC in Chapel Hill and her Bachelor’s Degree from Occidental College in Los Angeles.

Kelly Causey
Colorado Children’s Campaign
President & CEO

Kelly 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.
Cindy Cisneros
Committee for Economic Development
Vice President, Education Programs

Cindy Cisneros is responsible for overseeing the portfolio of education program work at CED, including early learning. She has led CED's early childhood education initiatives for the past six years. Most recently, Ms. Cisneros served as Director of Member Practice at Public Education Network. Prior to her work at PEN, Ms. Cisneros was a Principal Research Analyst at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and Director of Stakeholder Engagement for the National High School Center. Before joining AIR, Ms. Cisneros worked as a Senior Research Associate at the Education and Development Center. Through Ms. Cisneros’ work at the U.S. Department of Education, including as a Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, she managed and provided oversight of several formula and discretionary grant school improvement programs.

Maggie Clark
Georgetown Center for Children and Families
Senior state health policy analyst

Maggie Clark is a Senior State Health Policy Analyst at the Center for Children and Families (CCF) specializing in health coverage for young children. Before joining Georgetown University, she was an award-winning health journalist in Florida covering all aspects of Florida’s health delivery system, with special attention to Medicaid for children. She also held various research positions at the Pew Charitable Trusts in Washington, D.C.

Alisa Clements
Planned Parenthood South Atlantic
Director of Public Affairs

Alisa Clements currently serves as the Director of Public Affairs for Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, where I am leading the efforts to protect and expand reproductive health care for all West Virginians. I have been with Planned Parenthood for over four years. Prior to joined the PPSAT team, I worked in politics for seven years, leading statewide campaigns for climate change, Congressional candidates, and President Barack Obama. For the last four years, I served as National Campaigns Chair for Young Democrats of America and I just entered my second term as one of the National Committee Representatives for the West Virginia Young Democrats. In my free time, I enjoy hanging out with my chihuahua Bandit, hiking, and practicing Muay Thai.
Katrina Coburn, Senior Technical Assistance Specialist, implements ZERO TO THREE’s state policy priorities, tracks promising state system-building efforts, develops written materials for and provides technical assistance to states, and facilitates cross-state learning. She has also worked with ZTT’s National Center for Early Childhood Development Teaching and Learning and the Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Technical Assistance Coordinating Center. Katrina spent several years leading workforce development and CQI initiatives in Pennsylvania at the state level. She began her work in the ECE field as a family child care provider and in multiple positions at a regional resource and referral office.

Jamie Colvard, MPP, is a Senior Technical Assistance Specialist with the ZERO TO THREE Policy Center. Her work focuses on issues such as home visiting, infant and early childhood mental health, state advocacy, cross-agency collaboration, and other aspects of creating comprehensive early childhood systems that support infants, toddlers and their families. She supports states through technical assistance, research and analysis, and the development of written products and tools. She formerly served as a Resource Specialist with the Project LAUNCH Resource Center at ZERO TO THREE. Prior to joining ZERO TO THREE, Jamie worked on the program and policy staff at Grantmakers for Children, Youth & Families, and held several managerial and marketing positions with a regional law firm located in California. She earned her MPP from the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University and her B.A. from Linfield College.

Lori Connors-Tadros, Ph.D. is the Senior Project Director for the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) at the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University. The National Institute for Early Education Research provides independent, research-based analysis and technical assistance to inform policy supporting high-quality, early education for all young children. The Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) is one of 22 comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Programs. Lori leads the work of CEELO to build capacity of state early education administrators to implement comprehensive early learning systems for children birth through third grade. Connors-Tadros brings a strong understanding of the major federal programs serving young children and has extensive experience providing consultation to state and local leaders.
**Ruth Cosse**  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Policy Analyst

Ruth Cosse is a policy analyst on the child care and early education team. Prior to CLASP, she completed her master’s degree in education and social policy at New York University. Ms. Cosse’s quantitative capstone focused on the effects of teacher perception of instructional rigor on K-12 public school racial integration and included proposed policy recommendations to help foster educational and racial equity. Ms. Cosse has a passion for advocating for children of color with low incomes and addressing the systemic barriers that impact early development. Her main bucket of work at CLASP is maternal mental health. She also leads state technical assistance work related to CCDBG.

**Morgan Crossman**  
Building Bright Futures  
Executive Director

Dr. Morgan Crossman, a native Vermonter from Rutland, is the Executive Director of Building Bright Futures (BBF). Morgan holds a Ph.D. in Social Policy from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, specializing in Child, Youth, and Family Policy as well as Disability Policy, and a Masters in Applied Developmental and Educational Psychology from the Lynch School of Education and Human Development at Boston College. Prior to joining BBF, she was appointed to the Harvard-wide Pediatric Health Services Research Fellowship at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital for Children. There she led many research studies focused on service integration and improving care transitions for children with special health care needs and their families as they navigate multiple complex service systems over the life course. During this time, she also taught two graduate classes at Boston University’s School of Public Health.

**Marilee Dal Pra**  
First Things First  
CEO

Marilee Dal Pra is Chief Executive Officer for First Things First, Arizona’s early childhood state agency. Prior to joining FTF, Marilee was Vice President for Programs at Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, where she led the foundation’s community initiatives and strategic program development. Previously, Dal Pra served as the director for the Governor’s Division for Children, where she coordinated policies and programs to improve conditions for Arizona’s children and families in partnership with professional organizations, business groups, and policymakers. Her prior work experience also includes oversight of juvenile justice programs for the Governor’s Office and work to improve outcomes for women on probation.
**Christina DAllesandro**
MomsRising
NH Director

Christina is a lifelong advocate for children and families. She has spent the last four years working to ensure that the voices and experiences of Moms and Families are included in federal, state and local policymaking. In addition to working alongside amazing NH partners, Christina is raising 2 boys along with her husband on the NH seacoast. Christina previously worked for a number of state and international organizations over the course of her career, including Save the Children UK, Planned Parenthood and NH Cares. An eternal optimist she is still trying to see the glass as half-full.

**Evan Delgado**
Turrell Fund
Director of Programs, Clients, and Events

Evan Delgado is the Director of Programs, Clients, and Events at the Turrell Fund, a foundation serving children and families in northern New Jersey and the state of Vermont. Based in Montclair, NJ, the foundation works in focus areas ranging from K-12 to the arts but has a strong interest in early childhood development and family support. Evan oversees the grantmaking process, conducts site visits, and works on the Fund’s strategic initiatives and policy work. Prior to joining the Turrell Fund, Evan helped the Princeton-based Burke Foundation develop its early childhood and prenatal strategy. He conducted interviews with numerous early childhood stakeholders to inform the Foundation’s first white paper “Investing Early: Recommendations for Funding in Early Childhood” and researched evidence-backed early childhood programs and initiatives.

**Denise Dell Isola**
Irving Harris Foundation
Senior Program Officer

Denise Castillo Dell Isola, J.D., is a Senior Program Officer at the Irving Harris Foundation. Her grantmaking, field leadership and special initiatives focus on infant and early childhood mental health, early learning, family support, advocacy, policy, and systems-building at the state and federal levels. Denise spearheaded the Foundation’s efforts, with public and private partners, to develop an action plan to better integrate early childhood mental health into Illinois’ child- and family-serving systems. She also leads the Foundation’s work with the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership to advance a public/private partnership for a mental health consultation with state agency leaders, advocates, foundations, and other stakeholders. More recently, Denise has been leading rapid response grantmaking at the intersection of immigration and early childhood.
Diane Dellanno, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, is a policy analyst and member of the early childhood team at ACNJ. Her primary role has been to develop an infant/toddler advocacy campaign to improve early learning policies and programs for infants and toddlers in NJ. Most recently, Diane was the principal investigator for two research studies, Out Of Reach, a look at the cost of quality childcare in New Jersey and No Room For Babies, that examined the availability of infant-toddler childcare in New Jersey. Prior to joining ACNJ in 2012, Diane served as a director of Early Childhood and Education Programs to Prevent Child Abuse – NJ. Diane has conducted numerous state and national presentations on a variety of topics and her research have been published in Families in Society and Social Work in Education. Diane received her BA from Montclair State University and her MSW from Rutgers-The State University.

Eoin Dillon manages state policy work done in the states that CSA staffs from its national office. By overseeing state leads for each state, he ensures work to mobilize local members in support of state policies is done in coordination with in-state advocacy partners and limited resources are used strategically. Eoin joined Council for a Strong America in 2015 as a member of the Fight Crime: Invest in Kids team, and continues to work with law enforcement leaders in several states. Previously, he spent seven years working with and mobilizing communities in Chicago through AmeriCorps, local political campaigns, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, and the Mayor’s Office. He also worked at an afterschool center in Madison, Wisconsin for three years.

Dr. Dionne Dobbins is the Senior Director of Research at Child Care Aware® of America, a nonprofit membership organization whose mission is to lead state and national initiatives that ensure every child has access to affordable, high-quality childcare. She leads a team of researchers who work closely with the policy staff to align research reports with Child Care Aware® of America’s strategic goals, including our well-known reports and tools on childcare supply and demand, licensing, and affordability. 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, the mental health of young children, childcare, military families and vulnerable children and families.

JunHee Doh
Advancement Project California
Policy and Research Analyst
Titus DosRemedios
Strategies for Children
Director of Research and Policy

Titus is Director of Research and Policy at Strategies for Children (SFC), a policy and advocacy organization focused on high-quality early education in Massachusetts. He analyzes early education policy, research, data, and the state budget to inform SFC’s advocacy and communications. Titus also supports SFC’s Community Readiness initiative, which includes partnerships in Springfield, Holyoke, and New Bedford. Prior to joining SFC Titus 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
Santa Fe Community Foundation
Director, Santa Fe Baby Fund, Santa Fe Community Foundation

Lisa Dwyer serves as GEEARS’ Director of Special Projects and Partnerships. She manages the Mayor’s Summer Reading Club program and other partnership activities, including fundraising. She is on the Board of the Atlanta Speech School and has spent many years supporting early childhood and public education through her work in APS schools and other community endeavors. Prior to GEEARS, Ms. Dwyer managed project operations for Constella Group, a contractor for the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. Her projects included the Youth Violence Initiative, HIV/AIDS training, and various other public health initiatives. For five years, she also managed the American Cancer Society’s “TLC” catalog for women undergoing cancer treatment. Ms. Dwyer holds an MBA from Vanderbilt University and an Advertising/Journalism degree from the University of Oregon.

Wendy Elliott
Alliance for Early Success
Grant Manager

Wendy is responsible for leading the grant management system. Wendy has 14 years of experience managing a variety of federal, state and private grants. For over 9 years Wendy was a senior staff member for Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC), where responsibilities included grants management and program development for 50 sub-grantees. Wendy has an extensive background working with diverse populations including African American, Hispanic, Somali, Burmese and Vietnamese youth. Wendy has provided diversity training to various youth-serving organizations such as Volunteer Centers, HandsOn programs and Boys and Girls Clubs.
Jennifer Esterline
Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium
Executive Director

Jennifer is the founder and executive director of the Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium, a collaboration of 50 private, corporate and community foundations across the state working to promote, protect, and improve Texas public education through public policy and advocacy. Jennifer has been working in the nonprofit space for almost two decades, first as a program and development director for nonprofit and higher education institutions, and later as executive director for the KDK-Harman Foundation in Austin.

Elizabeth Everett
First Five Nebraska
Senior Policy Associate

Elizabeth Everett is the Senior Policy Associate for First Five Nebraska (FFN) and leads the policy team and the organization’s efforts to promote early childhood as a key economic development principle for the state and communities. Prior to her position at First Five Nebraska, Elizabeth lived in Washington, DC and worked for Senator John McCain in both his personal office and on the Senate Armed Services Committee. In these roles, she worked on several pieces of legislation, including the annual National Defense Authorization Act, the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act and the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Vanderbilt University and a Master of Business Administration with a concentration in Global Management from George Washington University. Elizabeth and her husband, Rick, live in Lincoln with their dogs Ruby and Rosie.

Danielle Ewen
EducationCounsel
Principal

Danielle has served in numerous leadership positions in childcare and early education policy. Before joining EducationCounsel, she served as the Director of the Office of Early Childhood Education in the District of Columbia Public Schools where she oversaw programs serving three- and four-year-old children in high quality, comprehensive classrooms. She also served as the Director of the Child Care and Early Education team at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). At CLASP, she worked on federal and state issues around childcare and early education, particularly the reauthorizations of the Child Care and Development Block Grant and Head Start.

David Feigen
Texans Care For Children
Early Childhood Policy Associate

David Feigen leads Texans Care for Children's work on pre-k, childcare, and other policy priorities. Before joining Texans Care for Children, David was a Legislative Director at the Texas House of Representatives, where he shaped and executed legislative agendas focused on expanding opportunity for all Texans. Working with a diverse group of stakeholders, David achieved numerous legislative victories on behalf of early childhood education, juvenile justice, and child protection.
**Jordana Ferreira**  
Early Childhood Action Strategy  
Lead Network and Policy Support

Jordana brings a keen interest in early brain development and the power of advocacy to improve outcomes for young children and their families. She has long worked in human services, first by providing therapeutic services and community-based interventions to children and youth with special needs. Most recently, she served as Associate Director of PATCH, the State of Hawai‘i’s designated Child Care Resource and Referral Agency. She also is an active participant in task forces and coalitions focusing on enhancing the quality of care provided to our youngest Keiki. She has served on the childcare advisory committee, Hawai‘i children’s community council, HCYC (Hawaii career for young children), the Hawaii Children’s Trust Fund Coalition, and she is a member of the board for ‘Imi Ola Autism Services. She also facilitates Parent Leadership Training Institute courses, teaching participants advocacy skills and encouraging them to be leading voices for Hawaii’s Keiki.

**Morgan Forrester**  
NC Child  
Early Childhood Health Policy Director

Morgan Forrester recently joined NC Child to lead a new, collaborative initiative in North Carolina focused on building and strengthening the state’s early childhood mental health system. As a professional social worker, Morgan has worked directly with families and children and as well as helped lead numerous systems-building initiatives in the health, early intervention, and mental health sectors. She has experience in government, for-profit, and non-profit sectors, program development, community engagement, and grant management. She is a creative problem solver, collaborative leader, and systems thinker rooted in creating equitable systems.

**Linda Franciscovich**  
The Grossman Family Foundation  
Executive Director

Linda R. Franciscovich is the Executive Director of The Grossman Family Foundation, a family foundation located in Cos Cob, Connecticut. Over the last two decades, she has advised families and multi-generational foundation boards in all areas of philanthropic gift planning and strategy development including estate and tax planning, mission and program development, governance, and succession planning. Prior to joining The Grossman Family Foundation, she held positions at U.S. Trust Company and Fairfield County Community Foundation. She is admitted to the Bar of the State of NY. She serves as a Director of the Berthe M. Cote Foundation and Norwalk ACTS -a collective impact initiative. She and her husband live in Westport, CT.

**Elizabeth Fraser**  
Connecticut Association for Human Services  
Policy Director
Morgana Freeman
Tallahatchier River Foundation
Director

Morgana Freeman helps others find fulfillment, a bigger purpose, to serve those who serve others. Morgana believes that service is at the core of any business — from retail to entertainment; from social enterprise to entrepreneurial franchise. Morgana’s role is across a variety of businesses that function in many different ways to provide a good or service, there is always a bigger purpose in business and life. During her years as a Hairstylist and salon owner from 1995-2007, her strength became organizing and creating processes to maximize a consistent brand experience. Since that time, Morgana experienced the hotel industry with InterContinental Hotels Group; development with Project Development Service Incorporated (PDSI); food service with Tom, Dick & Hank Restaurant Group; and non-profit with Tallahatchie River.

Rita Furlow
Maine Children’s Alliance
Senior Policy Analyst

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 has focused on special education and disability law and advocated for children in private practice as the Executive Director of the Learning Disabilities Association of Maine.

Ami Gadhia
Child Care Aware of America
Chief, Policy, Research, and Programs

Ami Gadhia is Chief of Policy, Programs and Research for Child Care Aware of America (CCAoA). Ami comes to CCAoA from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) where she was the Director of Federal Advocacy and Regulatory Affairs. During her five years at AAP, she worked on critical Federal policy related to numerous child and family-centered issues to include: early childhood, child abuse and neglect, toxic stress, environmental health, injury, violence and poison prevention, Native American child health, foster, adoption, and kinship care. Ami has testified before Congress and federal agencies numerous times and has appeared in the national print and TV press on various policy issues. A former practicing attorney, she is a member of the Connecticut and New York State Bars. Ami received her law degree from the University of Connecticut School of Law and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Government from Cornell University.
**Katherine Gallagher Robbins**
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Director of Child Care and Early Education

Katherine Gallagher Robbins is CLASP’s childcare and early education director. She works to increase access to high-quality childcare and early education for families and children who have low incomes, with a focus on policies that support child development and the needs of low-income working parents. Robbins brings expertise on family economic security and family policy. Prior to joining CLASP, Robbins was the senior director of poverty policy at the Center for American Progress. In that role, she worked to reduce economic insecurity and cut poverty with a special focus on women, people of color, and people with disabilities. She also previously served as the director of research and policy analysis for the National Women’s Law Center. Robbins earned her undergraduate degree in government at The College of William and Mary. She holds a doctorate in political science from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

**Betty Gardiner**
South Carolina First Steps  
Director of Grantmaking and Development

Betty Gardiner has served in various capacities within South Carolina First Steps, the state’s school readiness initiative, since 2006. She recently assumed the newly-created senior management position of Director of Grantmaking and Development to expand the organization’s work as an intermediary funder of services impacting children birth through 5 and their families within every county in South Carolina. Her work at SC First Steps has included technical assistance, accountability and oversight of local First Steps county partnerships; management of program data systems; grant writing; and interagency collaboration.

**Ireta Gasner**
Ounce of Prevention Fund  
Vice President, Illinois Policy Team

Ireta Gasner serves as the key strategist for the Ounce in the area of government relations and systems building for the State of Illinois and provides leadership to the Illinois Policy Team. Before moving into this role, Ireta was the Ounce’s primary contact with the Illinois General Assembly and the Illinois congressional delegation and has led efforts to increase funding for early childhood programs and to pass improved policies for children and families. Before coming to the Ounce, Ireta provided direct services and administered programs for high-risk children and families for 14 years, including home-based Head Start.

**Merrill Gay**
Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance  
Executive Director

Merrill got involved in early childhood when his son was four and the university closed his preschool to make way for a new parking garage. In the 16 years since, Merrill built the New Britain CT Early Childhood Collaborative, developed a community plan for young children and as director of the Early Childhood Alliance helped push through the law establishing CT’s Office of Early Childhood.
Barbara Gebhard
ZERO TO THREE
Assistant Director of Public Policy

Barbara leads efforts to support states in the development of policies and systems to meet the needs of infants and toddlers. She coordinates annual state policy action team meetings and also provides technical assistance to public-private teams on various topics relevant to infant-toddler policies. Barbara oversees the work of the Programmatic Assistance for Tribal Home Visiting (PATH), a federally funded project providing technical assistance to tribal home visiting grantees. She is ZERO TO THREE’s point of contact for the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Coordination Center, and the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood On-Site Compliance Review project. Previous roles include the director of the BUILD Initiative, Deputy Director of the WV Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families, State Early Intervention Director, and State Day Care Specialist in the WV Department of Health and Human Resources.

Matt Gillard
Michigan’s Children
President and CEO

Matt Gillard is dedicated to supporting the implementation of relevant and innovative public policy. As former State Representative for the 106th District, Matt served six years in the Michigan House of Representatives, concluding his service in 2008 due to term limits. Matt also built successful advocacy and consulting business, providing guidance to various organizations, constituencies, and decision-makers relative to education policy issues. Matt joined Michigan’s Children in 2014 as President and CEO. In this role, Matt oversees all of Michigan’s Children’s programs and operations.

Kathy Glazer
Virginia Early Childhood Foundation
President

Kathy Glazer joined the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, a non-partisan, public-private venture, as President in January of 2012. Previously she worked with the national BUILD Initiative as Director of State Services, providing strategic advice to states advancing their early childhood policies and agendas. From 2005-2009 she served in Virginia state government positions including Executive Director of the Governor’s office for early childhood policy and Director of the Office of Early Childhood Development. Most recently, she served on the National Academies’ committee to develop the Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education report.

Hanah Goldberg
Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students
Director of Research and Policy

Hanah directs research and policy initiatives for GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students. A passionate advocate for young children and their families, Hanah brings to GEEARS a range of early childhood and research experience, having worked with students in clinical settings and as an elementary educator. Her research experience spans a number of areas, including early language and literacy development, school readiness, program evaluation and fidelity, and health literacy. In addition to her responsibilities at GEEARS, Hanah teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in psychology, education, and child development.
Raul Gonzalez
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Senior Program Officer

Raul Gonzalez is a Senior Program Officer on the U.S. Policy, Advocacy, and Communications team at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. He currently focuses on policy and advocacy grantmaking in support of the Foundation’s Early Learning initiative and Standards, Assessments, and Accountability policy. He previously led the Cross-Cutting team’s civil rights portfolio. He joined the Foundation in 2013, with a focus on cross-cutting federal education policy and advocacy. Prior to joining the Foundation, Raul was the Legislative Director at UnidosUS (formerly known as the National Council of La Raza – NCLR). He also led several education initiatives as the Director of UnidosUS’s education policy shop. Before joining UnidosUS in 1998, he was a Senior Legislative Assistant in the office of U.S. Representative Major R. Owens. Raul started his career in education as a teacher in the New York City public schools where he taught writing and algebra.

Rolf Grafwallner
Council of Chief State School Officers
Program Manager

Dr. Rolf Grafwallner is Program Director for Early Childhood Initiatives 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.

Reynaldo Green
Quality Care for Children
Vice-President, Nutrition and Family Well-Being

Reynaldo Green is the Vice-President of Nutrition and Family Well-Being at Quality Care for Children located in Atlanta, Georgia. Since 2010, he has overseen QCC’s administration of the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program that serves 4 million meals to over 20,000 children across the state each year plus other nutrition initiatives such as Chefs for Young Children and Farm to Early Care and Education. Additionally, Reynaldo manages the two-generation Boost program that awards childcare scholarships to the children of four-year college students and parents in under-resourced communities.

Mark Greenwold
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Senior Consultant

Mark Greenwold works as Senior Consultant to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids with regard to federal and state regulation of tobacco products and litigation concerning the regulation of tobacco products. Mr. Greenwold also represents state governments in the enforcement of their settlement agreements with tobacco product manufacturers. Previously, Mr. Greenwold served as the first Chief Counsel for Tobacco for the National Association of Attorneys General, where he was responsible for coordinating the activities of all the States under the tobacco Master Settlement Agreement of 1998 and enforcing the agreement.
**Emily Griffey**  
Voices for Virginia’s Children  
Policy Director

Emily Griffey leads Voices’ policy team, tackling crosscutting issues such as economic opportunity and trauma-informed policy. She convenes the Early Childhood Policy Network and leads the development of the Unified Policy Agenda. Emily serves on the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet Trauma-Informed Care and Early Childhood Workgroups, the Three Branch Initiative focused on implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act, and on partner advocacy coalitions. Emily comes to Voices with experience in working on early childhood issues at a local and regional level for Greater Richmond’s Smart Beginnings, Richmond City Social Services, and Baltimore’s Safe and Sound Campaign.

**Lynanne Gutierrez**  
Groundwork Ohio  
Policy Director & Legal Counsel

Lynanne Gutierrez supports Groundwork Ohio’s statewide effort to advance quality early care and education by increasing the quality of and access to evidence-based interventions that support the healthy development of young children and position them for lifelong success. A dedicated child advocate, Lynanne leads the development and implementation of Groundwork’s policy agenda, priorities, and strategies through effective communication, advocacy, research, and data analysis. Lynanne manages the Groundwork Ohio policy team and key policy initiatives supported by state and national partnerships and coalitions. She also provides targeted development and operational support for the organization. Lynanne leads the Ohio Early Childhood Race and Rural Equity project, Groundwork’s ongoing commitment to eliminate racial disparities in Ohio’s early childhood system.

**Aline Hankey**  
Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, UC Berkeley  
Research and Policy Associate

Aline Hankey is a Research and Policy Associate with the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at UC Berkeley. In her work, Aline leads studies exploring the link between early educator wellbeing, workplace conditions, and quality ratings in the field of early care and education at the regional, state, and international levels. Prior to joining CSCCE, Aline served on the research team of Dr. Catherine Snow, investigating fadeout effects in early childhood interventions in Boston public schools, going on to carry out impact evaluation analyses as a consultant to early childhood organizations in San Francisco. Earning her graduate degree with a concentration in International Education Policy from Harvard, Aline holds experience in research, program management, and fieldwork promoting the expansion of critical educational access for marginalized communities in Brazil, West Africa, and South Korea.

**Sheila Hansen**  
Child and Family Policy Center  
Policy Director

Sheila Hansen is the Policy Director at the Child and Family Policy Center. She is a lobbyist and advocate for Iowa’s children and their families. Sheila previously worked as Executive Director is the Iowa Head Start Association. She has degrees in Sociology and Psychology from the University of Iowa.
**Casey Hanson**  
Kids Win Missouri  
Director of Outreach and Engagement

Casey Hanson is the Director of Outreach and Engagement at Kids Win Missouri. Prior to her current role, Casey Hanson was the Policy and Communications Coordinator for the Missouri AfterSchool Network (MASN), housed at the University of Missouri in Columbia, where she earned her Bachelor’s degree in Sociology and Master’s in Public Affairs. Before joining MASN in 2014, she coordinated a statewide project aimed at expanding the state’s longitudinal data system to include more early childhood and afterschool related data. Casey’s passion for afterschool and early childhood education has been fueled by her direct experiences as a program volunteer, staff person, and participant. She also has experience working directly for legislators and as a community organizer for candidates and issue-based campaigns.

**Harriet Dichter**  
Consultant

**Kinah Harrison**  
WK Kellogg Foundation  
Program Officer

Kinah Harrison is a Program Officer for Education & Learning and Family Economic Security at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan. In this role as a member of the Education & Learning and Family Economic Security teams, Kinah is responsible for identifying and nurturing opportunities for affecting positive systemic change within communities aimed at creating conditions in which children can develop, learn and grow. Kinah holds a master’s degree in Nonprofit Management from Case Western Reserve University’s Weatherhead School of Management and a bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Dayton.

**Abbe Hensley**  
Best Beginnings  
Executive Director

Abbe Hensley has been an advocate for children and families for 40 years. Her special interests are young children’s early literacy and language development and parent support and education. Since 2006, she has served as the founding executive director of Best Beginnings, a public-private partnership that focuses on growing readers, building strong families, and engaging community. Prior to joining Best Beginnings, Ms. Hensley was the director of outreach services for the PBS Ready To Learn Service, funded by the US Department of Education. This was a nationwide effort proven to help parents and early childhood educators increase young children’s early literacy skills and prepare them for success in school. She has deep roots in Alaska - her grandparents arrived 100 years ago – and she recently was inducted into the Alaska Women’s Hall of Fame in recognition of her lifetime efforts as an advocate for early literacy, children, and families.

**Dana Hepper**  
Children's Institute  
Director of Policy & Advocacy

Dana Hepper oversees the Children’s Institute’s legislative advocacy and community engagement work. She started her career as an elementary school and preschool teacher, then worked at Stand for Children for nine years doing community organizing, policy, and advocacy. Dana also serves on the board of Partnership for Safety and Justice and the Safety and Justice Action Fund focused on criminal justice reform.
Ana Hicks
Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation
Children’s Cabinet Coordinator

In her role as Children’s Cabinet Coordinator, Ana helps to direct and facilitate the work of the Children’s Cabinet. Ana recently worked for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, where she provided policy advice and technical assistance to state-level non-profit organizations across the country to support their efforts to strengthen and improve the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Prior to that, Ana served for four years as chief of staff to the Speaker of the Maine House where she was responsible for developing and advancing a broad policy agenda that included expanding access to affordable health care and supporting seniors to live independently in their homes. From 2004 - 2012, she was a senior policy analyst at Maine Equal Justice Partners where she worked to strengthen Maine’s anti-poverty programs. Ana began her career as a field organizer for the Children’s Defense Fund. She has a master’s degree in Urban Policy and Child Development from Tufts University.

Dede Hill
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Director of Policy

Dorothy (Dede) Hill 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. She 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.

Kelly Hoffman
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Vice President of Data & Strategy

Kelly joined Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children in July 2012 as the liaison to the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s national KIDS COUNT project, which seeks to enrich local, state and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children and raise the visibility of children’s issues through a nonpartisan, evidence-based lens. As the KIDS COUNT Director, Kelly collects and analyzes data detailing the conditions of Pennsylvania’s children in PPC’s areas of policy emphasis. The information Kelly provides is used to develop and review policy proposals and regularly produce detailed reports on her findings and conclusions. In January 2019, Kelly was promoted to Vice President of Data and Strategy which expands her data work to more strategic planning and directing organizational planning efforts in areas including human resources and technology. Kelly also serves on the national KIDS COUNT Steering Committee.
Lauren Hogan
National Association for the Education of Young Children
Managing Director, Policy and Professional Advancement

Lauren Hogan is the Managing Director for Policy and Professional Advancement at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), where she leads the organization’s portfolio in work related to federal and state policy, advocacy, higher education, professional recognition, and applied research. She previously served as Vice President of Program and Policy at the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) in Washington, DC. Lauren began her career working with an after-school program at the Urban League in Louisville, Kentucky and later served as the director of an early literacy and family support program in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Julia Hohner
Groundwork Ohio
Communications and Development Director

Julia Hohner supports Groundwork by advancing its mission through strategic communication and development initiatives. Julia has significantly developed Groundwork’s digital footprint including its website, social media and a robust and growing list of weekly and monthly external communications. Julia also works to enhance Groundwork’s communications efforts through the development of print and digital resources to further engage child advocates, legislators, and the press in Groundwork’s advocacy efforts. Julia conducts grant research, project impact reporting, and ongoing organizational efforts. Throughout 2018, Julia provided targeted leadership to support the management of the Vote for Ohio Kids Campaign to ensure Ohio’s next governor made early education and healthcare a top priority. Julia has a B.S. in Psychology and an M.A. in Nonprofit Administration from John Carroll University.

Betty Holcomb
Center for Children’s Initiatives
Policy Director

Betty oversees policy development and advocacy, to promote quality early learning, healthy development and care for all children, birth through school age. She works closely with other city, state and national advocacy organizations as well as public officials, the media and practitioners to expand and improve early learning opportunities for all children. Betty 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 childcare, Pre-K, special education, early intervention, home visiting, and family leave.
Amanda Hollowell
9to5 Georgia
State Director

Amanda graduated from the University of California at Berkeley where she received her Bachelor’s Degree in Business Communication. She is originally from Palm Springs, California and has made Savannah, Georgia her home for the past ten years. Amanda is a standing member of the Savannah Black Heritage Festival Committee and Health Fair, Member of the Savannah (GA) Chapter of The Links Incorporated, Board member of Georgia Shift, Graduate of the Georgia WIN List Leadership Academy 2015, Social Media Manager for Women Must Vote a grassroots organization in Savannah, GA, volunteer for Planned Parenthood of Coastal Georgia, and co-organizer for Women’s March Savannah. Formerly, Amanda served on the Board of Association for Multicultural Affairs in Transplantation and the Technology Chair and Girls on the Run of Coastal Georgia. To date, her greatest accomplishment is being the mother of her son, Joah Cash.

Christine Holmes
Penfield Children's Center
President and CEO

For the last 11 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.

Mina Hong
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Senior Policy Manager

Mina Hong is a senior policy manager on the Ounce’s National Policy Team, and provides policy and advocacy consultation and support to states to strengthen and expand high-quality early childhood programs and services. Previously, Mina was a Senior Policy Associate at Michigan’s Children, a policy advocacy organization focused on children’s issues from cradle to career, where she played a key role in state budget and policy wins for families with young children. Mina also has experience supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at the University of Michigan Division of Student Life and New Detroit, Inc., a racial justice organization; and has served as an adjunct professor at the University of Michigan School of Social Work. Mina holds a master’s degree in social work and a master’s degree in public policy from the University of Michigan.

Jen Horwitz
Let's Grow Kids
Policy & Research Director

Jen Horwitz is the Policy & Research Director for Let's Grow Kids. In this role, she informs and guides the organization’s policy analysis and development and research work. Jen’s career has included experiences in education, international development, fundraising, public policy, and advocacy fields, with groups such as the American Cancer Society, Amnesty International USA, and WOMEN’S WAY. Jen received her MS in public policy and management from Carnegie Mellon University and her BA in government and legal studies from Bowdoin College.
Karen Howard
Alliance for Early Success
Senior Policy Director

Karen Howard is a Senior Policy Director at The Alliance for Early Success. Many of you will know her from her work as the Vice President of Early Childhood Policy at First Focus on Children, where she led the organization’s work in cross-cutting policy initiatives that impact the early health, development and well-being of children, with specific emphasis on children at risk. With more than 20 years of experience in the legal, policy and advocacy arenas, Karen has served as the Director of Policy for the Nurse-Family Partnership — one of the country’s leading evidence-based home visiting programs — and as legislative counsel in the office of Senator Ken Salazar (D-CO) where she focused on health and education policy, including Medicaid, Medicare, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, and No Child Left Behind, among other initiatives. Earlier in her career, Karen served as Deputy Attorney General in the Colorado Office of Attorney General.

Richard Huddleston
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
Executive Director

Rich Huddleston has been with Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families since 1995 and its executive director since 2004. Rich has conducted extensive research and advocacy in public policy issues impacting children and families, including state tax and budget issues; poverty/low income economic issues; and P-12 education. In 2011 the Arkansas Minority Health Commission recognized Rich as one of the state’s 20 most Influential Minority Health Advocates and again in 2014 as the recipient of their Minority Health Policy Award. In 2012 the Arkansas Times named him one of the 50 most influential Arkansans for his child advocacy work. In 2014, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation recognized him as one of their 40 Leaders for 40 Years series. Rich serves on the Arkansas Supreme Court Commission on Children, Youth and Families. A native of Gastonia, NC, Rich has a B.A. in Political Science from Carroll University and MPA from West Virginia University.

Michelle Hughes
NC Child
Executive Director

Michelle has served as Executive Director of NC Child since 2014, and has worked in the field of children’s advocacy for almost 20 years in North Carolina. Before joining NC Child, Michelle held a number of executive and leadership positions including Project Director of the Partnering for Excellence Initiative at Benchmarks, Executive Vice-President for Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina, and Public Action Director at the NC Child Advocacy Institute, the organizational predecessor to NC Child. Her career has focused on improving children’s well-being by advancing evidence-based public policies and building the capacity of systems to better serve children and families. She has worked in the areas of child health, mental health, early childhood, child abuse prevention, foster care, and family support, and helped to launch and scale up a number of evidence-based programs in North Carolina like the Incredible Years, Strengthening Families, and Circle of Parents.

Meagan Jackson
Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students
Communications & Engagement Coordinator
Cynthia Jackson
Educare Learning Network/Ounce of Prevention Fund
Senior Vice President

Cynthia D. Jackson is dedicated to producing high quality early learning that achieves positive outcomes for all children and parents. As Executive Director of the Educare Learning Network and Senior Vice President at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, she leads a generative, coast-to-coast network of high-quality birth-to-five schools that function as innovative learning labs for the field of early childhood education. In collaboration with the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Educare Learning Network school leaders, and early childhood stakeholders, Cynthia advances practice, research and policy solutions to create greater system-wide impact.

Bill Jaeger
Colorado Children’s Campaign
Vice President, Early Childhood & Policy Initiatives

Bill 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 fifteen years teaching, studying, and working on issues in public education and public policy. His research has been published in American Politics Research and State Politics and Policy Quarterly, and has served as a Colorado Children and Families Health and Human Services Ascend Fellow with the Aspen Institute.

Cemeré James
National Black Child Development Institute
Vice President of Policy

Cemeré James is the Vice President of Policy at the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI). In this role, she leads advocacy work at the national level developing and implementing strategies to influence and shape government policies and raise public awareness on issues that impact Black children’s education, health and wellbeing. Cemeré also provides technical assistance and training to NBCDI’s National Affiliate Network in advocating for policy solutions at the state and local levels. Prior to joining NBCDI, Cemeré was a senior policy analyst at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). Cemeré was also Lead Operations Specialist at Illinois Department of Human Service and, from 2009-2011, an inaugural fellow in the Illinois Early Childhood Fellows Program. Ms. James holds an MPP degree from University of Chicago and a Master of Industrial Engineering and Management Science degree from Northwestern University, as well as a bachelor’s degree in Industrial Engineering.
Luc Jasmin
Washington Childcare Centers Association
President

My name is Luc Jasmin III, and I am the owner of Parkview Early Learning Center in Spokane County, Washington. I first began my career working in the public school system and transitioned to early childhood education; working my way up from a teacher to assistant director and then, in 2013, an owner when I purchased Parkview in North Spokane. Growing up a first-generation Haitian-American has really propelled me to understand and focus on, among other factors: equity, racial bias, and cultural differences. My fundamental goal is to help create a solid foundation in which all children can be successful; regardless of their parents, racial background, religious affiliation, economic standing or any other unnecessary obstacle. I also believe in protecting small businesses by mitigating the economic strain we face on a regular basis.

Tara Jensen
Montana Budget & Policy Center
Co-Director

As a co-director of the Montana Budget & Policy, Tara helps guide the organization to ensure its position as a leading voice shaping the debate around budget priorities. She works with the media, foundations, policymakers, and advocates build the reputation of MBPC as a respected source of information and analysis on state budget and fiscal issues. She also serves as a communications director for a variety of coalitions in Montana. For more than fifteen years, Tara has worked in state government and for a number of nonprofit organizations in Montana including the University of Montana Foundation and as the executive director for CASA of Missoula. She also served as the communications director for the Montana Office of Public Instruction and as the deputy chief clerk at the Montana House of Representatives. She has a master’s degree in public administration from the University of Montana.

Caitlin Jensen
Zero to Five Montana
Director, Statewide Office

Caitlin is the Director of the Zero to Five Initiative for Montana and works in partnership with community collaboratives and the great statewide office team to develop and implement innovative strategies. Caitlin's launch into early childhood began 16 years ago at a Head Start classroom in Seattle. Her experiences working with young children and families in low income communities, both locally and internationally, led her to pursue her Master’s in Social Work with an emphasis on policy and advocacy at the University of Washington. Her professional aspirations led her to purposeful work in complex early childhood systems initiatives in both Montana and Washington state. She worked to implement the Montana Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, and was the Head Start Collaboration Director in Montana as well as in Washington before returning to Montana to further pursue her passion in policy and early childhood system building with Zero to Five.
Christine Johnson-Staub leads the Child Care and Early Education team’s state technical assistance work, and its work on CCDBG implementation. In addition to state subsidy program policies, Christine also has expertise in early childhood financing, system building, and racial equity in early childhood programs.

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.

Jasmine joined the Partnership for America’s Children in May of 2019. She is committed to advancing the holistic development of children to pursue their optimal potential regardless of their families’ socioeconomic or educational status. Her passion for child advocacy has been developed through her work at Save the Children, America Reads*America Counts, and various political organizations concerning marginalized communities. Jasmine is excited to continue advancing the life of every child by supporting the network of child advocacy organizations through the Partnership for America’s Children. Jasmine has a Master of Public Policy from Georgetown’s McCourt School of Public Policy. She is an alumna of the University of Maryland, College Park where she received a Bachelor of Arts in Government and Politics.
Brandy Jones Lawrence

Brandy Jones Lawrence serves as the state program manager for the Pritzker Children’s Initiative, a project of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation. In this role, she oversees a portfolio of investments and partnerships that are intended to create improved outcomes for our nation’s infants and toddlers. She brings to the foundation deep experience in early childhood education policy analysis and program development after serving more than 16 years at The Ounce of Prevention Fund. During her tenure at the Ounce, she served on the National Policy Consultation team, supporting advocates and organizations across the country with customized birth to five state policy, financing, and strategy expertise. Much of this work was in support of the Ounce’s network of twenty-two Educare schools, as well as helping to lead partnership development efforts, with potential and newly-established Educare sites. Brandy holds a Master’s of Public Policy from the University of Chicago.

Nancy Jost

Nancy is the chairperson for Minnesota’s Early Learning Council. She manages the B8 Workforce Coalition, the West Central Initiative regional Early Childhood Initiative, regional Early Childhood Dental Network, Early Childhood Mental Health Network, co-chairs the PN3 Coalition, and actively participates in many state-wide early childhood task forces.

Katherine Kempe

Katherine Kempe 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.

Mandi Kimball

Mandi Kimball

Children at Risk
Director Public Policy & Government Affairs
Carlise 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. Carlise regularly convenes experts from states and national and technical assistance groups to communicate effective strategies for data integration and the use of data to support policy. She has over 19 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.

Neil Kirschling
Rodel
Senior Program Officer

Neil is a senior program officer at Rodel, a nonprofit organization that partners with Delawareans and educational innovators from around the world to transform public education in the First State. In this role, he leads the development and execution of organizational strategies to advance Rodel’s policy and legislative priorities. Previously, he served as a legislative fellow in the Delaware General Assembly, conducted research for the University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration, and participated in the Delaware Department of Education’s “Future Education Policy Leaders” program. Neil graduated from the University of Delaware with a Bachelor of Arts degree in public policy and a Master of Public Administration.

Lisa Klein
Alliance for Early Success
Executive Director

Lisa Klein is the 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. She combines her interests in children, social justice, and dance by serving on the Kansas City Board of Alvin Ailey.
Adriana Kohler
Texans Care for Children
Senior Health Policy Associate

As Senior Health Policy Associate, Adriana D. Kohler leads Texans Care for Children’s work to improve infant and maternal health, support children’s nutrition and fitness, and strengthen access to health coverage so that Texas kids and families can be healthy and succeed. Before joining Texans Care for Children, Adriana worked at a national nonprofit in Washington D.C. where she developed and advanced policy solutions at the state and federal level to address a variety of health finance, public health, and health insurance issues and improve access to preventive care. Adriana also spent several years at a law firm counseling a range of clients on legislative and regulatory issues involving Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) as well as Affordable Care Act implementation. Adriana received her B.A. in History and Political Science from the University of Pennsylvania, and her J.D. from the University Of Pennsylvania School of Law.

Allison Krutsinger
Children’s Alliance
Early Learning Policy Director

Allison brings a unique blend of policy and early learning experience to her position at Children’s Alliance. She began her career in Olympia in 2007 as a legislative aide working on early learning and child welfare policy under the leadership of Representative Ruth Kagi. She completed her graduate studies in Infant and Family Practice in 2011 at Arizona State University and then worked as a coach, manager, and system leader in Arizona and Washington state, improving access to high-quality early learning. In her role as Early Learning Policy Director, she brings her deep knowledge of the benefits of quality early learning and her passion to ensure that children furthest from opportunity can succeed in school and life.

Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn
MN Prenatal to Three Coalition
Project Coordinator

Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn is the Project Coordinator for Minnesota’s Prenatal to Three (PN-3) Coalition, which is focused on advocating for our youngest children and families - and rooted in equity and inclusion. Laura is the founding CEO at LaCroix-Dalluhn Consulting. LaCroix-Dalluhn Consulting works with public agencies, non-profits, philanthropic organizations, and coalitions to identify sustainable solutions for complex issues and challenges. Laura’s consulting expertise is providing management and strategy consulting services. Prior to starting LaCroix-Dalluhn Consulting, Laura led various statewide networks and associations representing public, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations working collaboratively to address common concerns and ideas.
Dr. Landry holds a Bachelor’s degree in Chemistry from Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas and a Master’s degree in Business Administration (MBA) from the Cox School of Business at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. He earned his Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the Simmons School of Education and Human Development at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, in 2018. Landry most recently was the chief executive officer of the Lena Pope in Fort Worth, Texas, a nonprofit that serves children and families with an array of prevention and early intervention services, including childcare, public education, mental health counseling, and juvenile justice. He previously served as director of Nebraska’s Division of Child and Family Services and sits on national boards, including the Child Welfare League of America, a national coalition of private and public agencies working to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families.

Melissa Lazarín is Senior Advisor for State Early Childhood and K-12 Policy at the Migration Policy Institute’s National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy where she works on education issues related to immigrant children and English Learners. Her areas of expertise include education advocacy and policy development; testing, standards, and accountability; and education issues facing English Learners, Latinos, and immigrants. She has served in a variety of positions over the last two decades, including Managing Director of K-12 education policy at the Center for American Progress, Director of Education Policy at First Focus, and Associate Director of Education Policy at UnidosUS. Most recently Ms. Lazarin was at the National Governors Association, where she oversaw issues related to educational equity. Ms. Lazarín holds a bachelor’s degree from Stanford University and a master’s degree from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas.

Amanda is part of the state policy team for CFRP’s Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center and works to develop and implement processes for sharing information with stakeholders. She holds a Master of Public Policy from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota and a Bachelor of Science in Economics from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Prior to joining CFRP, she managed and supported research projects at the Population Reference Bureau, Pew Research Center, and the Human Services and Public Health Department at Hennepin County, Minnesota.
**Stacy Lee**  
Children Now  
Managing Director, Early Childhood

Ms. Lee is the Managing Director of Early Childhood, focuses on the collaborative development of prenatal to age 5 state policies, the 2020 Census, and key research partnerships. Prior to joining Children Now, Ms. Lee was Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Integration at First 5 LA, a tobacco tax funded public entity aimed at supporting children 0-5. She also served as the Policy Manager there and was responsible for managing an $18 million portfolio of grants focused on early childhood policy and advocacy; oversaw state lobbying efforts; led the agency’s policy strategy development focused on early education home visiting advocacy; and developed partnerships and coalitions with funders and advocates at the local, state and federal levels. Ms. Lee holds a BA in Geography with a focus on Urban and Regional Development and a minor in Asian American Studies and an Executive MBA from the Drucker School of Management.

**Sherry Leiwant**  
A Better Balance  
Co-President

Sherry Leiwant co-founded and is co-president of A Better Balance, a legal advocacy organization whose mission is to ensure workers can care for their families without risking their economic security. Sherry works on campaigns to enact laws guaranteeing paid sick time, paid family leave and fair scheduling, drafting almost all of the 46 paid sick time laws enacted in the U.S., paid family leave laws in several states including New York and Massachusetts and scheduling laws helping fast food workers and retail workers in New York City. ABB also has a clinic hotline that helps many callers who are having problems accessing their rights. Sherry previously ran the women’s poverty project at NOW LDEF and prior to that was a senior staff attorney at the Welfare Law Center. She is a graduate of Princeton University and Columbia Law School. She has served on the boards of Bank Street College and Basic Trust Infant and Toddler Center.

**Rhea Lewis**  
Louisiana Policy Institute for Children  
Policy Associate

Rhea Lewis is a Policy Associate at the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children (LPIC). Rhea’s work includes conducting research to support LPIC’s policy agenda and assisting with LPIC’s advocacy activities, and educating policymakers, stakeholders and the public at large to ensure that young children all across Louisiana are ready for success in school and life. She is a designer, collaborator, and implementer and her skillsets include writing, research, graphic design, and event planning, and strong program and project management. Previously, Rhea worked at Converge, a national social justice consulting firm based in New Orleans, Louisiana. Her portfolio included managing a three-year Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiative for community organizations in Northwest Arkansas and coordinating the New Orleans Youth Program Quality Initiative (NOLA YPQI), a city-wide effort to increase the quality of youth programs available to young people across New Orleans.
**Stinson Liles**  
Alliance for Early Success  
Director of Communications

As the Director of Communications for the Alliance for Early Success, Stinson leads communications strategy, planning, and implementation for the Alliance. He has 20 years’ experience in multiple communications channels (including social, traditional, digital, and public relations) for numerous national nonprofit organizations, and is responsible for ensuring that Alliance communications advance the organization.

**Becky Ludwick**  
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children  
Health Policy Director

Becky Ludwick is the Health Policy Director for Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. In this role, she helps guide the organization’s policy development and implementation work focusing on health care issues impacting children. Prior to joining PPC in April 2018, Becky spent nearly 12 years in various positions with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Most recently, she served as the Director of the School-Based ACCESS Program in the Department of Human Services, overseeing more than $150 million in annual Medicaid funding for schools providing health services to special education students. Prior to DHS, Becky was Deputy Policy Director and Special Projects Manager in the governor’s office for former Gov. Tom Corbett. Becky holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science/Applied Public Policy from West Chester University. She resides in Harrisburg with her husband and daughter.

**Clinton Macsherry**  
Maryland Family Network  
Director of Public Policy

Clinton Macsherry, a former journalist and legislative aide in Baltimore and Annapolis, has for the last 19 years served as Director of Public Policy for Maryland Family Network, a statewide advocacy organization working to ensure that young children and their families have the resources to thrive. In this capacity, he led a successful campaign to restructure state governance of childcare and early education. His recent lobbying efforts have focused on expanding public pre-kindergarten, enhancing the quality and affordability of childcare, strengthening family support programs, and establishing paid family leave. In each of these policy areas, Maryland made tremendous strides in 2018.

**Lydia Maglioicci Icke**  
Commonwealth Children's Fund  
Partner

Lydia is a partner at the Commonwealth Children’s Fund, a Massachusetts foundation established in 2018 whose mission is to ensure the best possible start in life for the state’s youngest residents, ages 0-5. CCF has a place-based approach to funding, providing individual MA communities with resources to help them build a coordinated and easily navigated system of care for all families with young children. CCF also invests in academic research and public policy.
Amanda Manjarrez
Latino Network
Director of Advocacy

Amanda Manjarrez is Latino Network’s Director of Advocacy, leading a department that oversees the organization’s policy advocacy agenda, leadership programs, and 501c4. Prior to joining Latino Network, Amanda worked as the Advocacy Director for the Coalition of Communities of Color-based in Portland, Oregon. The CCC is an alliance of 19 culturally-specific organizations working to advance racial justice. Amanda has tackled critical issues to advance racial equity and improve the quality of life for people in the community. Originally moving to Portland to attend Lewis & Clark Law School, she is now an active member of the New Mexico State Bar. Before law school, Amanda 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 has also managed electoral campaigns and has consulted with a variety of candidates in New Mexico on communications and public policy issues.

Jennifer March
Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York
Executive Director

Marina Marcou-O’Malley
Alliance for Quality Education
Operations and Policy Director

Marina Marcou-O’Malley is the Operations and Policy Director for the Alliance for Quality Education. Marina joined AQE in late May 2008. As a former pre-school and elementary school teacher, as well as an adjunct lecturer at the University at Albany, she has seen how education policy affects students’ lives and futures. Her expertise is in the fiscal analysis of education state budgets for Pre-K -12 and education policy, particularly in regards to educational equity for low-income communities and communities of color, as well as in the state’s insufficient investment in early care and learning. Marina is also a parent of two children, one in 5th and one in 2nd grade.

Terrelene Massey
Southwest Women’s Law Center
Executive Director

Terrelene G. Massey is the Executive Director for the Southwest Women’s Law Center. She started at SWLC in January 2019. Terrelene holds a Juris Doctor from the University of New Mexico School of Law, and a Master of Public Affairs from the University of Texas at Austin, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs. She is licensed to practice law in New Mexico and the Navajo Nation. Terrelene previously served as the Executive Director of the Navajo Division of Social Services overseeing the child welfare program. She also was employed as an attorney at Johnson Barnhouse & Keegan, LLP, in Albuquerque. She also served as a staff attorney at New Mexico Legal Aid, Inc., where she provided legal services to low income clients regarding federal Indian law, family law, and tribal law matters.
Debi Mathias is Director of the QRIS National Learning Network for the BUILD Initiative and Senior Consultant for the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance and the State Capacity Building Center IMPACT Project. Before this, she was Director of Early Learning Services with the Departments of Education and Public Welfare in PA, responsible for the state’s QRIS, state Pre-K, Head Start Collaboration Office and State Head Start funding, family support programs, professional development systems and standards-aligned systems. Ms. Mathias’ areas of expertise include QRIS, professional development, training and technical assistance, and systems building.

Tracy McDaniel, MPH, is a long-time advocate for women and families. She currently works as the Policy Advocate for Paid Family Medical Leave at Southwest Women’s Law Center in Albuquerque, NM. Before coming to SWLC, she coordinated a large coalition focused on improving the health and well-being of young children and their families in central New Mexico. Her past professional experience has focused on health promotion, birth work, lactation support, and working with survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence. She holds a BA in Psychology and Women’s Studies from Miami University, a graduate certificate in Maternal Child Health Epidemiology from the University of Arizona, and a Master of Public Health degree from the University of New Mexico. She is the mother of three amazing people who inspire her and keep her focused on working toward a better tomorrow for women, children, and families.

Davida McDonald has served in various roles in the early childhood field. She currently is a Senior Policy Advisor at EducationCounsel and previously was a Senior Manager on the National Policy Team and the Ounce of Prevention Fund. She also served as a Senior Advisor for Early Childhood Development in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Ms. McDonald was Director of State Policy at the National Association for the Education of Young Children and earlier worked at the Trust for Early Education as a State Program Analyst.
**Margie McHugh**
Migration Policy Institute  
Director, National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy

Margie McHugh is Director of the Migration Policy Institute (MPI)'s National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. The Center is 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. It provides in-depth research, policy analysis, and technical assistance, training and information resource services on a broad range of immigrant integration issues. 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.

**Jim McKay**
TEAM for WV Children  
State Director, Prevent Child Abuse WV

Jim McKay is Director of Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia, which is a project of TEAM for WV Children. He also serves as Policy Director for the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds. Jim has served as Director of PCAWV since 2007. He is co-chair of the WV ACEs Coalition, chair of the WV Legislative Action Team for Children and Families, and a member of the National Child Abuse Coalition. His proudest achievement is being a father of two great sons, Jake and Jonah.

**Caitlin McLean**
Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, UC-Berkeley  
Workforce Research Specialist

Caitlin is a lead researcher for the biennial Early Childhood Workforce Index as well as related research, particularly strategies to improve compensation and workforce data. Prior to joining CSCCE, Caitlin’s research focused on comparative early care and education policy in the United States and select European countries.

**Kaitlyn McNabney**
Children’s Advocacy Alliance  
Policy Manager, School Readiness

Kate is passionate about ensuring that every child in the state of Nevada has the chance to attain an excellent education, starting in the early years of a child’s life. This passion comes from her experience as a Las Vegas classroom teacher through Teach For America as she daily witnessed the inequities our children and communities face. She received her Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science from Emory & Henry College and her Master’s in Public Policy and Administration at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Kate enjoys hiking with her dog and rock climbing on the weekends.

**Carlye McQuiston**
Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness  
Program Director

Carlye McQuiston has a master’s degree in social work and six years of experience in the non-profit sector working and advocating for at-risk youth. As Program Director at OPSR, I also help to manage program operations and grants.
**Neil Mellen**
Children’s Trust Fund of South Carolina
Director of Policy & Advocacy

Neil educates policy makers, thought leaders and child advocates across South Carolina on issues that impact children and families. He works to advance public policies at the local, state and federal levels that reduce child abuse, neglect, and injury. Prior to joining Children’s Trust, he played a key role as an architect of South Carolina’s tax credit and scholarship programs for students with special educational needs. A graduate of the Virginia Military Institute with a bachelor's degree, he holds a master’s degree from the University of South Carolina. He also served as a Peace Corps volunteer.

**John Merz**
ACT, Inc.
Executive Director

John is the Executive Director of ACT, Inc. a Connecticut statewide organization focused on HIV/AIDS, homelessness and health disparities. He has worked in this area of social services for 30 years. ACT anticipates formally affiliating with the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) on January 1, 2020, in a parent/subsidiary relationship. At that time John will become CEO of both ACT, Inc. and CAHS.

**Rachael Miller**
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Child Welfare Policy Director

Rachael Miller is the Child Welfare Policy Director at Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. In this role, she assists the organization in the development of statewide legislative and policy reform in the field of Child Welfare. Prior to joining PPC, Rachael spent 10 years at York County Office for Children, Youth, and Families. At the county child welfare agency, she served in multiple layers of the organization, including direct service case management, direct service supervision, quality improvement management, as well as serving as the Educational Liaison. In addition to her technical experience, Rachael has prior experience as a former child impacted by the Child Welfare System, making her work both a professional and personal mission.

**Laura Milliken**
Spark NH
Director

Laura Milliken is the Director of Spark NH, the governor-appointed early childhood advisory council for the state of New Hampshire. She is an attorney who has spent her career working with and on behalf of families— particularly low income families and domestic violence survivors. In 2011 Laura decided she wanted to help families before they were in crisis— by moving to the prevention side of the work. She believes strongly that by ensuring all families have equal access to the developmental opportunities for their children that build healthy brain architecture, we can prevent the kind of crises she addressed for years and create thriving communities for New Hampshire. Laura is a graduate of Barnard College and Boston University School of Law. She lives in Concord with her husband and two college-age sons.
**Suzann Morris**  
Bipartisan Policy Center  
Fellow

Suzann Morris is currently a fellow with the Bipartisan Policy Center, where she supports the Early Childhood project. She is the former Deputy Secretary of the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). In her previous role, Morris spearheaded the modernization of Pennsylvania’s early childhood education system, including Pennsylvania’s first combined quality and child care resource and referral network, investment in a credit-bearing professional development system, and an overhaul of the state’s quality rating and improvement system. Morris served as a member of the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission and as co-chair of the Pennsylvania Early Learning Council. Prior to OCDEL, Morris led local and state advocacy initiatives for chapters of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. She lives in Lancaster, PA with her husband and two boys.

**Beth Morrow**  
Maryland Family Network  
Associate Director of Public Policy

Beth Morrow is an advocate for young children and the grown-ups who care for them. In her current role as Associate Director of Public Policy at Maryland Family Network, she coordinates legislative and budgetary advocacy efforts for the leading early childhood organization in the state. Her work over the past two decades has led to key policy advancements in the areas of quality affordable child care, family support, and access to paid family leave. She graduated with a BA in Sociology from Loyola University Maryland and lives in Baltimore with her husband and three young children.

**Allison Muhlendorf**  
Alabama School Readiness Alliance  
Executive Director

Allison works to promote high quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten as a top statewide priority in Alabama. Prior to joining ASRA, Muhlendorf served as a state policy associate for Pre-K Now and served as a legislative assistant to former Oregon State Senator Vicki L. Walker. Prior to her work in the Oregon Senate, she worked at the Children’s Institute. Since joining ASRA as executive director in 2012, Allison has worked with ASRA’s Pre-K Task Force to launch and advocate for a visionary set of recommendations for expanding high-quality, voluntary pre-k to all Alabama families by the year 2023. Since the 2012 release of the Task Force’s recommendations, state investments in Alabama’s First Class Pre-K program have grown from $19 million to $123 million, and the percentage of four-year-olds served statewide has grown from six to nearly 40 percent. Alabama has the nation’s highest-quality pre-k program, and children who attend outperform their peers in reading and math at all levels.

**Tate Mullen**  
Kansas Action for Children  
Research and Policy Analyst

Before my work with Kansas Action for Children, I worked as a policy and budget analyst for Jefferson County in Colorado. I also worked as an instructor at the Center for Adult Education in Loveland Colorado. I have a master’s degree from the University of Wyoming in political science and am currently a public policy/public administration master’s graduate candidate at the University of Colorado Denver.
**Kelley Murphy**
Children's Action Alliance
Director, Early Childhood Policy

Kelley Murphy is the Early Childhood Policy Director at the Children’s Action Alliance. Before this, she was the Bureau Chief in Policy at the Arizona Division of Behavioral Health Services. She spent four years as Senior Health Policy and Program Specialist for Arizona’s early childhood agency, First Things First, where she worked at the state and local level for improved health policy for children and partnered with community members to further define and develop the system of early childhood in Arizona.

**Lauren Necochea**
Idaho Voices for Children
Director

Lauren Necochea is the director of Idaho Voices for Children and concurrently directs the Idaho Center of Fiscal Policy. Both are programs of Jannus, Inc. Lauren previously oversaw and evaluated programs addressing children’s safety and health hazards for the Baltimore City Health Department. Prior to that, she was a policy fellow with joint appointments at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Princeton University’s Center for Health and Wellbeing. She has evaluated anti-poverty programs internationally and was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to study microfinance in Peru. Lauren earned her Master in Public Affairs at Princeton University and holds a B.A. in Economics from Pomona College.

**Laura Nevitt**
Hawaii Children’s Action Network
Community Engagement and Training Director

Laura has 20+ years of organizing in both the electoral and issue advocacy worlds. She has a Master’s Degree in Advocacy and Political Leadership from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and a Bachelor’s Degree in Women’s Studies/Political Science from Metropolitan State University. She has worked with Healthcare workers in Michigan to engage them in the political process, advocated and educated for Clean Energy in Louisiana, was the Political Director for a Labor Union in Washington State and most recently, was the Executive Director for the Democratic Party of Hawaii.

**Carol O’Donnell**
CT Early Childhood Funder Collaborative
Executive Director

Carol P. O’Donnell, CT Early Childhood Funder Collaborative’s (CT ECFC) executive director, has broad philanthropic experience having held leadership positions with community, family and corporate foundations. She has facilitated the growth and expansion of the CT ECFC working with funders from across the state. As Associate CEO of the Connecticut Community Foundation (CCF), she designed and managed its early childhood initiative and was directly involved in the creation of the CT ECFC serving as one of its first co-chairs. O’Donnell holds an MPA from the University of Connecticut and a BA from the College of William and Mary.
Amy O’Leary
Strategies for Children
Director

Amy works to ensure that Massachusetts invests the resources needed for all children, from birth to age five, to access high-quality early education programs that prepare them for success in school and life. Prior to joining SFC in 2002, she worked as a preschool teacher and Program Director at Ellis Memorial in Boston. Amy currently serves as the President of the National Association for the Education of Young Children Governing Board, a member of the Board of Directors for the Children’s Investment Fund in Massachusetts and serves on the adjunct faculty at Boston University Wheelock College of Education in Boston and Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester.

Beth Oppenheimer
Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children
Executive Director

Beth Oppenheimer has spent many years advocating for the needs of children and is committed to advancing opportunities for all Idaho families. Beth has served as the ED of the Idaho AEYC since 2010, where she works to ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood. She is currently the lead advocate for state investments for preschool. Beth has served as the Assoc. Director for the Student Union Building at Boise State Univ, where she gained valuable experience in business while at the same time provided employment opportunities for students. She has worked on education, policy, and development issues for the Univ. of Idaho, the Junior Achievement (DC) and the Institute for Women’s Policy Research in Washington, DC. Beth is very involved in her community and serves on several boards which include the YMCA, Andrus Center for Public Policy and in 2016 was elected to serve on the Boise School District Board of Trustees. Beth and her husband, Jonathan have two daughters.

Cynthia Osborne
Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center, The University of Texas at Austin
Director

Cynthia Osborne, Ph.D. is the Associate Dean for Academic Strategies at The University of Texas at Austin LBJ School of Public Affairs and director of both the Child and Family Research Partnership (CFRP) and the Center for Health and Social Policy (CHASP). She most recently launched the new national Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center at CFRP, specializing in evidence-informed state policies that strengthen outcomes for infants and toddlers. She is a child and family policy expert and program evaluator. Osborne holds a Ph.D. in Demography and Public Affairs from Princeton University and a Master in Public Policy from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government.
Danielle Pacifico-Cogan
Children's Institute
Director of Community Affairs

Danielle Pacifico-Cogan joined the Children’s Institute in 2016 with more than ten years of communications, community engagement, and advocacy experience. As Director of Community Affairs, Danielle engages with Oregonians across the state to build support for CI’s vision that every child in Oregon is prepared for success in school and life and provides technical support to partner organizations. Danielle also leads CI’s emerging equity and justice work, with a focus on centering young children and families who experience barriers to opportunity due to race/ethnicity, poverty, disability, and/or geographic location. Danielle is a member of the Portland’5 Center for the Performing Arts Foundation Board, the City Club of Portland Board of Governors, and the board of directors of The Children’s Book Bank.

Allison Parish
Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions
Florida MIECHV Project Director

Allison Parish MS, EdS, IMH-E ® (IV-P) is the Florida Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Initiative Project Director. She partners with multiple statewide agencies and national TA providers to improve the early childhood sector in Florida. She also oversees implementation of the Florida Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Impact Project, which is part of a learning collaborative for 12 states and their place-based communities that uses collective impact and continuous quality improvement methods to improve policies and services impacting early child development and family well-being. She was one of the first two people in Florida to earn an infant mental health mentor endorsement in policy and continues to serve as an advisor to the Florida Association for Infant Mental Health.

Nasha Patel
Louisiana Dept of Education
Chief of Early Childhood Strategy

Amber Payne
Invest Early NC
Project Director

Amber Payne has 12 years of experience working with foundations, governmental agencies, non-profits, and community organizations in South Carolina, Georgia, Iowa, Florida, and North Carolina. She created AP Community Partners in 2012 as a way to help her clients achieve measurable, lasting results in the fields of prevention of child abuse and neglect, substance abuse prevention, food security, and public health. She is a Cum Laude graduate of Clemson University in Organizational Communications and Sociology. She obtains a dual Masters in Social Work and Public Health from the University of South Carolina. Amber has earned the International Certificate of Prevention Specialists for work in Substance Abuse Prevention. Amber’s work includes the development of content for statewide on-line training for Adverse Childhood Experiences and has evaluated statewide prevention programming including Healthy Families Home Visitation and the Nurturing Parenting Program.
**Kimberly Perry**  
DC Action for Children  
Executive Director

As a former teacher turned lobbyist, Kimberly has spent her career at the intersection of public policy, social entrepreneurship, and civic empowerment. Kimberly was selected to be DC Action for Children’s Executive Director in 2019 because of her life-long commitment to achieving equitable opportunity for every child. She also brings to her position deep expertise in child and adolescent health, food security, civic engagement. In addition, she has a proven track record of working effectively with policymakers at the national, state, and local levels. Prior to DC Action for Children, Kimberly founded two global, social enterprises, served as founding director of DC Hunger Solutions, vice president of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, and executive director of DC Vote. She’s also been an advisor to campaigns, foundations and organizations on issue-based advocacy, citizen engagement, and social impact.

**Sophie Phillips**  
TexProtects/Prevent Child Abuse Texas  
CEO

Sophie is the Chief Executive Officer for TexProtects. Prior to becoming CEO, Sophie served as Chief Operating Officer 2015-2018 where she managed the daily operations of the organization, and she has been with TexProtects since 2012. As a social worker, her passion and interest is in addressing the root causes of child abuse and neglect and creating partnerships to advance state policies and practices. She led the statewide Texas Home Visiting Consortium for many years, a collaborative of home visiting providers, funders, researchers and state agency resources to raise awareness and coordinate legislative efforts around the expansion of home visiting in Texas. They have successfully advocated and secured over $166 Million in state funds for evidence-based home visiting programs in Texas.

**Gail Piggott**  
Alabama Partnership for Children  
Executive Director

Gail Piggott has 45 years of experience in education, administration, and management of non-profit and government programs for children and families at the local and state levels. She became the executive director of the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) in 2003. This broad public/private state-level agency concentrates on issues of children from birth to five and their families, coordinates the state’s Strengthening Families, Help Me Grow, and Project LAUNCH initiatives administer the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program and coordinate multiple advocacy and education initiatives related to early childhood healthy development and family support.
**Sally Puleo**
Council for a Strong America
Vice President, State Operations and Policy

As the Vice President of State Operations and Policy, Sally has oversight of Council for a Strong America’s state policy work across the country and manages operations of the nine state offices. She joined Council for a Strong America in 2007 and is based in Chicago. Before her current role, she launched and led Mission: Readiness in Illinois, and helped lead Fight Crime: Invest in Kids in Illinois. Previously, Sally worked as an advocate for sexual and domestic violence victims in four states.

**Al Race**
Center on the Developing Child
Deputy Director and Chief Knowledge Officer

Al focuses on how to use the knowledge generated by the Center’s work to transform the landscape in which science-based innovation for children and families can thrive. The Center catalyzes local, national, and international innovation in policy and practice for children and families, especially those facing serious adversity. In collaboration with a broad network of research, practice, policy, community, and philanthropic leaders, the Center seeks transformational impacts on lifelong learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health.

**Rosita Ramirez**
NALEO Educational Fund
Director of Constituency Services- Education

Dr. Rosita Ramirez is Director of Constituency Services for the Education Portfolio for the National Association of Latino Elected & Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund, a nonprofit organization that facilitates full Latino participation in the American political process, from citizenship to public service. Dr. Ramirez is primarily responsible for the overall design, implementation and development of education policy institutes and governance training opportunities within the organization for Latino elected officials across the United States.

**Manica Ramos**
Child Trends
Senior Research Scientist

**Teresa Ramos**
Illinois Action for Children
VP Public Policy & Advocacy

Teresa Ramos is the Vice President of Public Policy and Advocacy at Illinois Action for Children. Prior to joining IAFC, Teresa was the Director of Community Engagement at Advance Illinois, where she leads the campaign to fix the K-12 funding formula in Illinois. She engaged community members in policy, advocacy, and community-building to strengthen the Illinois public school system. Teresa previously served as education organizer and manager of the Grow Your Own Teachers program at ONE (now ONE Northside). She earned her Ph.D. in Anthropology, focused on school culture and educational policy, with a minor in Latina/Latino studies, from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
Jessie Rasmussen
Buffett Early Childhood Fund
President

Jessie Rasmussen has been with the Buffett Early Childhood Fund for over 10 years, serving first as the Vice President for four years and then as President since 2011. The entire focus of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund is on promoting the opportunity for children facing the greatest odds in life to have quality experiences in the first five years of life. Investments are made in Nebraska and nationally in three key areas—practice, policy and knowledge development. Across her professional career, Jessie has been an early childhood practitioner, Nebraska State Senator, Director of the Governor’s Office of Children and Family Policy, Director of Health and Human Services in Nebraska and Iowa, and Director of Early Childhood Policy at the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation.

Sara Redington
The Miles Foundation
Director of Strategy and Communications

Sara Redington is Director of Strategy & Communications for The Miles Foundation. Ms. Redington brings 10 years of strategic planning, marketing, and communications experience to her role. She founded Redington Solutions in 2009, a marketing and communications firm serving businesses in Texas and across the country. Prior to that endeavor, Ms. Redington led both local and international business development efforts at the global law firm of K&L Gates. Today, she helps connect The Miles Foundation to its mission by spearheading strategic partnerships that amplify community impact, communicating with key stakeholders about industry trends and foundation news, and aligning Foundation practices with its long-term vision for success. Ms. Redington graduated cum laude from Vanderbilt University with a B.A. in Communications and Psychology. She lives in Dallas, Texas with her husband, Zach, and daughter, Emma Joy.

Grace Reef
Committee for Economic Development
Outreach Consultant

Grace Reef is the founder of the Early Learning Policy Group, LLC. A veteran political and policy strategist, Grace worked for 17 years in the U.S. Senate as a senior policy advisor on issues related to families with children for Senators George Mitchell, Tom Daschle, and Chris Dodd. Grace’s experience ranges from childcare, Head Start, and state pre-K to welfare reform and family economic stability. She has worked with a number of state coalitions in partnership with the Alliance for Early Success seeking to strengthen access to quality early learning settings. As an outreach consultant to the Committee for Economic Development (CED), Grace specializes in working with business leaders and early childhood policy to strengthen the quality of early learning settings (childcare, Head Start, and state Pre-K).

Judith Reidt-Parker
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Director, National Policy

As Director of the Ounce National Policy Team, Judy provides leadership for the consultation provided to a 23 state network and represents the Ounce in collaborative relationships with national partners. She has been in the early childhood field for over 30 years with experience in direct service, advocacy, and philanthropy.
Cynthia Rice
Advocates for Children of NJ
Senior Policy Analyst

Cynthia 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, childcare and linking preschool to the early elementary years. Ms. Rice has also 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, where she prosecuted juvenile offense and domestic violence cases.

Alyson Richards
Let’s Grow Kids
CEO

Richards is the CEO of Let’s Grow Kids, a philanthropic organization promoting access to affordable, high-quality early care and learning in Vermont by 2025. Prior to this role, Richards served as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin where she led several efforts to support early childhood education, including winning competitive federal grants totaling $70 million and supporting the passage of universal Pre-K. For her leadership, Richards was selected as a 2013 Toll Fellow by the Council of State Governments and as the 2014 Vermont Champion for Education by the New England Secondary School Consortium. She was recently honored by Save the Children as a Changemaker for Children. Richards also served on the 2008 Obama Campaign and graduated with honors from Brown. Richards is a Trustee of the University of Vermont Medical Center and the VT Council on Rural Development and lives in Montpelier with her husband, James, and twin babies Beau and Wesley.

Sarah Rittling
First Five Years Fund
Executive Director

Jessica Roach
Children’s Alliance
Early Learning Policy Specialist

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 leads the organization’s policy development on issues related to the early learning workforce, including compensation, credentialing, and professional development. Jessica worked for more than 15 years in Washington, DC with nonprofits, the faith community and in the U.S. Congress, organizing and advocating for greater opportunity and economic security for those living at the margins of our economy. She 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 years of teaching in a preschool classroom.
Julie Rogers is Director of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center. She has over 30 years’ experience in the early childhood field. Her previous work includes policy/program analyst, professional development specialist, parent educator and preschool teacher. She holds an M.S. in Family Studies. She has worked extensively with broad, multi-disciplinary stakeholder groups, helping to build professional development systems. Her work over the past 19 years with the Center has included managing the Center’s quality assurance system, directing special projects, coordinating all aspects of the T.E.A.C.H. Annual National Professional Development Symposium, staffing the T.E.A.C.H. National Advisory Committee, and developing Center materials including the annual report, a bi-annual national newsletter, project specific newsletters, and funder reports.

Angela focuses on projects in the arena of early childhood health and family support, including expanding voluntary home visiting programs, promoting developmental screenings and early intervention, and the development of a comprehensive statewide prenatal to three policy agenda. Before joining Children Now she held positions within various early childhood systems and policy efforts in Colorado. She 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 impact initiatives related to juvenile delinquency prevention, early childhood education quality, and mental health systems.

Sue Russell is the Executive Director of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center, which helps states implement effective workforce strategies to address the education, compensation, and retention of their early care and education workforce. She has 48 years of experience in the early childhood profession, most recently as the President of the Child Care Services Association. Areas of expertise include development of successful state and national workforce and QRIS initiatives, effective policies and systems to improve access to high quality programs for all children and to strengthen and support the early childhood workforce, early childhood professional development, workforce compensation and higher education systems, and state advocacy for better public policies, systems and investments for young children and their teachers.
Jason Sabo
Frontera Strategy
Founder

Jason Sabo is the Founder of Frontera Strategy, an Austin-based public affairs firm serving nonprofits and philanthropists. Jason has led and assisted efforts to pass legislation and secure appropriations at state capitol across the country for more than twenty years. Mr. Sabo works with advocates, activists, foundations, and others interested in improving state policies for children and families. Jason specializes in political strategy, lobbying, and campaign and candidate engagement. Jason likes to kayak, ride his bike, and hide out on the Llano River in a converted shipping container cabin.

Alicia Sanderfield
Alliance for Early Success
Administrative Assistant

Alicia Sanderfield is an Administrative Assistant for the Alliance for Early Success. Prior to joining The Alliance, Alicia was an executive assistant. Alicia graduated from the University of Illinois. Alicia a mother of two and a dedicated Marine Corps Spouse who currently resides in Quantico, VA.

Ruth Schmidt
Wisconsin Early Childhood Association
Executive Director

Ruth Schmidt, Executive Director, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA), leads the state’s largest membership organization for early childhood educators and state affiliate of NAEYC. A leading voice on the state level for strengthening the childcare workforce through policy and systems improvements, she serves on Congressman Mark Pocan’s K-12 and Early Childhood Education Advisory Group. Ruth is a founding member of the Wisconsin Early Learning Coalition, leads the state’s Infant and Toddler Policy Project, and is co-chair of Wisconsin Partners. She is the recipient of the 2019 Community Change-Maker Award by Community Shares of Wisconsin. Ms. Schmidt earned her bachelor’s degree from Grinnell College.

Brian Schmidt
Kids Win Missouri
Executive Director

Brian is responsible for executing Kids Win Missouri’s strategic plan and overseeing the organization’s development. He started his career in public policy as the Executive Director of the Missouri General Assembly’s Joint Committee on Tax Policy where he assisted legislators in analyzing and crafting tax and economic development policies. After his work with the Missouri legislature, Brian started Missouri Wonk, a public policy analysis consulting firm whose work tackled diverse projects with subjects including tax policy and incentives, healthcare, education, transportation, housing, crime, and neighborhood revitalization.
Katie Schoenhoff
United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
Director of Programs

Katie Schoenhoff is the Director of Programs for United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, health philanthropy located in Hutchinson, Kansas, dedicated to improving the health of Kansas. Schoenhoff’s work predominantly consists of grant consideration, evaluation, and administration of the Fund’s strategic initiatives in early childhood development, access to care, and Healthy Congregations. Prior to joining the Fund, Schoenhoff worked at the Reno County Health Department in health education and promotion. First in the role of health educator and later as Health Education and Promotion Coordinator. Through her work with the county, she served on several community health and social service coalitions and committees as well as managed a number of grant initiatives for the health department. Katie Schoenhoff lives with her husband, Mason, and their daughter, Josslyn, in Halstead, Kansas. Katie is a graduate of Sterling College.

Karen Schulman
National Women’s Law Center
Child Care and Early Learning Research Director

Karen Schulman 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 and has co-authored several other NWLC reports, including Set Up To Fail: When Low-Wage Work Jeopardizes Parents’ and Children’s Success; A Center Piece of the Child Care Puzzle: Providing State Prekindergarten in Child Care Centers; and A Count for Quality: Child Care Center Directors on Rating and Improvement Systems.

Rachel Schumacher
R. Schumacher Consulting
Consultant

Rachel Schumacher is an independent consultant specializing in early childhood policy, and the former Director of the Office of Child Care in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from 2014-2017. She is a highly regarded expert on child and family policy at the federal, state, and local levels. In the private sector, Rachel helped the JB and MK Pritzker Family Foundation launch an ambitious national effort to ensure children are on track for school readiness by age three. Prior to federal service, Rachel spent a decade at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), where she led policy research and provided technical assistance to policymakers on topics including infant and toddler childcare and Early Head Start policies, state early childhood systems and standards, and federal law and regulation for the Child Care and Development Fund and Head Start/Early Head Start. She lives in Washington, D.C. with her husband and two sons.
Kenneth Shackelford has 16 years in the early childhood sector of which eight of those years were as an executive director for a NAEYC accredited hospital based child care center that provided quality care for 400 children daily. Before joining United Way of Salt Lake in May of 2019 as the Senior Director of Network Partnerships, he moved to Salt Lake from Chicago to project manage the opening of three corporate based childcare centers for Goldman Sachs, Overstock.com & doTERRA International, Inc. Kenneth has a Masters in Early Childhood Administration and an Ed.S in Educational Leadership both from National Louis University.

Sheila Smith has extensive knowledge about policies that can benefit low-income children and the use of data and research in advocacy. Her team at NCCP partners with states to strengthen policies in the areas of infant-early childhood mental health, parent/family engagement, and two-generation programs for families in deep poverty. Sheila also leads work at NCCP to track state policies that affect young children in the areas of early care and education, health, and family support/economic well being, and to produce state-specific data on risks to children’s development.

Libbie Sonnier-Netto, Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children where she leverages her nearly 20-year career supporting young children and their families. Recognized for her tenacity and deep commitment to children, Libbie has led teams of individuals in system-wide initiatives for the betterment of children, families, caregivers, and practitioners. She has served as a state director of two federal programs managing multi-million-dollar budgets as well as developing and implementing pilot programs for children birth to age five in four states across multiple agencies and community partners to improve the efficiency and efficacy of direct services for children and their families. Libbie’s experiences conducting longitudinal and experimental research allow her to translate scientific findings into meaningful and practical policy implications that support better life outcomes for children.
Mandy Sorge
National Governors Association
Senior Policy Analyst, Early Care and Education

Mandy Sorge works on early care and education issues from birth through third grade. Mandy’s work at NGA has focused on improving policies around the ECE Workforce, integrating and aligning prenatal to age three policies, and embedding social-emotional learning into classrooms. Prior to joining NGA, she worked in training and technical assistance for the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships grants. She began her career as an early childhood educator working in Early Head Start and child care classrooms in both North Carolina and Washington, D.C. Mandy holds a master’s degree in Education Policy from the George Washington University and a bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is currently an Ed.D. candidate with the Peabody School of Education at Vanderbilt University.

Cyndi Soter O’Neil
ChildTrust Foundation
Senior Policy Advisor

Cyndi Soter O’Neil serves as a senior policy advisor for ChildTrust Foundation, which invests in early childhood education efforts for under-resourced families in NC. She brings experience from more than two decades of work in public education in NC, starting as a high school English and journalism teacher. Following graduate school, Cyndi worked in a range of communications, research and community engagement roles at WakeEd Partnership, Guilford Education Alliance and NC New Schools. Cyndi holds a BA in education (NC Teaching Fellow) and an MA in journalism and mass communication (Roy H. Park Fellow) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She also earned a postgraduate diploma in magazine studies from Cardiff University in Wales, UK (Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar). She currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Public School Forum and The Kilgoris Project. She is also actively involved in school-level PTA, having served as communications chair, VP and president.

Helene Stebbins
Alliance for Early Success
Deputy Director

Helene began her work with the Alliance for Early Success at its inception in 2005 as a grantee and now serves as the deputy director. She is responsible for leading the health policy strategy and also manages a portfolio of investments focused on financing, research, and communications.
Deborah Stein
Partnership For America's Children
Network Director

Deborah Stein, who became the first Network Director for the Partnership for America's Children in 2014, has more than 30 years of experience in policy analysis and advocacy on behalf of vulnerable children and their families. She also co-leads Count All Kids, the initiative to count all young children in the 2020 Census. Before she came to the Partnership as its first leader, she spent eight years at The Hatcher Group, a public affairs and communications firm, where she served as Vice-President of Public Policy. Debbie also spent nine years with Voices for America’s Children, the predecessor organization to the Partnership. Debbie previously worked for the Food Research and Action Center and as a consultant for several national legal services organizations. She spent six years at Brooklyn Legal Services, where she represented indigent clients in housing matters and in obtaining public assistance. She was co-president of the New York City Legal Services union local.

Becca Steinhoff
Wyoming Kids First
Executive Director

Becca has been the Executive Director of Wyoming Kids First since 2010. She provides thoughtful, strategic leadership for the organization to communicate a comprehensive vision for early childhood work that develops, connects and/or extends community systems for the benefit of young children. Becca appreciates the challenges presented by her role that has concurrent responsibilities at both the state and local levels and looks forward to facilitating processes that strengthen the dynamic connections between different layers of work for kids and families. Becca received a bachelor’s degree in Agriculture Business and Environment and Natural Resources from the University of Wyoming, and a Master of Public Administration degree from The George Washington University. Becca looks forward to spending time with her husband, Nat, daughter, Lydia, and family, and friends. She delights in time spent outdoors or in the kitchen and loves to adventure in both places.

Craig Stevenson
Kids Win Missouri
Director of Policy & Advocacy

Craig serves as the Director of Policy and Advocacy for Kids Win Missouri where he helps advance policies. Prior to joining the Kids Win Missouri team, Craig led the Mozambique initiative of the United Methodist Church, which helped raise funds for critical community needs in Mozambique, Africa. From 2010 to 2015, he worked on the Governmental Relations team at the University of Missouri. Craig is active in his community, serving on the board of directors for the Hallsville School District. Additionally, he and his wife, Brittnay, are licensed foster and have adopted their son, Sebastian. Craig was appointed in December 2018 by Missouri Governor Mike Parson to serve on the Missouri State Foster Care And Adoption Board. Lastly, Craig is in the ordination process in the United Methodist Church as a deacon.
Sherri Killins Stewart, Ed. D, is the Director of State Systems Alignment and Integration for the BUILD Initiative and an independent consultant. Within the BUILD Initiative, she is responsible for working directly with state leaders to advance early childhood systems efforts in health, early learning and family support. She is leading work to define and create intentional practice regarding equity in early childhood system practice, policy, and leadership within the work of the BUILD Initiative. Her equity work includes co-leading a fellowship of early childhood leaders to advance racial equity. Dr. Killins Stewart has worked at multiple levels and in a variety of states and/or communities to create targeted action to benefit young children and their families. Her former positions include Commissioner of Early Education and Care for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Vice President of Human Development and Operations at the Annie E. Casey Foundation and CEO of Empower New Haven.

Edward Stierli
Save the Children Action Network
Director, State Campaigns

Ed Stierli is the State Campaigns Director for SCAN, responsible for managing campaigns in targeted states to mobilize Americans to ensure that every child in the U.S. has access to high-quality early childhood education and that children around the world survive and thrive. Prior to SCAN, he spent five years at the National Parks Conservation Association, where he led the National Park Service Centennial campaign and efforts supporting policies that connect kids with the outdoors. Previous work includes coordinating federal, state, and local campaign efforts for the Alliance for Climate Protection and National Association for the Education of Young Children, as well as teaching middle school English in New Orleans. Ed has a B.S. in History and Political Science from Florida State University and a Master’s in Public Policy from George Mason University.

Louise Stoney
Opportunities Exchange
Co-Founder

Louise Stoney is an independent consultant specializing in early care and education finance and policy. She co-founded the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance and, more recently, provides strategic leadership to the national Shared Services movement through her work with Opportunities Exchange, a non-profit consulting firm focused on transforming the business of early care and education to improve outcomes for children. Louise has worked with state and local governments, foundations, national policy organizations, early care, and education (ECE) providers, industry intermediaries and child advocacy groups in more than 40 states and cities. Public and private organizations have sought Louise’s expertise to craft new financing strategies and policy options, model costs, challenge assumptions and explore innovative solutions.
**Trevor Storrs**  
Alaska Children’s Trust  
President/CEO

Trevor Storrs has an extensive background working in partnership with nonprofits for over twenty years. Currently, he is the President & CEO of the Alaska Children’s Trust (ACT). ACT is the Alaska statewide lead organization focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect. ACT is actively engaged in effecting public policy within political, economic and social systems and institutions that help build systems dedicated to ensuring the safety of children. With Trevor’s leadership, ACT has been inspiring the development of new social norms and ideas in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. A key strategy implemented was the development of the Alaska Resilience Initiative. The Initiative formed to advance the dialogue in Alaska on brain architecture, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)/trauma, and how communities can prevent ACEs/trauma and build resilience.

**Samir Tanna**  
Illinois Action for Children  
Director of Public Policy and Community Engagement

Samir Tanna is the Director of Public Policy and Community Engagement for Illinois Action for Children concentrating on state and federal policy affecting accessible, affordable, high quality child care and early learning programs. Prior to joining Illinois Action for Children, Samir worked as a Policy Associate at the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. There he worked on state and federal policy involving an employer based asset development pilot for adult learners. Samir received his B.A in Economics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and his MBA from Loyola University.

**Ken Taylor**  
Kids Forward  
Executive Director

Ken is the Executive Director of Kids Forward, a research, engagement and advocacy organization with a mission to inspire action and promote access to opportunity for every kid, every family and every community in Wisconsin. Its vision is of a state where every child thrives, notably children of color and those furthest from opportunity. Kids Forward Projects include the Wisconsin Budget Project, Kids Count, and Race to Equity. Issue Areas of focus include early care and education, health, juvenile, and child welfare. Ken’s previous positions include: Policy Advisor in the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families; Director at Dartington-I, an international organization focused on improving outcomes for children in need; Special Assistant to the Director of the Illinois Department of Children and Families; and Lieutenant U.S. Navy. Ken has a bachelor’s degree in Political Science from Duke University and a master’s degree in Public Policy from the University of Chicago.
Mary Beth Testa
MBST Solutions
Consultant

Mary Beth Testa facilitates the Rural Early Childhood Learning Collaborative for the Alliance for Early Success, connecting six states to share challenges and develop solutions for high quality child care in rural settings. Mary Beth brings nearly 20 years of experience in advocacy and policy development. Mary Beth’s expertise is in connecting policy and practice, with depth of knowledge in child care regulations and legislation. One area of focus is on family child care, and the way child care policy is applied and leveraged in states to support family child care. Mary Beth has led advocacy campaigns across a variety of states and at the federal level, representing and building coalitions with child care providers, child care resource and referral agencies, home visiting programs, and the Children’s Defense Fund. Mary Beth graduated from American University in Washington, DC and lives in Falls Church, Virginia.

Anna Thomas
Voices for Utah Children
Senior Policy Analyst

As a policy analyst, Anna Thomas works on issues related to early childhood success and juvenile justice reform. Before joining Voices for Utah Children, she spent nearly a decade with the ACLU of Utah, serving in a variety of roles, from development and media relations to criminal justice reform advocacy and community outreach. Before moving back to Utah in 2017, Anna handled development and communications for Front Range Earth Force, a service-learning non-profit partnered with public school teachers in Denver, Colo. She also worked for a grassroots environmental justice non-profit in Northeast Denver and served as an aide to U.S. Representative Diana DeGette of Colorado’s First Congressional District. Anna has a BA in Journalism from the University of Denver, and an MPA from the University of Utah.

Becky Veak
First Five Nebraska
Director

Becky is the Director of First Five Nebraska, a policy and communications organization that works with state and private partners in shaping effective early childhood policies based on best practices. Prior to this work, Becky 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.

Bharti Wahi
Children’s Defense Fund Minnesota
Executive Director

Bharti Wahi has held the position of Executive Director of Children’s Defense Fund - Minnesota for three years and brings more than 21 years of experience working within the nonprofit field and 15 years early childhood and k-12 education. She sits on numerous task forces including The Minnesota Early Childhood System Reform, the Preschool Development Grant Advisory Group and Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan’s One Minnesota Transition Advisory Board. She has held positions in the early childhood center, philanthropy, and public policy and advocacy.
Christina Walker
Clayton Early Learning
Director, Policy and Advocacy

Christina Walker is the Director of Policy and Advocacy at Clayton Early Learning. In this role, she leads the public policy efforts of Clayton, including legislative and regulatory advocacy, policy analysis, research, and content expertise. Christina also co-convenes the Raise Colorado Coalition with partners at the Colorado Children’s Campaign and a steering committee of diverse stakeholders working to improve public policies that impact pregnant people, infants, and toddlers. Previously, Ms. Walker was a policy analyst with the Center for Law and Social Policy. She has expertise in home visiting, Head Start, and state and federal child care and early education policies and systems. She also previously worked with Pew Charitable Trusts’ Home Visiting Campaign and the District of Columbia Public School’s Office of Early Childhood Education. Christina has a B.A. in Political Science from Baldwin-Wallace College and a Master of Public Administration from Cornell University.

Margie Wallen
Ounce of Prevention Fund
VP, National Policy

Margie Wallen has played numerous roles in advocating for public policies and investments that promote the healthy development of young children. In her current role, Margie oversees the vision and direction of the Ounce national policy team and serves as a primary strategist for the Ounce in supporting organizations and leaders in states outside of Illinois to advance policies and investments that benefit young children and families in under-resourced communities. Margie has more than 30 years of experience in public policy and has consulted on a variety of state initiatives to enhance access to high-quality early care and education, including designing a comprehensive early childhood professional development system and the blueprint for the Preschool for All program in Illinois. Through these efforts, Margie has contributed to policy wins that provided new funding and supports to state early childhood systems to sustain and continually improve high-quality programs.

Ginger Ward
Southwest Human Development
CEO

Ginger Ward is the founder and chief executive officer of Arizona’s largest nonprofit dedicated to early childhood development, with more than 900 employees serving 135,000 young children and their families each year. Ms. Ward has made a significant contribution to the early childhood field in Arizona by ensuring that the latest best practices and research are used to create programs and to educate parents, professionals, and policy makers about the importance of children’s earliest years to later development. She sits on a variety of boards and committees charged with forming policy on and improving services for children and families.
Albert Wat
Alliance for Early Success
Senior Policy Director

Albert is a Senior Policy Director at the Alliance for Early Success, where he supports the organization’s strategy and goals for early education, including increasing access to high-quality pre-k, improving the early learning workforce, and enhancing alignment with K-12 policies. Before joining the Alliance, Albert was a Senior Policy Analyst in the Education Division of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, where he helped governors’ staff and advisors improve their early care and education policies, from early childhood through third grade. Before NGA, Albert was the Research Manager at Pre-K Now, an advocacy campaign at the Pew Center on the States. Albert has served on two National Academies committees: Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation and Vibrant and Healthy Kids: Aligning Science, Practice, and Policy to Advance Health Equity. He also serves on the board of the Council for Professional Recognition.

Maria Weeg
Hilltop Public Solutions
Partner

A Partner in Hilltop Public Solutions’ Idaho office, Maria has been winning campaigns and driving issue advocacy since she was a kid spending Saturday afternoons knocking on doors or putting up yard signs with her dad. Maria is known for developing strategic and targeted advocacy programs, building strong grassroots coalitions and finding creative solutions for challenging campaigns and issues. Most recently, she ran the campaign designating America’s next national park in northern Maine and served as the general consultant on Idaho’s winning Medicaid expansion campaign. Hilltop’s Idaho office works with a variety of clients, focusing on using innovative communications and campaign techniques to influence decision makers and building data-driven, highly focused, disciplined campaigns. Maria was raised in the desert landscape of southern Idaho and when she’s not working, you’ll most likely find her experimenting in the kitchen with her husband, Jeremy.

Laura Weeldreyer
Maryland Family Network
Executive Director

Laura Weeldreyer is the Executive Director for the Maryland Family Network, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to family support and early childhood issues. She was most recently the Chief Program Officer for the Everyone Graduates Center at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education. Previously Laura worked nationally on a variety of education reform projects with school systems, state departments of education, and non-profit organizations, as a senior consultant for a public sector management consulting firm. Laura served as a Senior Fellow with the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy and as a member of the Maryland State Board of Education. Laura worked in the central office of the Baltimore City Public School System for eleven years. During her time with City Schools, she held several positions, including Deputy Chief of Staff and oversaw major systemic reform initiatives.
Michael Weinberg
Thornburg Foundation
Policy Officer

Michael Weinberg works to increase the number of children ready for kindergarten in New Mexico. Previously, as the program evaluation manager for New Mexico’s Legislative Finance Committee, Michael identified opportunities to improve outcomes across the birth to college education continuum. Michael spent the first fourteen years of his career in the education trenches, as a teacher, literacy coach, and principal of a PreK-8 school.

GG Weisenfeld
National Institute for Early Education Research
Assistant Research Professor

GG Weisenfeld is an Assistant Research Professor at the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University, Graduate School of Education. Her current work includes conducting national scans of pre-K policies at the state and city level, researching state efforts that support the implementation of high-quality preschools, contributing to the research and production of NIEER’s annual State of Preschool Yearbook, and offering technical assistance for state and city leaders on designing and enhancing pre-K efforts. Dr. Weisenfeld is able to incorporate her vast early childhood education work experience in understanding systems that support young children at the state, local, and program levels. She previously held the position of Hawaii’s Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning in the Office of the Governor, worked on state level birth to grade three alignments as the P-3 Director of Early Learning for Hawaii P-20, was a professor at CUNY.

Callan Wells
Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students
Health Policy Manager

An Atlanta native with extensive experience in the Georgia health policy advocacy community, Callan is GEEARS’ Health Policy Manager. She is passionate about ensuring equal access to affordable, consistent, quality healthcare for all Georgians, especially children. She lives in East Atlanta with her husband, Nick, and her two cats, Claude and Eloise.

Renee Wessels
Buffett Early Childhood Institute
Associate Executive Director

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.
**Matt Weyer**
Education Commission of the States
Senior Policy Analyst

As a senior policy analyst, Matt focuses on early learning issues. Prior to joining the Education Commission of the States, Matt worked for over four years covering early learning issues for the National Conference of State Legislatures, earned his doctorate in educational leadership and policy studies from the University of Denver and was a kindergarten teacher in a bilingual classroom for Denver Public Schools. When Matt is not working, he can be found snowboarding or trail running in beautiful Colorado.

**Wesley Whistle**
New America
Senior Advisor for Policy & Strategy

Wesley Whistle is a senior advisor for policy and strategy with the Education Policy program. As a member of the higher education team, he researches and analyzes policy as well as implements advocacy strategies to create a more equitable and accountable system of higher education. Prior to joining New America, Whistle was an education policy advisor at Third Way. He was previously a higher education administrator at colleges and universities in Kentucky, working on accreditation, federal and state reporting, and assessment. Outside of education, he also worked in the Kentucky state government with the General Assembly, the state auditor, and the Cabinet for Economic Development. Whistle earned his master’s in public administration, with a concentration in education policy, from the University of Kentucky and his bachelor’s degree in political science from Kentucky Wesleyan College. His experience as a Pell Grant recipient and first-generation college graduate informs his work everyday.

**Catherine White**
National Women’s Law Center
Director, Child Care and Early Learning

Catherine White joined the National Women’s Law Center in February as the Director of Child Care and Early Learning where she oversees the Center’s work to expand access to high-quality, affordable childcare and early learning. In this work, she leads the federal Child Care and Early Learning Coalition, provides support to state advocates, and advocates for increased investments and policy improvements. Prior to joining NWLC, Catherine worked at the White House Office of Management and Budget, where she developed the Federal budget for childcare and early learning programs, provided technical assistance on legislation, and crafted other policy changes to ensure that programs meet the needs of low-income women and children. She previously worked at the U.S. Department of Labor, where she focused on strategies to enforce — and policies to strengthen — federal labor laws. Outside of work, Catherine loves to spend her time exploring DC’s different neighborhoods on foot.
Kara Williams is Director of Strategic Initiatives at the Allyn Family Foundation. She has over 20 years’ experience designing and directing large, complex community health projects. Previously, Kara 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. She has also directed clinical service delivery, health promotion and policy advocacy programs at the Onondaga County Health Department, and managed community-based participatory research at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine’s Division of Community Pediatrics. In addition, she has overseen health journalism programs, trained law students in mediation and creative problem solving, and provided technical assistance to nonprofits in program design and evaluation, and strategic planning.

Donna L. Wilson is the Program Director for Children and Families at the National Conference of State Legislatures who oversees the early care and education and child welfare programs. Ms. Wilson has more than 26 years of progressive experience in human services, which includes directing multi-faceted and complex projects. Ms. Wilson has extensive experience in protective services throughout the lifespan, ranging from birth to end of life. Her areas of expertise include: data informed decision making; data collection and analysis; diversity, equity, inclusion; cultural competence; cultural responsiveness; clinical assessment and evaluation; child abuse prevention; safety, risk and family assessment; child protection therapy; adult protective services; and organizational and workforce development. Ms. Wilson is a Doctoral Candidate in the Education and Human Development program at the University of Colorado Denver.

John is Vice President at Kansas Action for Children. His entire career has been focused on improving the health and wellbeing of children in Kansas and around the country, starting first with the William J. Clinton Foundation and then with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. John is a former Kansas state representative. During his time in office, he served as the Ranking Member on the Health & Human Services, Ranking Member on the Children & Seniors Committee, and Policy Chair for the House Democratic Caucus. John worked to redefine the culture of the Legislature to make it more open and collaborative. He is a 2006 graduate of the University of Kansas, where he studied graphic design and branding. The best parts of his day are when he’s spending time with his wife, Jami, and their two sons, Parker and Henry.
Johnny Wilson
Fathers New Mexico
Executive Director

Johnny was born in Tacoma Washington and graduated from Western Washington University. He began working with children and families in 1991. Johnny has worked with homeless youth as well as youth in residential treatment and transition programs for young adults. After becoming a father he began a twelve year stint in sexual health education, program management and policy analysis and advocacy. He has enjoyed stints as a bike messenger and in home improvement as well program and agency management. In November of 2014 he began working with Fathers New Mexico and took over the Executive Director role in 2015.

Lisa Wiltshire
Tennesseans for Quality Early Education
Policy Director

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.

Clay Wirestone
Kansas Action for Children
Communications Director

Clay Wirestone joined Kansas Action for Children in 2017, crafting messages for KAC and its multiple initiatives to improve the lives of kids. He earlier held editing, reporting, and design positions at the Topeka Capital-Journal, Concord (N.H.) Monitor, Tampa Tribune, and Philadelphia Inquirer. Clay has written for PolitiFact, Mental Floss, and the History Channel, and his work has appeared at cnn.com and HuffPost. A University of Kansas graduate, he has returned to Lawrence with his mystery novelist husband and their 8-year-old son.
Stephen Woerner
VOICES for Alabama’s Children
Executive Director

Stephen Woerner has served as the Executive Director for VOICES for Alabama’s Children since September 2018. Prior to that, he has worked extensively within the non-profit and youth development sector. His work has included serving as a non-profit consultant for a large state university, serving as executive director for a youth leadership and diversity education program, and as program director at several youth special needs programs.

Rebecca Woitkowski
New Futures
Early Childhood Policy Coordinator

Rebecca serves as the Early Childhood Policy Coordinator for New Futures Kids Count. She works to coordinate and lead early childhood policy and advocacy efforts in New Hampshire. Prior to entering into this role, Rebecca worked in private practice focusing on civil litigation and family law. Her experience working directly with clients lead her to seek out policy work to help improve the lives of New Hampshire families on a greater scale. Rebecca received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Southern New Hampshire University in 2008 and her Juris Doctor from the University of New Hampshire School of Law in 2011. As a life-long resident, Rebecca has a deep love for New Hampshire and is eager for the opportunity to use her legal skills to help advance policy which will positively impact her home state. In her free time, Rebecca can be found exploring the White Mountains with her family and two dogs.

Lindsay Yost
Adirondack Foundation
Program Director

As the Program Director at Adirondack Foundation, Lindsay focuses her time on strengthening the Foundation’s Birth to Three Alliance and local Adirondack nonprofits, while also helping generous donors align their giving with the causes they care most about. Lindsay holds a Master’s degree in Educational Psychology from the University of Colorado Denver and a Bachelor’s in Sociology from Bates College and brings her strong background in experiential outdoor education and leadership development, coupled with a deep commitment to the Adirondack Region, to the Foundation. Previously, Lindsay worked for the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and has experience in early childhood development as an elementary classroom teacher.
**Amy Zaagman**  
Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health  
Executive Director

Since 2009 Amy has led MCMCH, an organization of diverse partners representing hospital systems, statewide organizations, local public health advocates and individuals with an interest in the advancement of maternal and child health. She was employed for over 13 years in the Michigan Legislature serving eight years as Chief of Staff to the Majority Floor Leader and Chair of the Senate Health Policy Committee. After leaving the Legislature, Amy was Associate Director of the Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards and was primarily responsible for their advocacy and public policy efforts.

**Cecilia Zalkind**  
Advocates for Children of NJ  
President & CEO

Ceil leads ACNJ’s advocacy efforts to ensure that all children in NJ have the opportunity to grow up safe, healthy and educated. Her advocacy has helped secure measurable gains for children in many areas of child well-being, including early education, health, nutrition, child welfare, and juvenile justice. Ceil argued before the NJ Supreme Court on preschool standards in Abbott v. Burke, the landmark educational equity case. She is currently heading ACNJ’s birth to 3 campaign, Right from the Start NJ.

**Deborah Zysman**  
Hawaii Children’s Action Network  
Executive Director

Deborah Zysman is Executive Director of Hawaii Children’s Action Network (HCAN), the state’s only non-profit committed solely to advocating for children. HCAN leads movements through analysis, education, advocacy and coalition building, so all children in Hawaii are safe, healthy and ready to learn. She and her team are often spotted wearing HCAN’s signature superhero capes at events at the Capitol. Under her direction, HCAN coordinated the campaign to advocate for preschool for all four year olds in Hawaii and secured more than $22M to expand the State’s preschool programs. Currently, HCAN’s movements include better dental care for children, access to quality childcare/preschool for all families and paid family leave for working households. Ms. Zysman has a Masters in Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In her spare time, she enjoys yoga and going to the beach with her long-time partner, and their two children.