Enhancing Child Well-Being with Cash Assistance: Lessons from the Child Tax Credit and Next Steps for States

Speaker Biographies

Dolores Acevedo-Garcia is Samuel F. and Rose B. Gingold Professor of Human Development and Social Policy, and Director of the Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University. Her research focuses on the social determinants (e.g., residential segregation, neighborhood inequality, immigrant integration) of racial and ethnic inequities in health; the role of social policies (e.g., housing policies, anti-poverty policies, immigrant policies) in reducing those inequities; and the health and wellbeing of children with special needs. She is Project Director for diversitydatakids.org, a comprehensive research program and indicator database on racial and ethnic equity in child wellbeing and opportunity across multiple sectors (e.g., education, health, housing and neighborhoods) and geographies, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. In 2017-2019, she was a member of the congressionally-mandated National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine Committee on Building an Agenda to Reduce the Number of Children in Poverty by Half in 10 Years that produced the 2019 landmark report A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty. She continues to research policy changes that can help reduce racial and ethnic inequities in child poverty. For example, the project Including Children of Immigrants in the Post-Pandemic Economic Recovery Efforts and Safety Net—a collaboration with UnidosUS, initially funded by the W.T. Grant and Spencer Foundations—examines how to correct exclusions that limit access to social programs for children in immigrant families.

Gregory Acs is vice president for income and benefits policy at the Urban Institute, where his research focuses on social insurance, social welfare, and the compensation of workers. Previously, he served as unit chief for Labor and Income Security in the Congressional Budget Office’s Health and Human Resources Division and as vice president of the Association for Policy Analysis and Management. His recent work examines economic and social mobility and economic security with a focus on low-income working families. In the past, Acs has studied the employment patterns of young women to determine the paths women take to obtain jobs paying enough to leave them better off working than on welfare. He has also examined the well-being of children across living arrangements, the ways welfare policies influence family composition, the status of families leaving welfare, and how policies affect the incentives families face as they move from welfare to work. Acs has a PhD in economics and social work from the University of Michigan.

Alissa Anderson, Senior Policy Fellow, conducts research to support policies that will create a more equitable economy where all Californians share in the state’s prosperity. Much of her work focuses on refundable income tax credits as tools for boosting economic security. She has provided policy recommendations and analytical support to a coalition of advocates working to strengthen and expand California’s Earned Income Tax Credit (the CalEITC) since the credit’s creation in 2015. Before joining the Budget Center in 2005, Alissa was a research associate in the Center on Education Data and Policy at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. and taught English as a second language at an adult school. She earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Bryn Mawr College and a master’s degree in urban planning from the University of California, Los Angeles. While in graduate school she conducted research on local living wage policies for the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE).

Ashley Burnside is a Senior Policy Analyst with the Income and Work Supports team at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). She specializes in refundable tax credits, including the Child Tax Credit, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance program, access to food benefits, and she
also focuses on disability policy issues. She has been quoted and published in numerous media outlets including the New York Times, the Washington Post, CNN, Bloomberg, CNBC, Marketplace with NPR, and CBS. Prior to joining CLASP, Ashley was a Research Assistant at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities where she focused on TANF. Ashley also was a Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow with the Congressional Hunger Center. As a Hunger Fellow, she worked at a local food pantry in Denver, Colorado where she registered food pantry clients to vote and at RESULTS in Washington, D.C. where she researched refundable tax credits and the racial wealth gap. Ashley received her bachelor of arts degree in social theory and practice from the University of Michigan and wrote an honors thesis on the LGBTQ rights movement.

**Megan Curran** is the Director of Policy at the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University. Her research focuses on strategies for child poverty reduction, including income supports, poverty targets, and cross-national learning— including how child allowance programs in other wealthy nations might inform a permanent child allowance in the US. She and her Columbia colleagues have had a particular focus in recent years on evaluating the impact of the 2021 Child Tax Credit expansion on poverty and a range of family well-being indicators and identifying implications for long-term policy change in this area. She has worked in the US House of Representatives and the Scottish Parliament and as a policy analyst and researcher on child and family poverty in national and local policy organizations and universities in the US, UK, and Ireland. She holds a PhD in Social Policy from University College Dublin, Ireland.

**Rosa DeLauro** is the Congresswoman from Connecticut’s Third Congressional District, which stretches from the Long Island Sound and New Haven, to the Naugatuck Valley and Waterbury. Rosa serves as Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee and sits on the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, and she is the Ranking Member of the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, where she oversees our nation’s investments in education, health, and employment.

**Rebecca Firestone** has been working at the intersection of data, evidence and policy impact for over 20 years. She is an applied social scientist passionate about communicating and translating high-quality evidence in ways that decision makers can quickly understand to take action. After a career spanning three continents, Firestone now serves as Executive Director of OpenSky Policy Institute, where she leads a team focused on policy development that promotes shared prosperity and opportunity for all Nebraskans. Before joining OpenSky, Firestone led research and evaluation initiatives in the US, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia at the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, and she served in leadership roles with Population Services International and the Harvard Global Equity Initiative. Firestone holds a Doctor of Science in Health and Social Policy from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; MPH from the University of Washington; and BA in Anthropology and Asian Studies from Vassar College.

**Samsher (Sam) Singh Gill** is the third president and CEO of the Doris Duke Foundation (DDF), a New York-headquartered, national philanthropic organization that operates five national grantmaking programs—in the performing arts, the environment, medical research, child and family well-being, and mutual understanding between communities—as well as Duke Farms and Shangri La, two centers that serve the public directly. Prior to joining DDF in April 2021, Gill was senior vice president and chief program officer at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, where he oversaw more than $100 million in annual grantmaking across the foundation’s programs, in addition to managing Knight’s research and assessment portfolio and its grants administration function. Previously, he also served as vice president of Friedman Consulting, LLC. Gill also served on the board of the Philip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science in Miami and on the Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship, a project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He attended the University of Chicago and the University of Oxford, where he was a
Rhodes Scholar. A native of Minnesota, Gill lives in Brooklyn, N.Y., with his wife, Maira Reimão, and their two children.

**Hilary Hoynes** is a Professor of Economics and Public Policy and holds the Haas Distinguished Chair in Economic Disparities at the University of California Berkeley where she also directs the Berkeley Opportunity Lab. She is an economist who works on poverty, inequality, food and nutrition programs, and the impacts of government tax and transfer programs on low-income families. Her current research examines how access to the social safety net in early life affect’s children’s later life health and human capital outcomes. Professor Hoynes is a member of the American Academy of Art and Sciences, the National Academy of Social Insurance, and a Fellow of the Society of Labor Economists. She has served as Co-Editor of the *American Economic Review* and the *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*. She is currently a member of the National Academy of Sciences Committee on National Statistics and serves on California Governor Gavin Newsom’s Council of Economic Advisors. Previously, she served on the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Building an Agenda to Reduce the Number of Children in Poverty by Half in 10 Years, the State of California Task Force on Lifting Children and Families out of Poverty, and the Federal Commission on Evidence-Based Policy Making. In 2014, she received the Carolyn Shaw Bell Award from the Committee on the Status of the Economics Profession of the American Economic Association. Dr. Hoynes received her PhD in Economics from Stanford University in 1992 and her undergraduate degree in Economics and Mathematics from Colby College in 1983.

**Myra Jones-Taylor** leads the Urban Institute’s policy impact strategy as the organization's first chief policy impact officer. She works with researchers and policy experts across Urban to help maximize the impact of their findings and evidence-based recommendations while helping tell the story of how their work changes lives and strengthens communities. Before this role, Jones-Taylor was the chief policy officer at Zero to Three, where she led the development and implementation of the organization’s policy agenda, priorities, and strategies while serving as the principal spokesperson on all policy matters. She previously served as Connecticut’s founding commissioner of early childhood, leading the cabinet-level state agency that serves all children from birth to age 5 and is responsible for early care and education, home visiting, and early intervention and child care licensing in the state. During her time as commissioner, the state agency was awarded $50 million in new, competitive federal grants and expanded access to high-quality preschool to 25 percent more 3- and 4-year-olds. Jones-Taylor is a class of 2022 New America national fellow and has the honor of being both an Ascend fellow and a Pahara fellow of the Aspen Institute. She writes and speaks about racial identity, systemic racism, and social inequality. You can find her writing and speaking about these issues in *The Atlantic* and on the podcast *The Longest Shortest Time*. Jones-Taylor received a joint doctorate in American studies and anthropology from Yale University.

**Emilie Kornheiser** has been a member of the House of Representatives since 2019. She comes to her work in the legislature with a passion for supporting and amplifying community voices-- asking communities to own and tell their own stories in order to facilitate shared visions and outcomes. For the last five years, she has focused on improving the functioning and accountability of community development and support systems in Vermont state government. Before transitioning to local service, she worked internationally as a consultant brokering and evaluating partnerships between corporations and national governments to meet community development goals. Ms. Kornheiser received her BA in Sociology from Marlboro College and attended the MS program in Community Development and Applied Economics at the University of Vermont. She has served overseas promoting democracy and supporting small business development, and she has held numerous positions at community-based organizations throughout Vermont. She also started her own small business in downtown Brattleboro. Emilie continues to work with organizations both public and private that put connection at the center of skills building, accountability, and economic justice. She lives in Brattleboro in a converted barn with her family.
Elaine Maag is a senior fellow in the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center at the Urban Institute and a codirector of Innovations in Cash Assistance for Children. She is an expert on the taxation of low- and middle-income families. Her work examines the interactions between tax and transfer programs, the impact of cash supports, how well taxes support families, and the administration of tax and transfer programs. Maag has testified before state and federal congressional committees and advised congressional staff members and administration officials on the taxation of families with children and on higher education and work incentives in the tax code. Maag codirected the creation of the Net Income Change Calculator, a tool that allows users to understand the trade-offs between tax and transfer benefits and changes in earnings or marital status. Before joining Urban, Maag worked at the Internal Revenue Service and at the Government Accountability Office as a presidential management fellow. Maag holds an MS in public policy analysis from the University of Rochester. Maag is a board member of the Commonwealth Institute (Virginia), a member of the Code for America Tax Benefits Advisory Committee, and a member of the Humanity Forward Policy Council.

Katherine Michelmore is an associate professor of public policy at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. Michelmore is a leading scholar and educator on the social safety net, education policy, labor economics, and economic demography. A research associate at NBER, she is a recognized expert on the efficacy of the Earned Income Tax Credit and its impact on children. Previously, she was assistant professor of public administration and international affairs at Syracuse University's Maxwell School. Katherine completed her PhD in policy analysis and management at Cornell University. She holds a BA in economics and psychology from Wesleyan University. Prior to obtaining her PhD, Katherine was a research assistant at the Urban Institute.

Pedro Morillas, Economic Security Project’s Director of State Campaigns, oversees and executes ESP’s multi state campaign strategies to pass laws that put more money in peoples’ pockets. Pedro’s expertise is in building issue campaigns across multiple states to both win reforms that benefit people in the short term and build state and national momentum over the long term. He got his start as the Legislative Director for the California Public Interest Group fighting for consumer protections and democracy reforms and has since run campaigns ranging from immigration reform at Organizing for Action to gun violence prevention with Everytown for Gun Safety. No matter the issue, Pedro’s focus is to engage and support the people and organizations on the ground, so they have the resources to take an idea and turn it into a law in their state.

Erica Williams is Executive Director of the DC Fiscal Policy Institute where she leads the team in achieving its mission to shape racially-just tax, budget, and policy decisions to advance an antiracist, equitable District. Prior to joining DCFPI, Erica was Vice President for State Fiscal Policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. In this role, she helped lead the organization and its 40-person State Fiscal Policy division, and supported and shaped the efforts of the State Priorities Partnership. In addition to deep state tax and budget analyses, Erica oversaw and grew equity-focused policy initiatives on state Earned Income Tax Credits (EITCs), poverty reduction, and immigration, and spearheaded a major effort to deepen the equity and inclusion focus of the state team and the Partnership as a whole. Prior to her time with CBPP, Erica was a Study Director at the Institute for Women’s Policy Research. She holds a B.A. in Sociology and Spanish studies from Santa Clara University and an M.A. in international policy from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies.

Gabriel Zucker is the Associate Policy Director for Tax Benefits at Code for America. Zucker has nearly a decade of experience in the evaluation, design, and implementation of progressive policy. He previously did research and advocacy on tax benefits access and paid leave delivery as a Public Interest Technology Fellow at New America; served as Director of Research for the progressive voter turnout startup
VoteTripling.org; worked on healthcare access and homeless services at the Department of Veterans Affairs as a member of the U.S. Digital Service; and co-led the campaign to end veteran homelessness in Connecticut. Zucker holds a BA from Yale where he double majored in ethics, politics, & economics and music, and a Masters in applied statistics from Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. He grew up and lives in New York City.