

Federal Policy Changes and Their Impacts on Education

Speaker Biographies

Kristin Blagg is a principal research associate in the Work, Education, and Labor Division at the Urban Institute. Her research spans K–12 and higher education, with a focus on funding and finance policy. In higher education, Blagg has studied student loans, federal and state grant aid, student basic needs, and measurement of return on investment. In K–12 education, she has led work on measuring student economic disadvantage, funding formulas, and projecting the long-run returns on educational investments. Blagg holds a BA in government from Harvard University, an MEd from Hunter College, an MPP from Georgetown University, and a PhD in public policy and public administration from the George Washington University.

Lindsay Fryer is the President and Founding Principal of Lodestone DC, Lindsay Fryer advises organizations at the national, state, and local levels on the development and execution of policy and advocacy strategies. She brings deep expertise in federal legislative and regulatory processes and is widely respected for her ability to drive durable policy change. Her work spans federal education, workforce, research, and related social service issues from both authorizing and appropriations perspectives. She was named one of *Washingtonian* magazine's Top Education Lobbyists in Washington, DC in 2023 and 2024. Before founding Lodestone DC, Lindsay worked at a leading lobbying firm supporting the federal policy agendas of major corporations, membership associations, philanthropic organizations, and research institutions. She secured numerous policy and funding wins by building bipartisan support on Capitol Hill and working effectively across multiple presidential administrations. Lindsay previously served as a senior education policy advisor to former Chairman Lamar Alexander on the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee. She served as the Chairman's principal negotiator on S. 1177, the Every Student Succeeds Act (Public Law 114-95). Earlier, Lindsay was a professional staff member on the U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce, where she managed a broad education and workforce portfolio for the Chairman and House Republican Conference. Lindsay also worked at the American Institutes for Research, managing tasks on large-scale randomized field trials and providing research and consulting support to state and local leaders on high school dropout prevention. She helped develop an Early Warning System to identify students at risk of dropping out and authored multiple reports on these topics. Lindsay holds a bachelor's degree in secondary education and English, with a minor in special education, from Boston College, and a master's degree in Education Policy and Management from Harvard University. She serves as a Governor-appointed member of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV).

Karishma Furtado is a senior research associate in the Race and Equity Division and a former equity scholar at the Urban Institute. She uses human-centered data, research, and storytelling to catalyze and measure impact, facilitate accountability, deepen understanding, and imagine what's possible on the path to racial equity. Before joining Urban, Karishma was a founding staff member of Forward Through Ferguson, a St. Louis-based nonprofit focused on systems change to achieve racial equity; before that, she was a part of the nationally recognized Ferguson Commission following the killing of Mike Brown in 2015. She helped author the Ferguson Commission Report. Her research on the social determinants of health sits at the intersection of race, racism, and health and is in service of advancing health equity, especially in the school setting. She has published articles in leading public health and health policy journals on the Ferguson

Commission, the role of public health in advancing racial equity, and operationalizing a commitment to health equity in applied public health spaces. Karishma holds bachelor's degrees in biology and public policy from the University of Chicago and has completed master's and doctorate degrees in public health with a specialization in biostatistics and epidemiology from Washington University in St. Louis.

Emily Gutierrez is a senior research associate in the Work, Education, and Labor Division at the Urban Institute, where her research focuses on K-12 education policies that aim to mitigate educational inequities, disparities, and external factors that affect student success. Her research often includes student access to school food and measures of student poverty. She is also part of the inaugural William and Gail Gorham Scholar/Analyst Program and a Gorham Scholar/Analyst, class of 2024. Gutierrez spent time as a math teacher in Fort Worth, Texas. She received her BBA in economics, Spanish, and public administration and her MS in economics from Baylor University, and she holds a PhD in public administration from Syracuse University.

Kunjan Narechania is the CEO of Watershed Advisors, working with states across the country to realize their most ambitious goals — from early childhood to K-12 education and the workforce. Under Narechania's leadership, Watershed has grown substantially in size and impact. She leads a team of 35 people working across more than 15 states to envision, plan, and implement education policies that will materially impact the lives of young people. A key architect of one of America's most powerful school improvement stories, Narechania sharpened her leadership in large-system and government agency management and operations, instruction, and education policy. Before founding Watershed Advisors, she served as a top leader at the Louisiana Department of Education and as CEO of the Louisiana Recovery School District (RSD). As CEO of the RSD, an urban school system of 45,000 students, she led the design and execution of the state-run district's strategy in New Orleans, including a first-of-its-kind reunification with the local school system. During her tenure, a Stanford University study listed New Orleans among the top 10 cities nationwide for student growth from 2012-2017. As the Assistant State Superintendent of School Improvement at the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE), Narechania designed and oversaw Louisiana's statewide plan to grow student achievement in its 500 lowest-performing schools under the Every Student Succeeds Act. As part of this work, she developed the SuperApp, one of the nation's first systems for local school districts to simplify and leverage all state and federal grant funding to support state instructional priorities. Narechania has been published by *The 74*, and numerous times by the Fordham Institute, writing on instructional coherence and workforce funding. Narechania began her career as a sixth-grade math and science teacher and also served in leadership roles at Teach For America, including Vice President of Teacher Support and Development. She is based in New Orleans, where she proudly serves on the board of LiveOak Wilderness Camp.

Sasha Pudelski joined AASA in 2010 as a legislative specialist. As the Director of Advocacy for AASA, she leads the advocacy and policy team at AASA. In this role, she is the primary representative of AASA on Capitol Hill and in meetings with federal agencies. She also coordinates AASA's advocacy before the U.S. Supreme Court. Sasha tackles a broad portfolio of federal policy and funding issues but specializes in those that relate to school safety and school climate, the delivery of healthcare services in schools, privatization of public education, and special education matters. Sasha also co-leads the National Coalition for Public Education, a coalition of 50+ organizations that fight efforts to privatize federal education funding. She also founded the Medicaid in Schools Coalition, a coalition of organizations that aim to improve and protect the school-based Medicaid program. Sasha is also on the board of the Rebuild America's School Infrastructure

Coalition. Sasha is frequently quoted in the New York Times, Washington Post, Education Week and other national publications. A native of New Jersey, she graduated from Oberlin College. She is an alum of the Institute for Educational Leadership Education Policy Fellowship Program and the McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University Certificate in Education Finance. She resides in Virginia with her husband and two daughters.

Maggie Reeves is the Director of K–12 Education in the Work, Education, and Labor Division at the Urban Institute, where she leads high-impact initiatives at the intersection of education policy and economic opportunity. She co-leads the Student Upward Mobility Initiative, which works to identify the skill-based drivers of economic mobility within K–12 education, and spearheads projects designed to strengthen evidence-based decision-making in philanthropy focused on economic mobility. She also holds leadership roles spanning rapid-response policy analysis, school food policy, and integrated data systems. Prior to joining the Urban Institute, Reeves served as the founding Senior Director of the Georgia Policy Labs at Georgia State University (GSU)—a research-practice partnership leveraging integrated data to drive policy change. Over five years, she built the organization from the ground up, shaping its vision, strategy, partnerships, team, and operations. She also served as Senior Adviser for Research Strategy at the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies and played a pivotal role in establishing GSU's Center for State and Local Finance. Across nearly two decades, her career has bridged academia, the state executive branch, and the state judicial branch in pursuit of evidence-based policies that improve people's lives. Reeves holds a bachelor's degree in Women's Studies from Emory University and a Master of Public Administration from the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University. A proud Atlanta resident, Reeves is deeply committed to her community. She serves on the board of Park Pride, a local parks advocacy organization, and is an advisory board member for ATL: Advance the Lives. She also is a member of the National Advisory Council for Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy.

Kathryn Vesey White is Director of Budget Process Studies at NASBO. In this role, she tracks issues and changes in budget and financial management practices across the states and territories. She also collects and analyses state fiscal data, and authors the semi-annual Fiscal Survey of States. Additionally, Kathryn monitors state budget developments in areas including early education, K-12 education, and higher education, and conducts ongoing research on the use of performance data and evidence in state budgeting and management. Prior to joining NASBO, Kathryn served as a research associate for The George Washington University Regulatory Studies Center. She also spent two years with Deloitte's federal consulting practice. Kathryn is a graduate of Georgetown University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in English. She also holds a Master of Public Policy degree from The George Washington University, where she concentrated her studies in budgeting and public finance.