

Investing in Educators, Improving Families' Access to Care: Evidence from DC's Early Educator Compensation Initiative

Speaker Biographies

Dr. Justin B. Doromal is a senior research associate in the Family and Financial Well-Being Division. His research focuses on policy initiatives aiming to stabilize, build, and strengthen the availability of high-quality child care and early education. He also studies how policies and systems can support families' search for and use of child care and early education programs. In addition to studying early educator compensation in the District of Columbia, Doromal has led and contributed to projects examining child care compensation in Virginia, Maryland, and King County, Washington. Before joining Urban, Doromal was a postdoctoral research associate at the Annenberg Institute at Brown University. He also received an American Educational Research Association Dissertation Fellowship in 2020 to study child care teacher turnover and program closure in three state policy contexts. Doromal holds a BA from the University of South Florida. He received an MPP and an MEd in educational psychology and a PhD in education policy from the University of Virginia.

Dr. Erica Greenberg is a senior fellow in the Family and Financial Well-Being Division. Her research spans early childhood policies, focusing on preschool and child care access, quality, and outcomes. She is particularly interested in policy innovations that expand opportunity for children, families, and educators. She is coprincipal investigator of the DC Child Care Policy Research Partnership, which evaluates implementation of DC's early educator compensation program, and principal investigator of the DC Public Prekindergarten Study, which leverages a centralized admissions lottery to measure the efficacy of public preschool at scale. Recent national projects center the early care and education workforce, segregation in early education programs, and the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on early childhood systems and families with young children. Before joining Urban, Greenberg was an intern in the US Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development and a prekindergarten teacher in Washington, DC. Greenberg holds a BA from Yale University. She received her MA in political science and her PhD in education policy from Stanford University.

Dr. Laura Jimenez Parra is a research associate in the Family and Financial Well-Being Division at the Urban Institute. Her research focuses on child care and early education policies and practices that improve the outcomes of young children, families, and child care providers. She also has experience with the implementation and evaluation of early childhood programs examining issues of quality of care, the early education workforce, and cultural processes within these settings. Before joining Urban, Jimenez Parra was an Early Care and Education Research Scholar through the Administration for Children and Families, which supported her dissertation research on the close relationships family child care providers form with families and children in their programs and how these influence providers' and parents' well-being. She has a PhD in human development and quantitative methodology from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Dr. Kathryn Kigera is the Director of Quality Initiatives, in the Division of Early Learning at the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) in Washington, DC. She oversees the implementation of Capital Quality, DC's quality rating and improvement system, DC Child Care Connections, DC's child care resource and referral program, the Quality Improvement Network, an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant, workforce development and enhancement programs, and research partnerships. Prior to her current role, she served as a program manager at OSSE and has been in DC government for more than 12 years. She started her career in education conducting research on various grants focused on cultural and linguistic diversity and disability studies at The George Washington University (GWU) and served as a program manager and interim director of out-of-school time programs with the DC Public Schools. She has led innovative research and program design over the course of her career and aims to positively impact child outcomes by providing comprehensive support services to the education community. She holds an EdD from George Washington University.

Eve Mefferd is a research associate in the Family and Financial Well-Being Division. She applies qualitative and quantitative methods to research focusing on child care and early education, workforce well-being, and economic security. Before joining the Urban Institute, she was a research assistant at the Institute for Women's Policy Research focused on labor force dynamics and economic mobility and security. She has a BA in Sociology and Public Policy from Bennington College.

Elli Nikolopoulos is a research associate in the Family and Financial Well-Being Division. Her research focuses on efforts to increase access to high-quality and affordable child care and early education, especially for families with low incomes. Before joining Urban, Nikolopoulos completed fellowships with the Montgomery County Council and the Maryland General Assembly Department of Legislative Services. She holds a BA in government and politics and a BA in public policy, as well as an MPP with a focus on health and education policy, from the University of Maryland.

Dr. Heather Sandstrom is a senior fellow in the Family and Financial Well-Being Division and leader of the Early Childhood Practice Area. Her research focuses on child care and early education and two-generation programs that support the well-being of children and families. As a trained developmental scientist, Dr. Sandstrom applies a developmental lens to her work and considers the role of family, the home environment, and child care settings in children's learning. She has experience designing studies employing both qualitative and quantitative methods and has directed multiple federal research studies. She is currently Principal Investigator for the District of Columbia Child Care Policy Research Partnership, funded with two consecutive grants from the federal Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. Sandstrom has a PhD in human development with a certification in measurement, statistics, and evaluation from the University of Maryland, College Park.