

# **Equity Advisory Committee on Aging and Disability (EACAD) Committee Membership 2026 Biography**

## **Stakeholder Chair**

### **David “Jax” Kelly, *Aging and HIV Institute***

Jax Kelly, JD, MPH, MBA (he/him) is the Founder, President & CEO of the Aging and HIV Institute (A&H) and President of Let’s Kick ASS Palm Springs (LKAPS). A Black gay man living with HIV since 2006, Jax brings both lived experience and professional expertise to his work at the intersection of HIV, aging, and policy advocacy. While serving on California’s Equity Advisory Committee on Aging and Disability, he has helped guide initiatives like the LGBTQIA+ Survey of Older Persons and the Aging and Disability Lived Experience Advisory Board (AD-LEAB). Through A&H, Jax leads advocacy efforts to ensure the equitable implementation of Proposition 1 and recently launched Dundun, a peer-informed mental health initiative for older adults living with HIV. He is also guiding LKAPS into its 10th anniversary year, celebrating a decade of community-building and support for long-term HIV survivors in the Coachella Valley of Riverside County. A&H is committed to working across systems—housing, aging, behavioral health, and HIV services—to advance integrated solutions that center lived experience and reduce structural barriers. Jax regularly presents at national conferences and holds a BA from Yale University, a JD from Fordham University, an MPH from USC’s Keck School of Medicine, and an MBA from NYU Stern.

## **Stakeholder Committee Membership**

### **Maria Augilar Aroch, *Advocate***

Maria Aroch is a Senior Program Manager at California Resource Services for Independent Living (CRS-IL), a disability-led nonprofit advancing independence and equity for people with disabilities and older adults through person-centered services. She oversees Coordinated Family Support Services and the County-partnered Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC), working closely with public agencies and community partners to improve access to integrated services. With nearly 20 years of experience, Maria has led programs serving diverse and underserved communities, with a focus on reducing disparities in access to long-term services and supports. Her work includes cross-sector collaboration with county systems, care coordination, and supporting individuals and families navigating complex health and social service systems. She has also played a key role in emergency response efforts, including during the 2025 Eaton Fire, where she supported displaced older adults and individuals with disabilities in accessing critical resources and services. Grounded in lived experience and a strong commitment to equity, Maria brings a practical, community-informed perspective to advancing inclusive systems, dignity, and resilience for aging and disability communities. She is passionate about informing policies that center community voice and improve service accessibility.

**Julie Bates-Livesay, PhD, Agency on Aging Area 4**

Dr. Bates-Livesay is a Social Gerontologist and accomplished organizational leader dedicated to improving the lives of older adults through innovative programming, inclusive policy development, and community-centered advocacy. As Assistant Director at Agency on Aging Area 4, she oversees agency operations, risk management, human resources, and strategic initiatives that strengthen service delivery across a multi-county region. Her leadership has shaped transformative programs, including the agency's first Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility initiative and the award-winning Senior Connections person-centered case management program. With more than two decades of statewide and national impact, Julie has served in key roles at AARP, advancing age-inclusive workplace practices, LGBTQ audience engagement strategies, and large-scale advocacy campaigns. She is also an Adjunct Lecturer at the University of Southern California, where she teaches courses on social and cultural diversity in aging and develops training for the caregiving workforce. Julie's work is informed by her research on resilience among the Stonewall Generation and her long-standing commitment to ensuring that aging services reflect dignity, equity, and cultural humility. A frequent speaker and collaborator, she has built strong partnerships across government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community stakeholders.

**Lauren Brown, PhD, MPH, University of Southern California, Leonard Davis School of Gerontology**

Dr. Lauren L. Brown is an Assistant Professor of Gerontology at the University of Southern California. Centered around the biopsychosocial processes of aging, her research uses publicly available data to understand the unique challenges Black Americans face in maintaining physical and psychological well-being as they age. Focusing on the complex interplay between stress and health, her work aims to reframe the Black disadvantage narrative in health and aging by highlighting the heterogeneity in how Black older adults observe and adapt to stress burdens — acknowledging the resourcefulness, coping, and agency they employ in reaching older adulthood.

**Linda Cardoza, Council on Aging – Southern California, Advocate**

Linda Cardoza serves as Director, Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) for Orange County. HICAP, a program of Council on Aging – Southern California, provides no cost, unbiased Medicare and related insurances counseling, assistance, and education to Medicare beneficiaries and their families and caregivers. Linda began her tenure with HICAP 15 years ago as a volunteer counselor and has served as Program Leader for the past eight years. Previously, she spent a career in the private sector with a Fortune 200 company and served in other volunteer roles as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and leader with the AARP TaxAide Program. Linda holds a B.A. in Social Sciences and an MBA in Finance from California State Universities.

**Megan Carey, Caregiver and Aging Advocate**

Megan Carey is an accessibility specialist with more than 13 years of experience helping organizations make websites, documents, and digital information accessible for people with disabilities. Her work has focused on advancing equitable access to critical

information and services across healthcare, government, and enterprise organizations, ensuring digital experiences are inclusive and usable for all. Megan also brings lived experience as a caregiver for aging parents and as a former owner of a home care company serving seniors, giving her firsthand insight into the challenges families face when navigating aging and disability services. Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area and now based in Orange County, Megan regularly travels to the Sacramento region to support family members, giving her perspective on both Northern and Southern California communities and the diverse needs of families across the state. Megan also comes from a family deeply connected to military service. Her father, a Vietnam veteran who lives with long-term health impacts related to Agent Orange exposure, and her brother, a Gulf War veteran, have given her firsthand experience navigating veteran healthcare and support systems. She is also active in community service through National Charity League, where she volunteers alongside her daughters supporting local nonprofit and senior-focused initiatives. Megan is passionate about advancing accessibility, independence, and equitable opportunities for California's aging and disability communities.

**Denny Chan, *Justice in Aging***

Denny Chan serves as the Managing Director of Justice in Aging's Equity Advocacy team. In this role, he is responsible for developing and leading Justice in Aging's Strategic Initiative on Advancing Equity, with a primary focus on race equity for older adults of color, and he also coordinates the organization's equity team. He joined Justice in Aging as an attorney on the health team in 2014 and is based in Sacramento, CA. The son of working-class Chinese immigrant parents, Denny has worked significantly on non-discrimination, language access, and healthcare delivery reform issues for low-income older adults and brings all of these experiences to his advocacy. He previously served as a rotating law clerk for the US District Court in Los Angeles and participated in the Fulbright English Teaching Program as a fellow in Macau, China. Denny is a graduate of the University of California, Irvine School of Law. He received his BA from the University of Michigan.

**Ann Choi, *Chapman Consulting***

Ann Choi is a policy consultant with over a decade of experience in public health and healthcare operations, focusing on health equity for underserved populations. She previously served at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), including as a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer, where she led initiatives supporting dual-eligible populations, developed multilingual public health campaigns, contributed to federal rulemaking on care equity and language access, and supported disaster recovery efforts for communities affected by emergencies. Ann currently supports the advancement of California's CalAIM initiatives, which align with the state's Master Plan for Aging, and continues to work on programs serving dual-eligible adults. Her work is informed not only by her professional experience but also by personal experience helping care for elderly parents who face cultural and language barriers in navigating the healthcare system. Earlier, she served as a Peace Corps Community Health Education Volunteer, implementing USAID-funded programs in WASH, nutrition, and youth empowerment.

**Vincent Crisostomo, San Francisco AIDS Foundation**

Vincent Crisostomo has been an HIV/AIDS activist for more than 35 years in the U.S. and abroad, serving as an organizer, peer advocate, outreach, education and training provider, researcher and executive. Diagnosed with AIDS in 1995, Crisostomo brings a unique personal perspective to the challenges faced by medically disadvantaged populations and deep connections within the BIPOC and LGBTQ communities. He has been a caretaker to many friends and loved ones affected or lost to the AIDS epidemic as well as a caretaker to his own parents. Vincent is a current member of the San Francisco Mayor's Long Term Care Coordinating Care Council, has chaired the city's HIV & Aging Work Group, served on the SF Dignity Fund Steering Committee and currently co-chairs the SF Dignity Fund Oversight Committee. He is currently the Director of Aging Services at the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and was appointed by the Mayor London Breed to the San Francisco Human Rights Committee's LGBTQI+ Advisory Committee.

**Eric Anthony Devezin, MPA, Community Action Partnership of Riverside County**

Eric Anthony Devezin is a public servant and advocate currently enrolled in the Doctor of Public Administration (DPA) program at California Baptist University. Eric is a commissioner for the Community Action Partnership (CAP) of Riverside County, where he serves on behalf of the low-income constituency, and the co-chair of the Riverside County IHSS Public Authority Advisory Committee. He currently serves as a board member of the California IHSS Consumer Alliance (CICA) and as a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) for Voices for Children in Riverside County. With over two decades of navigating complicated public social services systems, Eric has spent his career protecting some of society's most vulnerable citizens. Eric is a 2025 Children Now Equity Fellow and founder of the CBU ICMA Student Chapter. He primarily works to advance health equity among marginalized communities and create inclusive policies for older adults, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ folks.

**Dr. Sue Elhessen, EdD, Commissioner for Public Social Services**

Dr. Sue ElHessen is a distinguished educator, advocate, and public servant dedicated to advancing equity, inclusion, and disability rights. She earned her Doctorate in Education with a focus on Human Performance Improvement from the University of Southern California (USC) and a Master's degree in Industrial-Organizational Psychology from California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). Dr. ElHessen's career is marked by nearly two decades of leadership in higher education, including a 19-year tenure at the University of Phoenix (2005–2022), where she focused on academic excellence and student success. Her corporate background includes serving as an Instructional Designer and Trainer for Northrop and Toyota Motor Credit Corporation, where she managed professional development and educational reimbursement programs. A prominent figure in state-level advocacy, Dr. ElHessen was appointed by Governor Newsom to the California Commission on Disability Access (CCDA), where she served as the Chair for Education and Outreach from 2020 to 2025. In this role, she led statewide efforts to promote accessibility and compliance through proactive community engagement. Her public service also includes nine years as an Elected School Board Member for the Bellflower Unified School District, where she authored the district's first

landmark Equity Policy for students. Her commitment to accessibility is further evidenced by her past roles as the ADA Coordinator for the City of Santa Monica, an Inclusion Excellence Commissioner at CSULB, and a member of the LA County Accessibility Appeals Board. Currently, Dr. ElHessen serves in several key leadership capacities: Equity Advisory Committee on Aging and Disability (EACAD) and Commissioner for Public Social Services. As a survivor of childhood polio, Dr. ElHessen brings vital lived experience to her work. She utilizes a scooter for mobility and employs assistive technology, such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking, in her professional endeavors. She continues to strive for excellence in promoting equity and inclusion for everyone.

**Lynn Fritz, *Licensed Marriage Family Therapist***

Lynn Fritz is a Licensed Marriage Family Therapist in private practice. She is a consultant and expert witness in Indian Child Welfare. Lynn is bicultural, her mother is Swedish, and her father is Native American. She has lineage with the Hoopa people and is an enrolled tribal descendent of the Karuk Tribe, Happy Camp, CA. In clinical practices, Lynn's work is focused on working with grief, trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, anxiety, relational issues, life transitions, aging, death and dying, multicultural issues, LGBTQ+, spiritual/religious issues, sobriety, mindfulness, and healthy living. She is an educator, public speaker and has served for 13 years as a caregiver for her parents and second mother, commencing such service in 2011. After completing her master's degree in counseling psychology, the educational requirement for applying to be a Licensed Marriage Family Therapist, Lynn completed her practicum and the first few years of her internship working with Redding Rancheria Tribal Health in Redding, CA. Since then, she has continued and expanded her relationships with Native American people and communities.

**Ephraim Getahun, *Advocate***

Ephraim Getahun has dedicated over 15 years to the field of aging healthcare, embodying the role of a lifelong caregiver through a diverse career path that includes experience in residential care facilities as care staff, hospice nurse, and Memory Care Director, and notably, as the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Training at Openhouse LGBTQ+ Senior Center. At Openhouse, they played a pivotal role in operationalizing the first LGBTQ+ Adult Day Program in the nation and developed key cultural humility trainings to improve healthcare for 2SLGBTQ+ older adults. After leaving Openhouse in January 2024, Ephraim has continued their passion for fostering equity in healthcare, traveling across the country delivering equity trainings aimed at healthcare providers. Their workshops and seminars are designed to refine care practices, ensuring that they are inclusive and sensitive to the unique needs of diverse aging populations. As an Ethiopian-American, Ephraim's commitment to caring for elders is deeply rooted in their cultural heritage, complemented by insights from their upbringing in rural Pennsylvania.

**Diana Jimenez, *County of Monterey, Department of Social Services***

Diana Jimenez currently serves as the Deputy Director for the Department of Social Service where she oversees the CalWORKs Employment Services and the Aging and Adult Services Programs and Branches. She earned a college degree while working full

time and raising a family. She is a graduate of Hartnell Community College and CSUMB where she earned a BA in Social and Behavioral Sciences. Growing up, Diana worked as a field laborer and packing shed worker along with her parents and siblings. She dropped out of high school at age 15 to help her parents make ends meet. Her work today is informed by her experience witnessing the effects of poverty firsthand. She has a strong compassion for families who struggle economically, socially, and educationally. Diana has dedicated over 30 years of volunteering and serving on various Boards, Committees, and Commissions that help provide services, improve the quality of life, and opportunities for families in need.

**Katie Nguyen Kalvoda, *Institute for Community Research and Solutions & Advance OC***

Katie Kalvoda is a long-time community volunteer in Orange County with a passion to close social and health disparities through board service and nonprofit leadership. As the founder of Advance OC, Katie served as the chief data architect for the Orange County Equity Map, an award-winning tool that reveals neighborhood-level social determinants of health that inform public-private efforts to improve health and social outcomes. In 2024, Katie founded the Institute for Community Research and Solutions to conduct original research and data collection and deliver best-in-class policy design and solutions guided by community participatory research, while leveraging artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies. Throughout her career, Katie has proudly served on various nonprofit and state boards – including the California Health Facilities Financing Authority and the Equity Advisory Committee on Aging and Disability – and has been recognized as a thought leader in health equity, public policy, and community advocacy. She holds a degree in Economics from the University of California, Berkeley and completed Executive Leadership Programs at MIT Sloan School of Management in artificial intelligence and global public health at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

**Nikki K. Lopez, MBA, CDP, *Caregiver OneCall***

Nikki K. Lopez is a Contra Costa County-based entrepreneur, published author, and caregiver advocate whose life's work is rooted in a simple belief: no one should have to navigate caregiving alone. Born in Jamaica and grounded in the East Bay, Nikki left a career at the Federal Reserve Bank to found Caring Haven Home Care (CH) in October 2023, a CDSS-licensed, VA-credentialed non-medical home care agency rated Best Senior Care Agency in the Bay Area. Her caregiving journey began with her grandmother, and that experience never left her. In 2025, she founded Caregiver OneCall (CGO), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit operating a free 24/7 caregiver navigation and support hotline available to unpaid family and informal caregivers nationwide. In its first year, CGO supported over 600 caregivers and delivered 1,800 hours of free respite care to dementia caregiving families in Contra Costa County. Ninety-three percent of first-time callers reported feeling more confident and less isolated after their call. Nikki is a two-time published author, an Antioch Rotarian, a 2025 Marquis Who's Who honoree, a District 5 Women's History Month Honoree, and a recipient of the Entrepreneur of the Year Award from the Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center. She holds an MBA and the Certified Dementia Practitioner (CDP) designation. She serves

on multiple Contra Costa County boards and brings to EACAD a frontline perspective on the intersection of caregiving, elder vulnerability, and community-based support.

**Alicia Martinez, MD, *California Rural Indian Health Board***

As the Director of Medical Services at the California Rural Indian Health Board, Dr. Alicia Martinez have dedicated over a decade to working in tribal health primary care. She has dedicated her career to improving healthcare services for tribal communities. Prior to this role, she practiced primary care at a Tribal health clinic and served as the lead provider. In addition to her current role, she serves as faculty for the Tribal Health PRIME program at UC Davis. As an enrolled Yurok tribal member, she is a passionate advocate for delivering culturally grounded and evidence-based care. She believes in tailoring medicine to meet the unique needs of the communities she serve.

**Alaya McKinney, MPP, *National MS Society (Disability Rights Advocate, Multiple Sclerosis Advocate and Patient)***

Alaya McKinney is a dedicated policy professional and aspiring attorney whose work bridges public policy, healthcare advocacy, and legal equity. She holds a Master of Public Policy with an emphasis in Healthcare Policy from Pepperdine University, where she distinguished herself academically while advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion. During her time at Pepperdine, Alaya served on the Diversity and Belonging Committee, implementing initiatives to amplify the voices of people of color and individuals with disabilities, and shared her insights on panels addressing the unique challenges faced by Black women living with disabilities. Alaya has lived with multiple sclerosis (MS) for 16 years, navigating the complexities of a chronic condition while excelling professionally and academically. Her lived experience drives her commitment to disability advocacy and healthcare equity. She serves on the Government Relations Advocacy Committee and as a District Leader Advocate for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, in addition to her roles as a Trustee on the Emerging Leaders Board and Executive Board Member of the Black MS Summit. In these roles, she travels to Washington, D.C., and Sacramento to lobby and testify before legislators on behalf of the multiple sclerosis community, and develops programs that educate, empower, and advocate for Black individuals living with MS. Alaya's career goal is to become a Disability Rights Attorney, dedicated to both advocating for systemic change and living the experiences of those navigating inequities in the healthcare system. She is committed not only to advocating for marginalized communities, but to advancing justice from within them—bringing lived experience, policy expertise, and legal ambition to the forefront of systemic change. Her unique perspective—as a Black woman with a chronic illness, a healthcare policy expert, and a committed legal advocate—positions her as a compassionate and results-driven leader, committed to creating inclusive spaces across legal, healthcare, and policy arenas.

**Jose Montoya, *California Health Collaborative***

Jose Montoya (he/him/el) is an advocate with the California Health Collaborative, where he has built a strong foundation in public health through his work in tobacco prevention and environmental justice. His engagement has largely focused on rural communities,

where he has supported community driven efforts to address health inequities and strengthen local advocacy. Through his work, Jose has collaborated with aging advocates and gained critical insight into the structural and functional gaps that exist within systems intended to support older adults and people with disabilities. In particular, he has witnessed firsthand how farmworker and migrant communities are often excluded from equitable and dignified aging systems, facing barriers related to access, language, and culturally responsive care. Jose brings a deep commitment to advancing health equity and amplifying underrepresented voices. He is especially passionate about identifying and promoting upstream, systems level solutions that address root causes of inequity. As a member of the Equity Advisory Committee on Aging and Disability (EACAD), Jose looks forward to contributing an equity centered perspective that uplifts rural and farmworker communities and helps shape more inclusive and just aging systems for all.

**Candelaria “Candy” Pahua Oros, MBA, CHES, Advocate**

Candy Pahua Oros is a public health professional and health equity advocate committed to advancing equitable access to care for underserved communities across California. She holds a Master of Business Administration in Healthcare Administration from Northern Arizona University and a Bachelor of Science in Health Science from California State University, Chico. Her work focuses on strengthening community partnerships, improving access to preventive health services, and elevating community voices in health policy and advocacy. Candy is actively involved in statewide and national initiatives supporting cancer prevention, patient navigation, and health equity, with a commitment to advancing inclusive systems that support aging populations and individuals with disabilities.

**Elizabeth Pinder-McSwain, Caramel Connections Foundations**

In 2016, Elizabeth Pinder-McSwain founded Caramel Connections Foundation (CCF) to empower families to make better food choices and where to access healthier options. CCF is devoted to supporting underserved communities in Southern California, with a particular emphasis on children’s health by addressing childhood obesity and heart disease through the Seeds of Joy Community Garden project.

**Carmen E. Reyes, University of California Los Angeles**

Carmen E. Reyes, Community Stakeholder Engagement Director, co-leads the Deprescribing Research Network Stakeholder Engagement Core, UCLA Clinical and Translational Science Institute - Special Populations Program, UCLA Resource Center for Minority Aging Research/Center (RCMAR), and UCLA Healthcare Value Analytics and Solutions (UVAS), and manages academic and community partnerships that support equitable community-partnered research. Carmen has over five decades of experience in health and human services, safety-net public sector in the field of aging on national/state/local levels to influence public policy and promote culturally-informed pragmatic real-world programs and collaborations. Carmen is former Commissioner on the California Commission on Aging, the Los Angeles County Commission for Older Adults, PCORI Health Disparities Advisory Panel, and the AcademyHealth Thematic Value-Based Care Among African-American and Latinx Populations leadership panel.

She currently serves on the Ventura County Area Agency on Aging Advisory Board, and Board member of Center for Health Care Rights.

**Amina Sen, *The Cambodian Family***

Amina Sen-Matthews is the Director of Programs at The Cambodian Family Community Center (TCF), a nonprofit community-based organization that has served low-income children, immigrants, and refugees in Orange County. Amina brings more than 10 years of nonprofit leadership experience working with immigrant and refugee communities, particularly within the Cambodian community. She currently leads a team of 15 staff members in TCF's Health and Mental Health Department, overseeing program development, service delivery, and community partnerships. Throughout her career, Amina has created, directed, and implemented several initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of health and mental health disparities affecting ethnic communities, particularly Cambodian immigrants and refugees. Her work focuses on addressing gaps in culturally and linguistically competent health and mental health services and building access to care within underserved communities. Amina frequently participates in community panels and discussions on mental health issues impacting the Cambodian community and serves as a committee member on the Orange County Older Adult Advisory Commission (OCAAC). Amina is trilingual and tricultural, speaking English, Khmer (Cambodian), and Cham, which allows her to effectively serve diverse immigrant and refugee populations. Much of her work focuses on adult and older adult populations, supporting culturally responsive health and mental health services. She holds a Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology with a specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from University of California, Riverside.

**Dani Soto, PhD, *Openhouse***

Dr. Dani Soto brings decades of dedicated experience in championing the well-being and rights of marginalized communities. They graduated Cum Laude with a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Montana, where they were a McNair Scholar. They received their Master's and Ph.D. from Bowling Green State University in Sociology, specializing in racial/ethnic disparities and disparities based on gender, sexual orientation, and sexual identity. After graduate school Dani spent four years as an Assistant Professor, where they served as an advisor/mentor for many campus and community groups serving underrepresented students. Dani transitioned to the non-profit sector, wanting to use their skills and expertise in a more applied way. Recognizing that true justice requires attention paid to the intersections of race/ethnicity, sexuality and sexual identity, sex and gender identity and expression, and socioeconomic status, they frequently examine and advocate in these areas. Their commitment to equity remains unwavering as they now serve as the Deputy Director at Openhouse, serving LGBTQ+ older adults in the San Francisco Bay Area. In this role, Dani channels their passion for participatory approaches and advocacy to cocreate a community in which older LGBTQ+ adults are seen, celebrated, and centered.

**Ronald Spingarn, Advocate**

Ron spent many years helping care for his aging parents who moved from Rochester, NY, to Tucson and, eventually, his mother who moved to Sacramento. In Sacramento, since 2000, Ron worked for three California government departments, the State legislature, a large non-profit organization and a locally-based national consulting firm. For 18 years in executive and other State government positions, his work focused on improving health care access to safe, culturally appropriate, affordable healthcare services, and strengthening healthcare delivery systems. Subsequently, he directed the statewide launch of an Alzheimer's Association program to train Medi-Cal providers about a new dementia screening tool and, served as a full-time consultant, leading a team that helped reduce homelessness for the City of Sacramento's Whole Person Care program. Throughout the 1990s, Ron advocated for persons with HIV/AIDS, directed HIV/AIDS prevention programs and worked closely with marginalized communities in Boston, Washington, DC, Phoenix and New York, and on California's Central Coast. At the ABC-TV Boston affiliate in the late-1980s, he worked on a year-long public service campaign on homelessness, receiving a New England Emmy Award nomination for his work. Ron earned a Master of Science, Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University, a Bachelor of Science, College of Communication, Boston University, and Certificate of Public Health Informatics, School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University.

**Carli Stelzer, MPH, California Behavioral Health Association**

Carli Stelzer serves as the Senior Policy and Legislative Affairs Advisor for the California Behavioral Health Association, where she leads advocacy on behavioral health policy and legislation in California. She has more than five years of experience working in Sacramento, engaging with state leaders and stakeholders to advance policies that strengthen access to care and support vulnerable populations. Carli began her career in statewide advocacy as Deputy Campaign Manager for the 2022 Yes on Proposition 1 campaign, which amended the California Constitution to protect access to reproductive health care. Prior to entering policy and legislative work, she earned a Master of Public Health from the University of California, Berkeley, with a focus on health policy and management. Her commitment to public health and equity is rooted in her early professional experience in Stockton, California. After graduating from Sonoma State University with a degree in Sociology, Carli worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant and Home Health Aide, where she witnessed firsthand how health policy and regulatory decisions impact vulnerable communities, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ individuals. These experiences continue to inform her advocacy and reinforce her commitment to advancing equitable policies that improve health and quality of life. Carli lives in Sacramento with her wife, Lindsey, and their puppy, Molly.