



Early Childhood Policy Council Council and Committee Member Biographies

Early Childhood Policy Council Members

The Governor's appointees are:

Nadine Burke Harris, of San Francisco, has been appointed Chair of the Early Childhood Policy Council. Burke Harris has been Surgeon General of California since 2019. Burke Harris was founder and chief executive officer of the Center for Youth Wellness from 2011 to 2019. She was a pediatrician at the Bayview Child Health Center from 2007 to 2019. Burke Harris was medical director at the California Pacific Medical Center from 2007 to 2011. She earned a Master of Public Health degree from the Harvard School of Public Health and a Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of California, Davis School of Medicine.

Mayra E. Alvarez, of Los Angeles, has been president of The Children's Partnership since 2015. She was director of the State Exchange Group for the Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from 2014 to 2015. Alvarez was associate director of the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from 2013 to 2014. She was director of public health policy in the Office of Health Reform at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from 2010 to 2013. Alvarez was a legislative assistant for U.S. Senator Richard J. Durbin from 2007 to 2010. She was a legislative assistant for Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis from 2006 to 2007. Alvarez was a legislative fellow for U.S. Senator Barack Obama from 2005 to 2006. She is a board member of the Food Research and Action Center, Alluma and the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights Action Fund and a member of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission and California First 5 Commission. Alvarez earned a Master of Health Administration degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Kim Pattillo Brownson, of Los Angeles, has been vice president for policy and strategy at First 5 Los Angeles since 2016. She was managing director of policy and advocacy at the Advancement Project from 2007 to 2016 and an attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California from 2006 to 2007. She is a member of the State Board of Education. Pattillo Brownson earned a Juris Doctor degree from Yale Law School.

Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, of San Luis Obispo, has been director of the Community Action Program for San Luis Obispo since 2018. She was deputy chief of public policy and research for Child Care Aware of America from 2017 to 2018, policy director of Ascend at the Aspen Institute from 2016 to 2017 and an independent consultant from 2015 to 2016. Sanchez Fuentes was director of the Office of Head Start at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from 2009 to 2014, executive director of the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association from 2006 to 2009 and an early childhood development consultant for the Education Development Center at the International Education Systems Division from 2003 to 2006. She was a research coach for Zero to Three Literacy for the Learning and Life Project from 2004 to 2005, director of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Farmworkers Collaboration for the Education Development Center in 2003 and a head start fellow for the National Head Start Fellowship Program at the Head Start Bureau in 2001.

Maria “Lupe” Jaime, of Fresno, has been senior director of early care and education at the Fresno County Office of Education since 2018, where she was director from 2014 to 2018. She was deputy director of the Central Valley Children’s Services Network from 2004 to 2014 and an hourly PITC specialist for West Education/Partners for Quality Infant and Toddler Caregiving from 2009 to 2014. She was an adjunct child development instructor at Reedley Community College from 2008 to 2014. She is a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, California Child Development Administration Association, and the Child Care Local Planning Council. She is co-chair of the Fresno State Dual Language Consortium. She is a former vice-chair for the California First 5 Commission. Jaime earned a Master of Education degree in cross-cultural education from National University and holds a child development director’s permit.

Kimberley Johnson, of Sacramento, has been director of the California Department of Social Services since 2019. She was deputy director for the Family Engagement and Empowerment Division at the California Department of Social Services from 2018 to 2019, branch chief of CalWorks and Child Care from 2017 to 2018, and branch chief of Child Care and Refugee Programs from 2015 to 2017. She was public policy director at the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network from 2012 to 2015, manager of the early childhood mentor program at the City College of San Francisco from 2009 to 2012, and director of programs and training for the parent services project from 2007 to 2010. Johnson was program director for the Children’s Network of Solano County from 1999 to 2007.

Alicia Lieberman, of Mill Valley, has been a professor at the University of California, San Francisco since 1980. She was director of research for the NIMH Multiproblem Families Study from 1977 to 1980. She is a member of the SAMHSA National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Lieberman earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in psychology from the Johns Hopkins University.

Paula Merrigan, of Castro Valley, has been a teacher at the Castro Valley Unified School District since 2008. She is a member of the California Teachers Association.

Merrigan earned a Master of Education degree from California State University, East Bay.

Scott Moore, of Berkeley, has been chief executive officer of Kidango since 2015. He was a senior fellow of the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley from 2014 to 2015, chief policy advisor for Early Edge California from 2007 to 2014 and executive director of the California Early Learning Advisory Council from 2012 to 2013. Moore earned a Master of Business Administration degree in management from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

Sarah Neville-Morgan, of Davis, has been superintendent of public instruction for the Opportunities for All Branch at the California Department of Education since 2019. She was director of the early learning and care division at the California Department of Education from 2017 to 2019. She was deputy director of program management at First 5 California from 2013 to 2017 and from 2007 to 2010. Neville-Morgan was a child development consultant at the California Department of Education from 2011 to 2013. She was deputy executive director of the California Early Learning Advisory Council from 2010 to 2011. Neville-Morgan was a child development consultant from 2000 to 2007. She was an academic child development specialist at the University of California, Davis Center for Child and Family Studies from 1994 to 2000.

Stephanie Myers, of Carmichael, has been an education programs consultant for the California Department of Education since 2012. She was a project associate for WestEd Center for Prevention and Early Intervention from 2000 to 2012, a health educator for the Breast Cancer Early Detection Program from 1999 to 2000 and a tribal head start education coordinator for the California Rural Indian Health Board from 1993 to 1999. Myers earned a Master of Education degree from California State University, Sacramento.

Carola Oliva-Olson, of Santa Barbara, has been a professor at California State University Channel Islands since 2012. She was an early learning specialist supporting Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs from 2001 to 2003 and from 2009 to 2010. She is a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Oliva-Olson earned a Doctor of Education degree in special education, disabilities and at-risk studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara and a Master of Arts degree in prekindergarten primary education from Barry University.

Cheryl Polk, of San Francisco, has been president and chief executive officer at HighScope Educational Research Foundation since 2013. She is a member of the American Psychological Association, the Association of Black Psychologists and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Polk earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology and a Master of Education degree in school psychology from Georgia State University.

Dean Tagawa, of Alhambra, has been an executive director for the Los Angeles Unified School District since 1996, where he has served in multiple positions since 1996,

including director and principal. He is a member of the Association of California School Administrators, the Alliance for Asian Pacific Administrators, and the Multicultural Coalition. Tagawa earned a Doctor of Education degree in educational leadership from Liberty University and a Master of Education degree in education administration from National University.

The Legislature’s appointees are:

Antoinette (Toni) Jacobs, of Bakersfield, is a recent appointed member of the Early Childhood Policy Council. Jacobs currently is an “Encore Entrepreneur” Founder/CEO of YourMiMi, Inc., a mobile, onsite, infant/toddler childcare center organization. She is a retiree from CSU, Bakersfield having served twenty-eight years in the School of Education/Teacher Education Department as a Placement Coordinator and Supervisor. She served on the Bakersfield Police Activities League Board as the Founder and Director of the BPAL Afterschool Tutorial Program. She also was appointed to the Kern County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Board and remains a corporate sponsor. She holds a BS in Business Administration – Management. She is happily married (thirty-six years) to Ron Jacobs with three adult daughters, two sons-in-law and two grandbabies.

Robin Layton, of San Diego, has served for the last 35 years as President and CEO of Educational Enrichment Systems (EES)—a San Diego not-for-profit agency that provides subsidized child development and preschool services to over 1,100 children from low-wage working families. Layton expanded EES operations from just 3 sites in 1984 to 21 child development centers and preschools throughout San Diego County. Layton has actively participated in several local and statewide early education initiatives throughout her career, including current membership on the California Child Development Administrators Association Policy Advisors Committee and the Jewish Family Service Public Affairs Committee.

Laura (Kay) Ruhstaller, of Stockton, is the Chief Executive Officer for Family Resource and Referral Center in San Joaquin County (since 2003). She served as a First 5 San Joaquin, Children and Families Commissioner for 10 years prior to joining the Early Childhood Policy Council. She is currently the Financial VP for the Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce. Ruhstaller is one of the founders of the San Joaquin Children’s Alliance, as well as the Breastfeeding Coalition of San Joaquin County. She served two terms as Public Policy Chair and Board Member with the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network. Ruhstaller is also a Registered Dietitian.

Sonia P. Jaramillo, of Monterey County, has been in the Preschool-12 educational system for 25 years. Jaramillo has been a teacher, a principal and director of categorical programs. She is an elected official and serves as the board president for the Gonzales Unified School District. She earned a Master of Education degree from San Jose State University and holds a Reading Specialist Credential, a Bilingual Teaching Credential and an Administrative Credential. Currently, Jaramillo is the Senior Director for the Monterey County Early Learning Program.

Donna Sneeringer, of Sacramento, is Director of Government Relations for Child Care Resource Center, where she works with advocacy organizations and service providers to identify the need for early education and childcare across Los Angeles and California. She has worked for over 25 years on early childhood programs and policy throughout California. She earned a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Southern California and a Bachelor of Child Development degree from California State University Northridge.

Khydeeja Alam, of Elk Grove, serves as the Director of Governmental Relations at Advancement Project, where she helps shape and advocate for policies to expand opportunities in California's educational system and for underrepresented communities. During her tenure at Advancement Project, she has co-lead efforts to re-instate state funding and exponentially increased funding for early care and education programs for our state's youngest learners. Prior to joining Advancement Project, Alam worked for the California State Legislature and a firm dedicated to K-12 education policy. Alam graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, and is a proud mother of two handsome boys and a beautiful baby girl.

Sheryl Shushan, of Ojai, has led Patagonia's Global Family Services, which includes programs for employees such as on-site childcare, childcare tuition assistance and infant travel support since 2016. Shushan managed Colorado's Early Childhood Leadership Commission, which serves as the state advisory council on early childhood from 2014-2016. Shushan was the executive director of a county-wide nonprofit committed to the accessibility and quality of childcare, parent education, and health care services for children birth through age eight between 2009-2014. She was the founder and director of the C Lazy U Ranch Preschool from 1996-2009. Shushan earned a Master's in Educational Administration and Policy from the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver and a Bachelor's in Early Childhood Education from Naropa University.

Natali Gaxiola, of Hawthorne, has been teaching at Felton State Preschool in the Lennox School District since 2003. As a preschool teacher and instructional leader, she has been featured in print and online materials, such as the teaching channel, Development and Research in Early Math Education Network resources, and Heinemann's *Young Children's Mathematics* (Carpenter et al. 2016). She presents regularly at local and national mathematics conferences and coauthored the "Preschool Connections" chapter in Stenhouse Publisher's *Choral Counting & Counting Collections: transforming the PreK-5 math classroom*. She was awarded Early Childhood Educator of Los Angeles County in 2019. She is a member of the California School Employees Association. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from California State University Dominguez Hills.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction's appointee is:

Janet Zamudio, of San Leandro, currently works for the WorkLife Office at the Leland Stanford Junior University in Palo Alto, as the Director of Child Care. In this role, she is the steward of the University's resources for Stanford's childcare centers. From 2000-

2018 she worked at two pioneer Child Care Resource and Referral organizations, BANANAS and Children's Council of San Francisco. Zamudio served as a school board member, one year as President, from 2014-2018 in the San Lorenzo Unified School District. She earned her Bachelor of Social Welfare degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Master of Education degree focused on Leadership in Early Childhood from Mills College.

Parent Advisory Committee Members

The Governor's appointees are:

Mary Ignatius, of San Francisco, has been appointed Chair of the Parent Advisory Committee. She has been a statewide organizer for Parent Voices California since 2005. She served on the California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education. Ignatius earned a Master of Social Work degree from Temple University.

Lisete Frausto, of Oakland, has been a parent and community organizer for Kidango Child Care Center since 2018 and a medical biller for Optima Ophthalmic Medical Associates since 2015.

Yenni Rivera, of Los Angeles, has been outreach coordinator for People Assisting the Homeless since 2018. She was director of operations for the Masters Workshop from 2014 to 2019 and a sales manager for Marriott International from 2012 to 2013. Rivera is a member of the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence and an ambassador for Parent Voices of California.

The Legislature's appointees are:

Patrick D. MacFarlane, of Los Angeles, is Government Relations Manager at Child Care Resource Center (CCRC). He is a former Public Policy Associate at Crystal Stairs, Inc. and previously served as Senior Field Representative with the California State Assembly. A University of Arizona graduate, MacFarlane was born and raised in Los Angeles, where he resides with his wife Raquel and 2-year-old daughter Leah.

Workforce Advisory Committee Members

The Governor's appointees are:

Tonia McMillian, of Bellflower, has been appointed Chair of the Workforce Advisory Committee. She has been a licensed childcare provider since 1994 and owner of Kiddie Depot Family Child Care since 1996. She is an instructor for the American Red Cross and a childcare provider-organizer at SEIU Local 99. McMillian served on the California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education.

Miren Algorri, of Chula Vista, has been a childcare provider for Algorri Family Childcare since 1996. She is a member of the San Diego Family Childcare Association and California Family Childcare Network.

Virginia Eigen, of San Jose, has been a child development specialist for the Campbell Union School District since 2002. She is a member of the California Early Childhood Mentor Program and the California School Employees Association Chapter 868.

The Legislature's appointees are:

Patricia Alexander, of Elk Grove, is a licensed in-home family childcare provider and has provided childcare for over 49 years. She is still operating her family childcare and preschool. She is currently a support leader and mentor with Solutions provider network to family childcare providers in the community and nationally since 1990 to present. Some of Alexander's involvements include being former President of Sacramento Valley Association for the Education of Young Children (SVAEYC) from 2011 to 2018, a past board member for the association, and currently past president of SVAEYC. She also served as the family childcare committee chair, legislation chair, and other duties. Pat is also past Vice President to Family Childcare Providers Association of Sacramento and board member from 2003 to 2017. She is also a former board member for the California Association for Family Childcare Providers (CAFCC). Alexander is currently a member of the Child Care Providers Union (CCPU) and has been a member for more than 16 years. She holds a degree in Early Childhood Education, with a specialization in ages 2-4 and a master teaching permit through the state of California.

Amelia M. Soto, of Gardena, is a Family Services Advisor at the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation of Head Start, where she has worked for the last 10 years. She was previously the Head Teacher in their Early Head Start classroom for children ages 18 months to 3 years. Soto has held a variety of roles teaching children from 18 months to 5 years old in her over 20-year career. She is an active member of SEIU Local 99, where she served on the Executive Board committees, participated in training other early educators as a peer trainer in Occupational Health and Safety, and has been a shop steward and bargaining team member. Soto is bilingual and has an Associate degree in Child Development and a director's teaching permit from the state of California.