



## **Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative**

### **Equity Working Group | Member Profiles**

#### **Ahmadreza Bahrami**

**Public Behavioral Health Division Manager/Equity Services Manager  
Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health**

Ahmad Bahrami (pronouns: he/him) has worked in county behavioral health systems for over 13 years. He currently serves as the Division Manager for Public Behavioral Health at the Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health. Ahmad and his team oversee the department's administration of the Mental Health Services Act, health equity efforts, media and public relations, prevention (including suicide and substance misuse), outreach and education among other duties. Ahmad's educational background includes a Bachelor of Science in Criminology, a Master's in Business Administration, and completion of doctoral work in Organizational Development.

#### **Amanda Chavez**

**Interim Behavioral Health Director  
Indian Health Council Inc, Valley Center**

#### **An-Chi Tsou**

**Legislative Advocate  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU) California**

An-Chi Tsou, PhD is a legislative advocate for SEIU California focusing on health policy. Her healthcare career began at UC Berkeley and UC San Francisco where she earned her joint doctorate in bioengineering working on stem cell research. Interested in having a more direct impact on society, she transitioned to policy work in 2012 and became the health staffer for former Assembly Member, now Attorney General, Rob Bonta. She earned state agency experience as a Senior Policy Advisor for the Department of Cannabis Control (formerly known as the Bureau of Medical Marijuana Regulation), and has experience as a Senior Consultant for the Assembly Health Committee specializing in policies related to Medi-Cal, long-term care, and cannabis. An east coast transplant, An-Chi now lives in the Bay Area with her family.

#### **Artenesha Jackson**

**Program Manager  
UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland**

Artesha Jackson is a proud native of Oakland, California and a product of Oakland Public Schools. As a Clinical Social Worker, she has over eighteen years of direct service experience and prides herself on being a mentor and a leader in her community. As part of UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland, she found



the opportunity to combat health inequity through the Center for Child and Community Health. Jackson is a member of UCSF's Center for Community Engagement Council, serving on the Research Committee. She attended UC Berkeley, graduating with her Bachelor of Arts in African American Studies and Social Welfare. She then attended and graduated from The University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration with a Master of Arts degree in Clinical Social Work, with a concentration in School Social Work. In 2017, Jackson completed the Emerging Leaders of Color Leadership Program with Trauma Transformed, completed UCSF's Diversity and Inclusion Certificate Program in 2018 and is an Atlantic Fellow for Health Equity, Senior Fellow, 2019.

### **Brooklyn Williams**

**Senior Advisor to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction  
California Department of Education**

Brooklyn Williams currently serves as Senior Advisor to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. She has spent over 20 years leading transformational programs including acting as Freedom School Program Director, Chief Program Officer for mentoring programs at court and continuation schools, 21st Century/ASSESS Expanded Learning Program Director, and management of restorative justice, social emotional learning and Coordinated Student Services Team Implementation programs for youth. She has degrees in both Social Welfare and Education from UC Berkeley.

### **Christian Jacobs**

**Race and Health Equity Lead  
Office of Health Equity, California Department of Public Health**

Christian Jacobs is trained as a Marriage and Family Therapist and has a background providing direct care, clinical mental health services for youth and adults. Christian has extensive experience developing policies and procedures to improve health equity in the behavioral health system and overseeing commercial plan and Medi-Cal services for the California Department of Managed Healthcare, California State Legislature, Department of Healthcare Services, and California Department of Public Health Reducing Disparities Project as a Lead Project Manager. Christian has a distinct passion for fostering public awareness related to equity within the behavioral health system and creating a culture of diversity and inclusion for disparate groups. He developed a passion for health equity due to past lived experiences. In addition, he recognized several levels of barriers individuals faced while working in inpatient and outpatient facilities as a Youth and Adult County Mental Health Clinician in Sacramento and Solano County. He also devotes his time doing advocacy work in the community with non-profit agencies and community business organizations mentoring boys and young adults.



**Christine Blake**

**Product Owner**

**Center of Data Insights and Innovation (CDII), California Health and Human Services Agency**

Christine Blake is an IT Manager for the Center of Data Insights and Innovation (CDII) within the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS). The CDII was established to advance CalHHS data initiatives and help turn data into insights, knowledge, and action. Christine has a background in Enterprise Architecture (EA), Project Management and Portfolio Management. Christine received her Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Southern University A&M in Baton Rouge, LA and her MBA from Strayer University in Atlanta, GA. Christine is the Product Owner of the CalHHS Equity Data Dashboard. The purpose of the Equity Data Dashboard is to address demographic data gaps and close health disparities among CalHHS services and programs.

**Constance Mitchell**

**DNP, CPNP-PC**

**Open Door Community Health Center**

**Sorrel Leaf Healing Center**

Constance earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice and her Master's of Nursing, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner degrees from Oregon Health & Sciences University. Next year she will be participating in the PMHNP accelerated program at UCSF. Her focus for her doctorate was the implementation of ACEs screening in pediatric primary care. Prior to her career as a Pediatric NP, she worked as a Public Health Nurse for Child Welfare Services in the Emergency Response Unit in Humboldt County. In her professional roles she has primarily served rural underserved populations. She also served a Trinity County's CHDP Director and Immunization Coordinator. Her areas of interest include health equity, mental health, children with special health care needs, and addressing trauma in primary care.

**Donielle Prince**

**Director of State Initiatives**

**PACEs Connection**

Dr. Donielle Prince, Ph.D., is currently Director of State Initiatives at PACEs Connection, which supports community-based resilience initiatives. Prior to joining PACEs Connection, Donielle spent 20 years as a program evaluator focused on education, community-based youth programming, and mental health. Donielle's signature evaluation projects included youth development studies, trauma informed training evaluations, and educational equity focused program and curriculum evaluations. Early in her career, Donielle worked as a children's therapist. Donielle's community service interests reflect her professional focus. She has been a youth mentor, including foster youth and youth in diversion court; and a leader in community-based organizing against state violence, educational inequity, and lack of access to mental health supports. Donielle has studied education, counseling psychology, and race and racism, earning her



B.A. at Wellesley College (1995), her MS.Ed. at the University of Pennsylvania (1996), and her Ph.D. at Stanford University (2006).

**Ebony Chambers**  
**Chief Equity and Partnership Officer**  
**Stanford Sierra Youth and Families**

Ebony Chambers, Chief Equity & Partnership Officer at Stanford Sierra Youth and Families, has 20 years of experience working with issues of social justice, equity, education, mental health and diversity. She is a speaker, educator, and workshop leader who has worked extensively throughout the United States and has served nationally and locally as an advocate and activist for access to care and the elimination of the stigma of mental illness for underserved and unserved communities. Chambers also worked with the National Council of Behavioral Health, on addressing Health Disparities within her local community, with a focus on eliminating barriers and increasing access for the LGBT community. Active in the community, Ebony is engaged in community initiatives, ensuring consumer voice is integrated at every system level.

**Dr. Erik James Escareño**  
**CEO**  
**Wombat Innovations, LLC**

Erik James Escareño, DSW identifies as a two-spirited, indigenous (Yavapai Apache and Chiricahua Apache), Los Angeleno fueled by social justice and perpetuating meaningful change. Having expertise in the field of mental health, Dr. Escareño specializes on interventions for LGBTQIA2S+ and Deaf folx, HIV advocacy, BDSM advocacy/education, and non-profit program development. This unique and diverse background fuels their passion and advocacy for further research in the mental health and social work fields through a strong social justice lens. Dr. Escareño has skillsets already aimed at creating purposeful social change and positive disruption of injustice for underserved and underrecognized communities. As a grassroots social impact leader, they embrace strategy and collaboration as the impetus for designing meaningful change.

**Erin Cabezas**  
**Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Behavior Specialist**  
**Pittsburg Unified School District**

Erin is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who has worked in public school settings for the past 13 years. Erin is starting her 7th year as a behavior specialist in Pittsburg Unified School District and holds her preliminary administrative credential. Erin is a mother to two young boys and is striving to raise them along with her educator husband with an awareness and passion to work towards equity, justice, anti-



racism, and celebration of differences in all their actions. Erin is excited to join the Equity Working Group to identify and dismantle inequities that abound in all systems in our society. In her free time, Erin enjoys being in nature, gardening, and taking her family and dog on adventures.

**Ellie Lian**  
**State President**  
**California Association of Student Councils**

Ellie Lian is a Chinese American high school senior residing in Orange County, California. She is incredibly passionate about legislation and policy, specifically regarding educational equity, algorithmic justice, and racial justice, all of which she channels into a number of different initiatives ranging from statewide to grassroots advocacy. One of her biggest motivators is working towards increased youth empowerment and ensuring that all student voices are being honored in any decision-making matter that concerns them. Outside of her work in student organizing, you can find her thrifting, painting, reading, or writing poetry.

**Greg Wohlman**  
**Principal**  
**Tahoe Truckee Unified School District**  
**Sierra High School/Cold Stream Alternative/TTUSD Educational Options Tahoe Truckee Unified School District**  
**ACSA Educational Options Council, President-Elect, Region 2 Representative, ACSA CYBHI Representative**

During his 23 years in public education, Greg has grown from a teacher to an administrative intern, an administrator, and now is seen as a district leader. Greg has teaching and administrative experience at all school levels of K-12. His experience includes traditional, continuation, independent study, and online school leadership. This vast experience and expertise in education has allowed him to sit at any table and at any level to discuss and problem-solve situations in education ranging from personnel and instruction to finance and facilities and parental/community involvement. Besides the advancement speed of cellphone technology, Greg has not witnessed a more stunning acceleration in his career as he has with the increase in mental health needs of students across the state of California. Greg believes that we must find better strategies to support our students and families.

**Dr. Ivan DeJesus Alvarez**  
**Bilingual School Psychologist**  
**Santa Barbara County Education Office**

Dr. Ivan DeJesus Alvarez, EdD, MA, LEP, is the Region VIII Representative for CASP. Ivan previously served as Board Member and President for the Central Coast Association of School Psychologists from 2017-2020. He has served as a Bilingual School Psychologist for the Santa Barbara County Education Office since 2014.



He has experience working with diverse populations in preschool and K-12 settings, including students with a range of disabilities. Ivan received his doctorate degree from the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri, Columbia in May 2022. He serves on the Board of Directors for the Children and Family Resource Services in Santa Barbara County. He has a passion for working with diverse families and underrepresented populations, in particular students with disabilities and mental health needs.

**Imelda Padilla-Frausto**

**Research Scientist/Commissioner**

**UCLA Center for Health Policy Research/LA County Mental Health Department**

D. Imelda Padilla-Frausto, PhD, MPH, is a research scientist at the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. Her research agenda primarily focuses on the structural and social determinants related to inequities in mental health, access to mental health care, and economic security. Padilla-Frausto is a commissioner for the Los Angeles County Mental Health Commission, appointed by Hilda Solis, Board of Supervisor for District 1. She also serves on the Adult, Adolescent, and Child Technical Advisory Committees, and the Mental Health and Substance Use Workgroup for the California Health Interview Survey.

**Janice Rooths**

**Vice President**

**Parents Anonymous® Inc.**

Janice Rooths is Vice President at Parents Anonymous® Inc., a nationwide family strengthening organization since 1969 that provides Evidence-Based Parents Anonymous® Groups and operates the California Parent & Youth Helpline. Janice is a racial equity champion and has served as CEO of RootWize, an equity implementation firm. She has 35+ years of experience in strategic planning, project management, and community organizing including facilitating youth to develop an organizing plan for Riverside County Alliance for Boys and Men of Color. Janice is co-Founder of Antiracist Riverside, Co-Director of the Center Against Racism and Trauma, on the Riverside Mayor's Bipartisan Forum, leadership for the California Anti-Racism Alliance, and President of The Charles A. Bibbs African American Museum and Cultural Center. She holds a BA in Communication Arts and an MBA. Janice is recipient of the City of Riverside 2021 Dr. Carlos E. Cortes Award for Championing Diversity and Inclusivity.

**Juan Acosta**

**Mental Health Advocate**

Juan Acosta age 25, grew up in Woodland CA. He is a first generation Mexican Immigrant. He attended and graduated from San Francisco State University with a Bachelor's in Psychology. Juan began his advocacy work locally at the age of thirteen. At age 21, Juan drafted a historic LGBTQ+ proclamation for his hometown of Woodland, CA. Since then, Juan has done work throughout the state of California,



nationally, & globally. He has served on national committees, spoken at conferences and festivals including: United Nations Side Events, and the first ever Youth Mental Health Action Forum White House event. Juan is a New York Times bestselling author for a book co-authored with Lady Gaga, Channel Kindness: Stories of Kindness and Community. He collaborates on a regular basis with numerous organizations and brands. His work has been featured by Mashable, Oprah Magazine, DoSomething, MTV and more. He currently serves as one of the regional managers for the CalHOPE Warm Line, and as a board member for Steinberg Institute.

**Judith L. Perrigo**

**Assistant Professor**

**UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, Department of Social Welfare**

Judith L. Perrigo, Ph.D., LCSW, draws from her personal background as a Salvadoran immigrant and years of applied clinical work with children and families to inform her scholarship. She is currently an Assistant Professor at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, Department of Social Welfare and the Social Work Training Director for the UC-LEND program. Judith is committed to creating a strong start for every child, particularly underserved children of color. She has worked with communities to better understand international and domestic child welfare, IDEA Part C early intervention services, early childhood education, and neighborhood wellness. Judith believes that children's first five years of life are especially important because they undergo foundational development with lasting effects throughout their life course. Thus, she aims to improve well-being and foster resilience for young children, reform inequitable systems, and elevate holistic (e.g., physical, social, and cognitive) and transdisciplinary prevention and early intervention initiatives.

**Kanwarpal Dhaliwal**

**Associate Director and Co-Founder**

**RYSE**

Kanwarpal Dhaliwal (she/hers) is Associate Director and Co-Founder of RYSE in Richmond, California. Kanwarpal is the daughter of Punjabi immigrants, whose journey to the United States was propelled by global shifts from Post-Colonial British occupation to US empire building. These forces have been both protective and predatory for Kanwarpal, her family, and her community of origin. These axes of privilege and subjugation guide Kanwarpal's purpose, which is to contribute to movements, communities, and legacies of liberation; to honor and heal the ancestors who fought for her existence and survival; and to forge a world that is just and gentle for future generations. Kanwarpal holds a Master's Degree in Public Health from San Francisco State University.



**Kimberly Wayne**  
**Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer**  
**Seneca Family of Agencies**

Kimberly Wayne is Seneca Family of Agencies, Chief Equity, and Inclusion Officer. Kimberly has over 25 years of experience serving youth and families leading residential, educational and community-based programs. Kimberly is responsible for leading the organization's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion priorities and initiatives. Kimberly manages the oversight of the agency's DEI Advisory Board, identity-based employee resource and professional learning community workgroups, as well as language related (interpreting and translation) services. Leading this work for Seneca means re-imagining and developing equitable practices to offer employees from marginalized communities a more inclusive workplace experience. Kimberly believes that when the agency's employees experience the full benefits of an inclusive workplace, the youth and families served will receive more culturally appropriate and responsive services.

**Laila Fahimuddin**  
**Policy Director**  
**California State Board of Education**

Laila Fahimuddin serves as a Policy Director for the California State Board of Education, where she staffs policy matters related to special education, multilingual learners and student mental health. Prior to joining the SBE, she served as a research analyst at SRI International's Center for Education Policy, where she managed and conducted qualitative research on large-scale evaluations of school and district policy reforms related to college/career readiness, positive behavioral supports, social emotional learning, and the Local Control Funding Formula. Laila began her career as a community organizer with the ACLU of Northern California, where she led campaigns on education equity, biased policing, and freedom of expression. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts from the University of California, Los Angeles.

**Lishaun Francis**  
**Director, Behavioral Health**  
**Children Now**

Prior to joining Children Now, Lishaun Francis was an Associate Director at the California Medical Association. She provided policy support and analysis for California physicians on the issues of Medi-Cal, Workers' Compensation, and Health Information Technology. Lishaun spent over two years with the Legislative Analyst Office (LAO) where she provided fiscal and policy analyses to the State Legislature on issues of mental health, developmental disabilities, and alcohol and drug programs. In Washington, DC, Lishaun Francis worked as a Program Analyst for the U.S Department of Education, providing fiscal support on issues of higher education.





**Liz Harvey**  
**Founder and CEO**  
**Behavioral Health Outcomes Data Services (BHODS)**

Liz Harvey, M.S. is the Founder and CEO of Behavioral Health Outcomes Data Services (BHODS). Her passion lies in using outcomes data as a tool to advocate for increased access to high quality services for California's historically underserved and vulnerable child and youth populations. Liz brings over a decade of experience in performance improvement, data analytics, program evaluation, and research that spans across the disciplines of psychology, child/adolescent development, child welfare, and education. With a passion and specialization in the behavioral health industry, Liz and her company have helped numerous non-profits, community-based organizations, foundations, and governments increase their capacity to translate vision into measurable and actionable goals.

**Marielle A. Reataza**  
**Executive Director**  
**National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA)**

Marielle A. Reataza (she/siya) serves as the Executive Director of the National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA), based in Alhambra, CA. Through research, community engagement, and advocacy, NAPAFASA aims to reduce disparities involving lack of access to culturally responsive health and behavioral health services. Much of her recent work has addressed the stigma in seeking behavioral healthcare. Prior to this work, Dr. Reataza was a high school science teacher, general surgery resident physician, and researcher. Dr. Reataza earned her BS in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from UC Irvine and her Secondary Science Teaching Credential from CSU Dominguez Hills. She later obtained her MD from the UC Irvine School of Medicine and her MS from UCSF-UC Hastings Consortium on Health Policy and Law. Dr. Reataza is a native speaker of Tagalog and an immigrant from the Philippines.

**Mikah Owen**  
**Senior Director, Clinical and Academic Programs – Health Equity**  
**UCLA-UCSF ACEs Aware Family Resilience Network (UCAAN)**

Mikah Owen is the Senior Director, Clinical and Academic Programs – Health Equity for the UCLA-UCSF ACEs Aware Family Resilience Network (UCAAN). As a Social Pediatrician, Mikah's work focuses on developing and supporting systems of care for marginalized youth and working to protect and promote the rights of children. Mikah completed medical school at the University of California, San Francisco where he was a matriculant of the Program in Medical Education for the Urban Underserved. Mikah completed a fellowship program in Community and Societal Pediatrics at the University of Florida College of Medicine



- Jacksonville and the Pozen-Commonwealth Fund Fellowship in Health Equity Leadership at Yale University.

**Nancy Hsu**

**Equal Justice Works Fellow**

**National Health Law Program**

Nancy Hsu, JD, MSW (she/her) is a first-generation Asian American, a social worker, and an attorney and Equal Justice Works Fellow at the National Health Law Program (NHeLP). She has extensive experience working with and advocating for children and youth in California both as a clinician and a behavioral health policy advocate. She also has experience accessing the California behavioral health system as a consumer. For a decade, Nancy worked with children and families in settings, including school, hospital, community mental health clinic, and county child welfare agency. Her current work at NHeLP continues to focus on ensuring children and youth in California have adequate and quality access to behavioral health care through the schools and systematic and community-based services. Nancy is committed to helping California build an equitable behavioral health system for children, youth, and their families.

**Dr. Nina Moreno**

**Senior Consultant**

**Seed Collaborative**

Dr. Nina Moreno, PhD, has designed, implemented, and evaluated innovative, community defined, culturally relevant strategies to strengthen communities and promote equity, inclusion, belonging, and diversity (EIBD) for the past 25 years. Dr. Moreno is deeply committed to advancing EIBD within public systems and engaging communities in this process. She is currently a Senior Consultant with Seed Collaborative and the Founder and Principal of Moreno & Associates, where she consults on strategy; project design, implementation, management, and evaluation; research, analysis, writing, monitoring, and advocacy; and conducts group facilitation. She was the Chief Officer of Research and Health Policy at Safe Passages/SP and the Interim Executive Director at the Children's Defense Fund-California where she worked primarily on advancing health and education systems change. Nina holds a Ph. D. in Social Welfare from the School of Social Work at Hunter College, a M.S. in Social Welfare from Columbia University School of Social Work, and a B.S. in Social Welfare from Cornell University's College of Human Ecology. When she is not conducting research and developing strategy, Nina may be found exploring the world with her wife.

**Pamela Riley**

**Chief Health Equity Officer**

**Assistant Deputy Director, Quality & Population Health Management**

**Department of Health Care Services – California**

Pamela Riley is an Assistant Deputy Director, Quality and Population Health Management (QPHM), and Chief Health Equity Officer at the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) in California, effective May



2, 2022. In this newly created role, Pamela will lead DHCS efforts on health equity, serve as DHCS' representative to the California Health and Human Services Agency's Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee, and serve as DHCS' children's health champion. Pamela Riley holds a Master's in Public Health (MPH) and a Doctor of Medicine (MD).

**Robert Byrd**

**Acting Deputy Director**

**LA County Department of Mental Health**

Robert Byrd, Psy.D., is the Acting Deputy Director for the Prevention Services Division with LA County Department of Mental Health (DMH). Dr. Byrd joined LA County DMH in 2009, at a time when the Department was in the beginning stages of implementation of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) services, which are designed to proactively address the mental health needs of the county's population through education, support, outreach and evidence-based services. Collaborating with key partners that serve children, youth and families has been the cornerstone of Dr. Byrd's work and advocacy. He has been mindful of the value and importance of inter-agency communication and engagement, to ensure successful implementation and delivery of quality mental health services within the county. Throughout Dr. Byrd's career, prevention, and advocacy strategies, as well as reducing the stigma of mental health have been a priority of his work. It is within this context that Dr. Byrd has been appointed as Acting Deputy Director, to lead a team of professionals devoted to developing programs and resources that fulfil DMH's commitment to the promotion of prevention to address the risk factors associated with mental illness and emotional disturbances.

**Sandra Gallardo**

**Executive Director**

**Associated Students, Inc.**

Sandra is currently the Executive Director at Associated Students, Inc. at Sacramento State, a \$10 million 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that provides basic needs and support services to the 31,000 students at CSU Sacramento. Sandra oversees the campus food pantry and childcare center and is the primary advisor for the campus student government. In prior roles, Sandra was an Assistant Secretary at the California Health and Human Services Agency and served as senior counsel to Senator Ted Kennedy in the U.S. Senate. Sandra has a Juris Doctor from UC Berkeley and a Master's in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

**Sara Bachez**

**Deputy Director of External and Governmental Affairs**

**First 5 California**



Sara Bachez is Deputy Director of the External and Governmental Affairs Office at First 5 California. In this role, she oversees legislative, policy, public relations, and communications initiatives and staff. Prior to joining First 5 California, Sara served as the Chief Governmental Relations Office for the California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) since 2015. In that capacity, she represented over 24,000 school business officials on federal and state matters impacting public education. Prior to assuming her role at CASBO, she served as Legislative Advocate for the Association of California School Administrators. Sara began her career in public policy as a legislative fellow for Senator Sheila Kuehl and then served for five years as a budget consultant for the Assembly Budget Committee where she administered \$15 billion in state General Fund expenditures for California’s higher education systems, the California Student Aid Commission, childcare and development programs, and the California Employment and Development Department. Sara received a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Master of Business Administration from California State University, Sacramento.

**Dr. Seciah Aquino**  
**Deputy Director**  
**Latino Coalition for a Healthy California**

Dr. Seciah Aquino is the Deputy Director of the Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (LCHC) — the State’s leading policy organization advocating for health equity in the Latino community. In her role, she is responsible for building and activating the infrastructure needed to further strengthen organizational, financial, policy and program development while advancing LCHC’s external strategy. Throughout her career, Dr. Aquino has worked to address health inequities across the nation. From serving as a promotora in LA County to advancing policy work at the State level through the Legislative and Executive branches of the Massachusetts State Government. Most recently, she led the public benefits portfolio at the California Immigrant Policy Center where she successfully advanced affirmative policy strategies to address social determinants of health and led over 150 organizations in the state-wide response to the Federal Public Charge threats as the chair of the California Protecting Immigrant Families Coalition. Dr. Aquino holds a Doctorate in Public Health (DrPH) from Harvard University and a Master of Science (MS) in Global Medicine from the University of Southern California. She is an inaugural member of the Robert Wood Johnson’s Health Policy Research Scholars program and as such, is committed to building a Culture of Health across the nation and ultimately the world. Dr. Aquino was born in Guatemala and immigrated to the United States at the age of ten. Through life experience, she has been blessed to learn first-hand how to stand up for the oppressed, how to provide for the needy, and how to speak up for the rights of the destitute.

**Shirley Yee**  
**Senior Director of Programs**  
**YR Media**



Shirley serves as the Senior Director of Programs at YR Media in Oakland, California. Shirley comes with over 25 years of working alongside Bay Area BIPOC youth and young adults on equity focused youth advocacy in non-profits, education and policy, including extensive experience as an interactive trainer on understanding systems of power, structural inequities and building power through youth voice, advocacy and organizing. Shirley works to build partnerships to address systems of community wealth extraction and its impact on mental and behavioral health. Examples include statewide policy advocacy for youth economic and financial access, Oakland youth organizing for educational equity, building Bay Area youth power in schools to address issues of adultism, white supremacy, patriarchy and homophobia and more. Shirley is a queer identified, first generation U.S. born child of immigrant parents (China and Japan), raised within a mixed class background from the mid-west and is also a parent of a young adult.

**Stephanie Houston**

**Assistant Superintendent, Innovation & Engagement  
San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (SBCSS)**

Dr. Stephanie Houston has been a professional K12 educator for 28 years, currently serving as Assistant Superintendent- Innovation and Engagement for the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. In this role, she is responsible for collaboration efforts with educators, government, community & faith-based organizations, law enforcement, health, business & industry, and elected officials to provide personal and academic success opportunities for all students in San Bernardino County- from Cradle to Career. Additional highlights of experience include: current Vice Chair and Trustee for the San Bernardino Community College District; Superintendent Colton Redlands Yucaipa ROP (2007-2019); CDE College & Career Indicator workgroup member; Commissioner for the Council on Occupational Education national postsecondary accreditation agency; adjunct professor at University of Redlands- School of Education; Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) state Career Technical Education Council President (2011-2014); San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board Youth Council (1999-2014).

**Steve Zimmer**

**Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education**

**Vincent Pompei**

**Education Consultant**

Dr. Vincent Pompei is a consultant with expertise in promoting equitable practices for LGBTQ+ youth. He is also an Assistant Professor in Educational Leadership at San Diego State University and is an Advisory Committee Member of the California Department of Education's Safe and Supportive Schools for LGBTQ+ Youth. Previously, he was the Director of the Youth Well-Being Program for the Human Rights Campaign, a Project Director for the Center for Excellence in School Counseling and Leadership and served as President of the California Association of School Counselors. In 2019, Vincent authored the California LGBTQ Youth Report in partnership with the Association of California School Administrators and eight



other professional associations and co-authored *Advocating for LGBTQ Students with Disabilities* in partnership with the National Association of School Psychologists. Vincent was acknowledged by the National Education Association as a Classroom Superhero and was honored by both the California PTA and Equality California for creating safe and inclusive schools.

**Venus Esparza-Whitted**

**Associate Governmental Program Analyst (AGPA)  
California Department of Social Services (CDSS)**

Venus Esparza-Whitted has worked in child welfare for close to thirty years. Venus has been working on disproportionality at the county level as well as in her current role as an AGPA for CDSS Children Services Quality Management Branch, Performance & Program Improvement Bureau, Children's Services System Improvement Section. Venus brings passion for serving and advocating for marginalized youth, families, and communities. Through a lens of equity, her practice is geared towards collaboration and inclusion of all, especially for people of color.

**Zofia Trexler**

**California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) Board Member/Peer Self Advocacy Trainer  
CAYEN/Disability Rights California**

Zofia Trexler is a youth mental health and disability rights advocate from Fresno, California. She currently sits on the board for the California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN), the transitional age youth advocacy wing of Mental Health America of California. Currently, she is working as a Peer Self Advocacy Trainer for Disability Rights California, where she teaches youth with psychiatric disabilities about their rights, services, and self-advocacy skills. She is also a volunteer for YO! Disabled and Proud, a program of the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC). After graduating from Fresno City College, she transferred to Stanford University, where she is currently pursuing a degree in Urban Studies.