



2022 NCSL Youth Homelessness Fellows Program

Speaker Bios

Embassy Suites, Denver Downtown Convention Center
Silverton Ballrooms | Denver, CO | Sept. 12-14, 2022

Annie Bacci is the director of the Corporation for Supportive Housing. She has over 15 years of professional experience creating supportive housing opportunities. Bacci is responsible for leading CSH's strategic direction within the Mountain West Region including oversight of all projects, business development efforts and the expansion of potential partnerships. Email: annie.bacci@csh.org.

Darla Bardine is the executive director of the National Network for Youth. She has dedicated her career to young people and families who experience homelessness, poverty, violence and exploitation. Before joining NN4Y, Bardine created and launched the *Fight Child Exploitation in Tourism Initiative* in South Africa and worked to reform foster care in Washington, D.C. She fought to secure assistance for families navigating the criminal justice and child welfare systems and to end the practice of shackling incarcerated pregnant mothers. Bardine holds a B.S. in Criminal Justice from Pennsylvania State University, an M.A. in Nonprofit Management from the University of Roehampton and a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center. Email: darla.bardine@nn4youth.org.

Adrienne Bush is the executive director at the Homeless and Housing Coalition of Kentucky. She has worked in affordable housing, community development and homeless service programs. She supports the mission of eliminating the threat of homelessness and increasing affordable housing in Kentucky through policy advocacy, a statewide AmeriCorps and VISTA program and direct rental assistance to people who have experienced homelessness. Bush holds a Master of Public Administration from Eastern Kentucky University. Email: abush@hhck.org.

Naomi Smoot Evans is the executive director of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice. She oversees member relations and development, fundraising and grant management and the coalition's initiatives in government relations, leadership development, juvenile justice reform, communications, and training and technical assistance. She has helped state advisory groups build their capacity as change agents and worked with youth members to improve relationships between law enforcement and the communities in which they work. Prior to joining the coalition, she represented young people in Virginia and the District of Columbia in juvenile court proceedings and special education matters. She received her J.D. from the University of the District of Columbia, David A. Clarke School of Law, and her B.S. from Christopher Newport University. Email: evans@juvjustice.org.

Elizabeth Gaines is the founder and chief executive officer of Children's Funding Project. Her career began with leading after-school and community-based youth programs at the Atwood Community Center in Madison, Wis.



She later served as youth policy analyst for Citizens for Missouri's Children, followed by 13 years at the Forum for Youth Investment, where she helped policy leaders develop tools and techniques to improve their use of data, increase their policy alignment and more efficiently apply resources for greater impact. Gaines is also the executive director of Children's Funding Accelerator, the advocacy arm of Children's Funding Project. Since 2018, Gaines has guided Children's Funding Project through over 40 projects with national networks, state and local governments, advocates and youth leaders. Gaines is a native of St. Louis and attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Email: elizabeth@childrensfundingproject.org.

Patricia Julianelle is senior strategist for program advancement and legal affairs at SchoolHouse Connection. She is an attorney and legal consultant for state and local governments and nonprofit organizations. Julianelle has over 25 years of experience defending children's and youth's rights and leading state and federal policy advocacy. Her expertise is in education law and policy, including the rights of children and unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, students with disabilities and undocumented immigrants. Her work has been published in academic and practice journals, including the Children's Legal Rights Journal, the Journal of Negro Education, Seattle Journal of Social Justice and Journal of Poverty Law & Policy. She graduated from Yale University and received her J.D. summa cum laude from Lewis & Clark Law School. Email: patricia@schoolhouseconnection.org.

Melissa Merrick is president and CEO of Prevent Child Abuse America, the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit organization dedicated to the primary prevention of child abuse and neglect. She has more than 20 years of clinical, research and leadership experience related to the etiology, course and prevention of child abuse and neglect. Previously, Merrick was a senior epidemiologist at the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Merrick leverages her clinical and research experiences to communicate and disseminate the public health importance of preventing early adversity to key stakeholders with diverse priorities, backgrounds and knowledge, including legislators, business and civic leaders, and members of the academic and medical communities. Merrick received her bachelor's degree in psychology, magna cum laude, from the University of Pennsylvania. She earned master's and doctoral degrees in clinical psychology from the San Diego State University/University of California, San Diego, joint doctoral program in clinical psychology, where she was a program coordinator for the San Diego site of the Longitudinal Studies on Child Abuse and Neglect consortium. Email: mmerrick@preventchildabuse.org.

Kelly Russo is the director of the American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness & Poverty in Washington, D.C. She coordinates policy development and programming related to the legal needs of people experiencing homelessness and poverty, and she collaborates with national, state and local advocacy groups, associations and government agencies to provide technical assistance and address issues related to homelessness and poverty. She leads the ABA Homeless Youth Legal Network, a national network that provides



information and fosters collaboration to help attorneys and providers address gaps in legal services for homeless youth. She is licensed to practice law in Florida and Washington, D.C. She graduated from Wake Forest University School of Law with a J.D. and from Wake Forest University with a B.A.

Email: Kelly.Russo@americanbar.org.

Tim Storey is the chief executive officer of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) with offices in Denver and Washington, D.C. Storey has spent the past 30 years working for and studying legislatures—specializing in the areas of elections, redistricting, legislative organization and leadership. During his tenure at NCSL, he has participated in, and led, more than two dozen, in-depth studies of legislative operations. And, he has consulted with, and conducted training for parliaments around the world. Storey staffed NCSL's Redistricting and Elections Committee for 20 years, authoring numerous articles and papers on the topics of redistricting and elections. For two decades, he led NCSL's StateVote effort to collect and analyze state election results. He led NCSL's State Services Division prior to being hired as NCSL's third executive director in June 2019. Born and raised in western North Carolina, he attended Mars Hill College and received his master's degrees from the University of Colorado. Email: tim.storey@ncsl.org.

Taylor Vitello is the director of proximate policy at Think of Us, a research and design lab focused on transforming the child welfare system so people with lived experience are at the center. Taylor is a founding team member of the organization's Center for Lived Experience. Previously, she served as the senior director of policy for the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, where she led government relations, Congressional Adoption Caucus work, education and advocacy work in domestic and international child welfare policy. Taylor has played an instrumental role in leading child welfare laws to passage, including the Adoption Tax Credit in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Taylor received her undergraduate degree in political science from the Catholic University of America and a master's degree in Public Management from Johns Hopkins University.

Email: taylor@thinkof-us.org.

Brittany Wade is a homeless program specialist at the Office of Homeless Youth Services at the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. With over 15 years of experience working with youth and families in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, Wade has expertise in systems-level coordination and direct services. As director, she administers rapid re-housing, homelessness prevention, host home and supportive housing programs throughout Colorado; uses best practices such as Housing First and youth-centered program models; and collaborates with state and local governments, Continuum of Cares, nonprofit organizations and other youth stakeholders to address the unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

Email: brittany.wade@state.co.us.

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