



Building for Equity:

National Early Care and Education Practitioners Advisory Committee



May 2023

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Committee Overview

In August 2022, the Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF) launched a National Early Care and Education Practitioners Advisory Committee (NEPAC) as part of its efforts to center the voices of providers. The group comprises leaders in the early care and education (ECE) field who have successfully used LIIF grant funds in the past.

Participants

NEW YORK CITY



DORIS IRIZARRY

FAMILY CHILD CARE; CO-FOUNDER
ECE On The Move

Doris Irizarry is the co-founder of ECE On The Move. She serves the grassroots organization by mobilizing its 600 Family Child Care Providers/ Members who are historically marginalized and impacted by systemic issues. She is also an early care educator in a residential setting – for the past 25 years.



GLADYS JONES

FAMILY CHILD CARE; CO-FOUNDER
ECE On The Move

Gladys Jones is the founder and leader of ECE On The Move, a membership organization of more than 600 early childhood educators working in residential settings in New York City. The organization was formed more than a decade ago when Gladys became tired of the lack of respect and representation she was seeing in politics and policies that affected the family child care industry. She became a leading voice in pursuit of change. A diverse and representative organization focused on family child care and is provider-led, ECE On The Move speaks from experience and conviction as it pursues a bold vision that includes living wages for educators and quality services to children and families – regardless of income. Gladys is an active leader of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care. She serves as one of the Campaign facilitators and a co-chair of the Action Team, the Campaign work group that leads and coordinates direct action, lobby days, and regional events. Gladys is frequently invited to speak at national, statewide, and New York City convenings and hearings.

Participants

NEW YORK CITY



SHANITA BOWEN
FAMILY CHILD CARE; DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
ECE On The Move

Shanita Bowen served 17 years as a Family Day Care Provider in the Fordham area community of the Bronx, ensuring that children aged two months - 12 years were given opportunities to explore culturally rich activities out of the Bronx and across the city. Shanita currently serves as the Director of Operations and a Family Child Care Provider Advocate for the grassroots organization, ECE On The Move, working with over 600 Early Care Educators throughout New York City. ECE On The Move organizes efforts to build up an equitable child care system shaped by the needs of Providers and Parents.

Participants

WASHINGTON, D.C.



CASSANDRA NELSON
CENTER-BASED; CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Kiddie University

Cassandra Nelson has nearly 30 years of providing high-quality, affordable child care services to children and families. Currently, she operates three locations in the District of Columbia. DC Mayor Muriel Bowser and the State Superintendent of Education have personally recognized all three locations. The third location is a proud recipient of A2Q funding from LIIF in 2018, and she is currently seeking funding for a fourth location. Cassandra sits on LIIF's National ECE Practitioners Advisory Board and the boards of DC Early Learning Collaborative, and the Ward 7 Business Partnership. She is also committed to the city's children and families through advocacy and philanthropy. Before her DC business endeavors, she worked in the federal government from 1976-1994. She gained valuable business experience and quickly rose to a high-level GS position. In 1992, Cassandra and her husband John acquired a failing child care center; under her leadership, the organization quickly grew from 50 children in one location to 600 children in four locations, two in Prince Georges County and two in Charles County. She gained approval from the MSDE to conduct a private certified Kindergarten program which later expanded to provide first- to third-grade education recognized by public schools nationwide.

Participants

WASHINGTON, D.C.



CYNTHIA DAVIS

CENTER-BASED; FOUNDER, OWNER & DIRECTOR
Kings & Queens Child Care Center

Cynthia Davis is the founder and Owner/Director of Kings & Queens Child Care Center, “the place where every child is royalty.” Cynthia worked as a contractor for the Department of Justice for 23 years and now as a Family Child care Teacher for over 15 years. Cynthia believes that high-quality care begins with providing resources, predictable routines and opportunities for adventure and exploration for children, and support to families so they can thrive regardless of economic status. Cynthia received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Development and Master’s degree in Early Childhood Education. Cynthia is currently the Executive Director of the D.C. Family Child Care Association. Cynthia’s mission is to advocate and ensure that Family Child Care Teachers’ voices are heard and recognized for their dedication and contributions to the field of Early Childhood Education.

Participants

WASHINGTON, D.C.



DELORES MCGEE

CENTER-BASED; OWNER/ADMINISTRATOR
Emergent Preparatory Academy

Delores McGee is a native of Washington, D.C. and currently resides in Bowie, MD. She was born to great parents who raised 18 children. Delores graduated from Strayer University in Business Administration and is attending Purdue Global University, focusing on Early Childhood Education. Her goal is to serve all children and families within Emergent Preparatory Academy’s reach. They have four school locations, three located in urban areas and one in Ward 5 of the District of Columbia, serving a diverse culture. Delores’ beliefs include spirituality over religion. She believes in always reaching above and beyond, aiming higher than expected. Delores also believes that adversity is your best teacher and that something good has to come from all adversarial conditions. She tries to bring this thought process to her business, families that she encounters, and her personal life. Her life goals are to be of service. She has always been drawn to those who need her (whatever it might be). Delores’ greatest joy is in what she is doing now — “when you can see the difference you make, it is joyful and humbling.”

Participants

CALIFORNIA



JENNIFER ALLEN
CENTER-BASED; EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Long Beach Day Nursery

Jennifer Allen is the Executive Director of Long Beach Day Nursery, one of California’s oldest licensed child care centers. After a 20-year international career focusing on community development in Mexico, where she held positions as Executive Director, Operations Manager, and Communications and Fundraising Manager in low-income communities, she has found her home in Long Beach, CA. She believes that Early Care and Education is a primary strategy for reducing intergenerational poverty and loves to empower collaboration between people and organizations. Bilingual in English/Spanish, she is also a Certified Trained Facilitator with a Master’s in Business Administration (MBA) from SNHU and a Bachelor of Arts in English from UCSB. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for Leadership Long Beach, Inc. and Amextra, Inc.



MAKINYA WARD
CENTER-BASED; FOUNDER & CEO
Kids Konnect Preschool

Makinya Ward, Founder & CEO of Kids Konnect Preschool, is a talented and seasoned business leader with more than 20 years of child care industry experience. She brings a wealth of expertise with particular strengths in business development, project management, traditional and digital marketing, and P&L management. In the midst of her corporate marketing career, Makinya founded and grew Kids Konnect, which was voted, Best Preschool in the Bay Area by the readers of Bay Area Parents magazine in 2010, 2018, and 2020. Since devoting her full attention to the preschool in 2014, she has grown from a single location supporting 42 families to five locations supporting nearly 200 families across the Bay area.

Participants

CALIFORNIA



MONIQUE GUIDRY
FAMILY CHILD CARE; OWNER, DIRECTOR & EDUCATOR
Guidry’s Early Care & Education Program

Monique Guidry has served in the Early Childhood Education workforce (center-based and currently family child care) for the past 24 years and holds a B.A. in Humanities & Leadership with emphasis on Early Childhood Education. She was the president of the Family Child Care Association of San Francisco and has been a Mentor Teacher through the California Early Childhood Mentor Program for the past 16 years. She also represents District 11 of San Francisco as a Child Care Planning and Advisory Council member. Through these experiences, she developed a deep appreciation for the power of public voice and the necessity for early childhood educators to provide informed first-hand knowledge to policymakers and stakeholders.

She is dedicated to serving her community. She is a member of the OMI (Outer Mission Ingleside) Community Collaborative, Young Ladies Institute, Invest Black, and Mega BlackSF to support and address the racial disparities for Black children and families in San Francisco. Her commitment to Black children inspired her to become a founding member of the African American Early Childhood Educators of San Francisco, an organization created to address the unrealized potential of Black children and Black families. To address California’s educational and Early Childhood Care disparities, she has been appointed by Assemblyman Phil Ting as Assembly District Delegate for District 19.

Participants

CALIFORNIA



OSCAR TANG
FAMILY CHILD CARE; BOARD MEMBER
Family Child Care Association of San Francisco

Oscar Tang has been a child care advocate in the home-based child care community since 2016. He has served on the boards of local & state early childhood education organizations, including: Family Child Care Association of San Francisco (FCCASF), California Family Child Care Network (CFCCN) and California Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCR&RN). His current and past advocacy projects include Language Justice for equitable information access for monolingual communities, providing constructive feedback and modification on infant safe-sleep regulations, removing barriers for operating and ensuring housing right protection of family child care providers. His family started their first family child care program in 2011. He now works in CCR&RN supporting the statewide child care consumer education website.



YESSIKA MAGDALENO
FAMILY CHILD CARE; OWNER, DIRECTOR & FOUNDER
Child Care Business Institute

Yessika Magdaleno opened her family child care business in May 2001 when her second child was born. Since then, she has become very involved with the child care field, leading her to found the Child Care Business Institute. Yessika regularly attends and leads workshops, conferences, and other educational events at many institutions. She is a member of several professional associations, including the National Association for Family Child Care, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Orange County Child Care Association, La Asociación Latina para el Cuidado Infantil, Child Care Providers United, Child care Changemakers, and the Orange County Child Care Council.

Participants

CALIFORNIA



DR. YOHANA QUIROZ
CENTER-BASED; CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER
Felton Institute

Dr. Yohana Quiroz is the Chief Operations Officer at Felton Institute in the San Francisco Bay Area. She is an experienced senior executive with 25 years of working with diverse, low-income at-promise clients with multiple barriers and abilities. She is responsible for developing the vision and managing publicly funded early care and education, early intervention & inclusion, family support, and community-based behavioral/mental health services via a two-generation, holistic, and culturally responsive approach.

Dr. Quiroz has led strategic partnerships, agency-wide growth initiatives, program development, and expansion efforts, including new ECE co-development projects with affordable housing communities in three different San Francisco neighborhoods. She also helps set and continuously align her organization around key strategic priorities, driven by an understanding of the needs of the communities they serve, the ever-changing non-profit landscape, and the organization’s internal core capabilities.

As a lifelong learner and advocate, Dr. Quiroz strives to ensure Felton’s collective work always centers on, celebrates, and uplifts the lived experiences of BIPOC children, youth, and their families, as well as the workforce that cares deeply for their lives and education. Dr. Quiroz earned a doctorate in Educational Leadership in P-20 from San Francisco State University, a Master of Arts degree in Organization and Leadership in Education from the University of San Francisco, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Child and Adolescent Development, with a concentration in Early Childhood Education from San Francisco State University.



NEPAC Facilitators

ERICKA ERICKSON | Director of Strategic Administration and Equity

ESMERALDA MARTIN-SINGH | Policy and Partnerships Manager

JOE FRETWELL | Manager of Advisory Services

MIGUEL GAVALDON | Facilitation Consultant

PAMELA CAMPOS | Policy and Program Officer

SHELLY MASUR | ECE Vice President of Advisory and State Policy

Regional Breakout Room Facilitators

AMY SHEA | Senior Program Officer, New York City

ELIZABETH WINOGRAD | ECE Manager, San Francisco

LAURA JACKMAN | ECE Director, Capacity Building, Washington, D.C.

VASHON MAULTSBY | Program Officer, Atlanta

YARIMAR GONZALEZ | Program Officer, New York City

Guest Speakers

ANGIE GARLING | Vice President of Early Care and Education

COURTNEY JENSEN | Lobbyist, Fernandez Cervantes Government Affairs

KIM DIGIACOMO | Vice President, ECE Capacity Building

LUCY ARELLANO BAGLIERI | Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer

OLIVIA BARROW STRAUSS | Policy Manager

SOYLA FERNANDEZ | Lobbyist, Fernandez Cervantes Government Affairs

Listening & Learning Circles - Highlights

KICK-OFF SUMMIT

In early August 2022, LIIF's National Early Care and Education Practitioners Committee (NEPAC) convened virtually for the first listening and learning circle with the committee hearing an overview of LIIF's background in advocacy for equitable ECE and community development policymaking at the Local, State, and Federal levels. This was followed by a presentation focused on the history of child care policy in the United States and how its legacy of racism perpetuates the underfunded system we see today. Together, we reviewed LIIF's policy work at the national level, in partnership with the National Children's Facilities Network (NCFN), and discussed LIIF's vision for a child care system that provides equitable, accessible, affordable and quality care for all children from birth to five. We closed the summit by agreeing to a learning calendar focused on specific topics.

STATE & LOCAL ECE POLICY

In late August 2022, LIIF hosted the first Listening and Learning Circle with the committee to frame how State and Local policy impact the ECE field. The committee heard a high-level overview of how bills become law and the powers at play within the 3 branches of government. To discuss advocacy at the State level, we highlighted Build Up California's work to navigate a budget ask through the State budget-setting process. This was followed by an explanation of how government operates at the local level by highlighting Build Up San Mateo County where technical assistance is utilized to engage with local planning departments, planning commissions, city councils, and the County Board of Supervisors to identify viable locations, funding and additional solutions to the child care infrastructure crisis. In LIIF regional breakout groups, we provided a space for the committee to discuss priority issues in their communities and identify influential decision-makers in preparation for sharing a regional policy update.

HOW TO INFLUENCE POLICY

In September 2022, the committee reconvened for a presentation on Five Tips to Influence Policy. Drawing from the experience of the NCFN, the committee learned about the lasting impact of 1. Building partnerships and coalitions, 2. Clear communication, 3. Prioritizing relationships with policymakers and their staff, 4. Identifying synergies, and 5. Celebrating small successes. The presentation was followed by guest speakers Courtney Jensen and Soyla Fernandez from Fernandez Cervantes Government Affairs, who described their work in Sacramento as lobbyists supporting LIIF in crafting strategies and finding solutions to advancing ECE facilities work in California. Following the presentations, the committee reconnected in their regional breakout groups to identify partnerships and policy solutions for addressing local ECE facilities issues.

CO-LOCATING CHILD CARE

In October 2022, the committee convening was focused on connecting ECE and community development. Using the definition of community development by the United Nations as a process where the conditions of social and economic progress are created through participation within the community and resilience on community initiatives, we discussed the elements of community development, such as housing, transit, environment, economic development, and planning with children, youth, families and senior citizens at the center of a vision for thriving communities. As a group, we discussed the infrastructure of family-friendly neighborhoods and what is needed to build neighborhoods that work for all families by including child care near housing and transit to incentivize walkable communities with less traffic congestion.

CLIMATE RESILIENCY & VALUES

In November 2022, our committee held its final listening and learning circle connecting climate change and early childhood. Through this presentation, we learned the ways that young children are uniquely vulnerable

to climate change and the environmental stressors that most affect them, such as extreme heat, air quality, flooding, sea-level rise, hurricanes, and wildfires among other naturally occurring disasters. To plan for a future where the newborns of 2022 are expected to experience a four-fold increase in extreme weather and climate-related events over their lifetime, we discussed policy recommendations that ensure communities develop funding that invests in small businesses and ECE practitioners who need assistance to adopt climate mitigation strategies that enable their use of resilient, high-quality and sustainable materials. In closing, the group drafted value statements that laid the foundation for our shared values.

CLOSING / CELEBRATION SUMMIT

In February 2023, after 8 months of meeting virtually, LIIF hosted our NEPAC members in San Francisco, CA for a day-long summit where we reviewed the NEPAC policy recommendations through an interactive feedback session that allowed us to reflect on what the policy platform was missing and what meaning each policy priority held for our group of ECE leaders. Next, we traveled via local public transit on Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) to observe a high-quality ECE facility co-located with affordable housing in the Mission District of San Francisco. The site-visit took place at Felton’s Solmar Learning Center with our very own Dr. Quiroz sharing her experience leading the development and managing the process of building a new ECE facility in a community of high need. The NEPAC Celebration Summit was a successful opportunity for our NEPAC members to network across geographic regions, connect with LIIF staff, and celebrate the collective achievements of our ECE leaders.

Shared Values

As part of the NEPAC policy and advocacy training module, committee members worked collaboratively to brainstorm, write, and agree on a set of shared values to apply as a lens for evaluating policies and proposals. Setting values is a critical precursor to making policy recommendations, and the inaugural LIIF NEPAC value statements below are intended to inform future updates to the committee’s policy platform.

The value-setting process began with a survey completed by all NEPAC members that asked them to select five words from a list of values that they thought should be the foundation of all public policy decisions affecting the ECE sector. The five most commonly identified words were: **SUSTAINABILITY, EQUITY, RESPECT, DIGNITY, and CHANGE**. Members then participated in facilitated small group discussions to draft statements explaining these values, which are identified below.

On *sustainability* of the early care and education sector, the NEPAC believes...
Early care and education is a public good, and everyone should realistically be able to access it in the setting that best fits their needs and priorities.

On promoting *equity*, the NEPAC believes...
The United States early care and education sector has roots in racism, discrimination, and prejudice, and the best way to respond to injustices of the past is to intentionally steward resources and focus on the communities, children, and programs that have historically been excluded from opportunities.

On building *respect* in the sector, the NEPAC believes...
Regardless of where a family lives or where a child is born, they are deserving of respect and access to a developmentally appropriate, loving, nurturing, and engaging early education experience.

On *dignity* for the work of early care and education, the NEPAC believes...
The early care and education field is deserving of dignity and recognition of the meaningful contributions to society that are made in a variety of settings.

On advancing *change*, the NEPAC believes...
Early care and education is fundamental to child well-being, family economic security, small business growth, and thriving communities. Therefore significant public investment is needed to ensure the programs that provide this public service are able to thrive.

Policy Recommendations

A core focus of LIIF's inaugural National Early Care and Education Practitioners Advisory Committee (NEPAC) was to collaboratively design a policy platform based on expert presentations and small group discussions that occurred during the six NEPAC convenings in 2022 and 2023. Committee members voted to approve the initial NEPAC Policy Platform at the February 6, 2023 in-person summit.

Each of the nine recommendations below stems from the experiences of individual early care and education (ECE) providers that LIIF works with through NEPAC, as well as other grantmaking, lending, technical assistance, and advisory committees nationally. The initial NEPAC Policy Platform is meant to be continuously updated and reconsidered over the course of the current two-year term. Recommendations are meant to be adaptable and relevant in various places and levels of government.

The ultimate goals of recommendations below are to increase access to high quality, equitable, and healthy child care, stabilize the workforce, and improve economic stability within all communities.

- 1. Invest more public resources in child care facilities to improve quality, build supply of licensed spaces, and improve sector working conditions.** Federal, state, and local policymakers should identify resources to establish dedicated, multi-year child care facilities funds to create more licensed child care programs and options for families. Such programs should include a mix of grants and affordable loans to ensure all children in need of care have access to healthy, high quality, and nurturing environments. Facilities and physical space are chronically under-resourced in the early care and education sector despite the [overwhelming benefit](#) that high-quality environments have on child development, staff satisfaction and working conditions, and broader community development efforts. Many child care providers have put off necessary repairs and expansion projects in order to cover operating costs as the sector continues to work to return to pre-pandemic enrollment. Dedicated facilities funds should be administered through a financial intermediary, such as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), that leverages public resources with private and philanthropic funds to double or triple total resources available for the sector. Working with an intermediary partner also allows states and cities to avoid cumbersome reimbursement mechanisms and enables more efficient, equitable access to capital among providers who have historically struggled to access conventional financing.
- 2. Ensure ECE providers have access to robust technical assistance to successfully complete development projects.** A large, multi-year facility construction or renovation project can be a once-in-a-career undertaking for ECE providers. Technical assistance (TA) from trusted intermediaries and facilities development experts is critical to ensure projects are financially viable, well designed, and prepared for common challenges. CDFIs, including LIIF, offer specialized TA that bridges the child care sector, the financial services industry, and real estate – a unique combination of expertise that is often distinct to CDFIs. We have expertise in topics ranging from building business plans to capital stacks, and we leverage expertise and best practices from our other geographies. TA for facilities development projects requires working closely and collaboratively with child care providers to address individualized issues. Common forms of support include navigating regulatory processes, licensing and building code regulations; loan financing both through LIIF and or other CDFIs that offer small business loans; and other TA for facilities development and business sustainability.

- 3. Raise rates for ECE providers who serve children from low-income families.** Low subsidy reimbursement rates are a primary driver of the challenges ECE programs face in qualifying for and affording traditional bank financing and debt for large facilities projects. Not all providers are guaranteed the highest rates, and the process to apply for reimbursement is cumbersome and inaccessible for many. Currently, providers do not have sufficient support in completing the paperwork necessary to access higher rates. In the short-term, states should contract with TA service providers to support child care operators to ensure they can obtain the highest rates possible and to train providers in how to support the families they serve as they apply for subsidy vouchers. Additionally, decoupling parents' work hours from the child's access to child care services would increase the number of families that qualify for access to child care assistance and ensure that all children have access to child care regardless of their parents' work hours. Each of these factors is fundamental to the long-term viability of ECE businesses. With adequate public funding for programs that provide care to low-income families and communities, facilities projects and program expansion would be more of a possibility through traditional small business lenders.
- 4. Continue to increase ECE workforce compensation.** ECE facilities investments must be made in tandem with parallel efforts to increase wages and total workforce compensation. Despite evidence of aggregate economic recovery from job losses that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data show that the child care workforce has [not recovered](#). ECE employment in October 2022 was still 8.4% below what it was in February 2020. The economics of child care in the United States are [broken](#): families pay too much, and providers receive too little. New York and the Hochul administration took important steps to respond to this conundrum in the FY2023 state budget with nearly [\\$350 million in support for the child care workforce](#). Interventions like these must continue, and be replicated, in order to fairly compensate essential workers, better position programs operating on thin margins to recruit and retain staff and ensure that facilities and infrastructure dollars can be as impactful as possible. Until compensation of early educators and program directors comes more into line with that of teachers and administrators in K-12 schools, the ECE sector will continue to struggle to recruit and retain its workforce.
- 5. Promote supportive land use policies that ease facilities projects.** There are many hidden regulatory barriers and exclusionary land-use policies that artificially constrain housing supply and restrict the ability of ECE providers to construct new facilities and expand or improve existing ones. There needs to be a direct focus on reforming state and local zoning, permitting, and other development regulations to increase supply of ECE facilities. State incentives could also encourage localities to reduce complexity and length of conditional use permit reviews for ECE programs and reconsider parking mandates that may constrain supply.
- 6. Align supply building initiatives with housing, community development, and tax credit programs.** With minor policy tweaks, government agencies could unlock significant additional public and private capital for the ECE sector. One way to encourage this is by creating incentives in the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) [administration guidelines](#) for affordable housing developers who are willing to create space for or partner with ECE providers. Co-location of affordable housing and child care is a powerful tool for supporting families and communities, as represented by the [more than 20 states](#) that currently have LIHTC incentives for projects that seek to meet housing and ECE needs of low-income families. Beyond LIHTC policy, states could develop a gap financing

program such as [Oregon's \\$10 million CARE Fund](#) for housing developments that include space for ECE, an approach that inspired the recent introduction of [Congressional legislation](#) for a federal pilot to accelerate strategies for co-location. State administration of other traditional community development programs, like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), represents additional opportunity to stretch existing public resources further by building in incentives or setting aside funds to construct or improve ECE facilities in conjunction with broader economic development, infrastructure, or housing initiatives. Importantly, timelines for deployment and use of community development incentives should align with traditional child care funding programs to ensure that ECE providers can adequately partner with housing developers and other stakeholders. Nonprofit and private landlords could also be encouraged to lease or retrofit existing commercial spaces or residences to child care providers with waivers or reductions in property tax liabilities, as already tested in [Colorado's HB22-1006](#).

7. **Encourage the use of existing publicly owned assets to build ECE supply.** The cost of acquiring property or finding suitable space for ECE facilities bars many existing, high-quality providers from expanding their capacity at new sites. States should gather information on publicly owned buildings or land that is vacant or underused, as well as public parks and outdoor spaces proximate to ECE facilities, and identify which could be donated, used by, or affordably sold or leased to ECE programs. Voters in San Diego recently approved a [ballot measure](#) to open up city libraries and parks and recreation buildings for use by ECE programs, and cities nationwide regularly seek out ways to use assets to develop needed housing or other community facilities in coordination with nonprofit and private partners. State guidance on best practices or financial incentives for these initiatives could help cities and counties better envision their role in building supply of ECE.
8. **Center children and families in transit planning, urban design, and infrastructure projects.** Young children and families need reliable, high-quality anchor institutions in their communities, like affordable housing, ECE facilities, libraries, and parks. However, the connectedness of these institutions – through physical proximity or transportation and mobility planning – [too often ignores](#) the realities and challenges of raising and traveling with young children. Corridors children and caregivers use to travel from home to parks or care facilities [must be made safer](#) by slowing traffic, creating dedicated public spaces for pedestrians, and co-locating services to [reduce time spent in commute](#). Beyond safety, though, states should consider how it might use abundant federal infrastructure resources to improve relationships children have with the environment that surrounds them. Making it easier and safer for parents to walk, cycle, or take public transit multiplies the benefits of high-quality ECE facilities [far beyond classroom walls](#). It positions the act of travel itself as a child development intervention, reducing parent stress and creating more opportunities for play and positive interactions between young children and adults.
9. **Prioritize children in new programs to combat climate change.** The impacts of climate change – notably extreme heat, poor air quality, sea-level rise, and more frequent natural disasters – pose a threat to everyone, but they [disproportionately harm young children](#). Adapting child care settings to be more resilient, energy efficient, and sustainable can have immediate benefits for child health and safety and support societal goals to reduce aggregate greenhouse gas emissions. States should identify innovative ways to ensure that the spaces where young children live and play are prioritized for funding. This could occur through direct set asides for ECE programs and

partnerships with intermediary organizations like CDFIs to provide TA to small businesses who need support identifying and completing projects to make new or existing programs more sustainable and resilient. LIIF made [substantial recommendations](#) to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on allowable expenses, sources of leverage, and best practices for the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund that states could mirror in designing a climate bond program.

Conclusion / Reflections

Access to high-quality early care and education is the foundation for healthy, thriving children and families. Quality, affordable child care is a community investment that enables the whole family to succeed by permitting parents to work or attend school while feeling confident their children are getting a strong start on the skills necessary for future success in school and life. While high-quality early care and education programs may look different for every child and family, all provide healthy, supportive, engaging places for children to learn and grow.

Unfortunately, demand far exceeds supply for high-quality child care, particularly for low-income families. At LIIF, we advocate for local, state, and federal policies that support child care facility development; using capital, capacity building and public advocacy together, LIIF builds sustainable community-based systems to support child care facility financing and development. Our success in community development policy-making comes from building relationships with outspoken ECE practitioners who hold a bold vision for their communities. As LIIF leans into the diverse voices leading change in the ECE field, we hope that collaboration through LIIF's NEPAC fellowship continues to provide our partners with the skills needed to design, coalesce, and lead policy change in their communities.

LIIF has become a leader in creative capital deployment and investment in ECE facilities. Yet, we acknowledge that our ECE grantees and ECE business owners speak first-hand about the economic and social disparities they have endured and are closer to the inequities that public policy seeks to remedy. We are dedicated to strengthening the voices of our grantees and their communities to better understand what is needed to create healthy, inclusive and vibrant communities.

At the end of LIIF's NEPAC Summit, our ECE leaders were asked to complete the sentence, "LIIF is..." We hold their words as inspiration for the work we must continue.



“LIIF is an organization that shows it **really cares** about the community, about children, about families.”

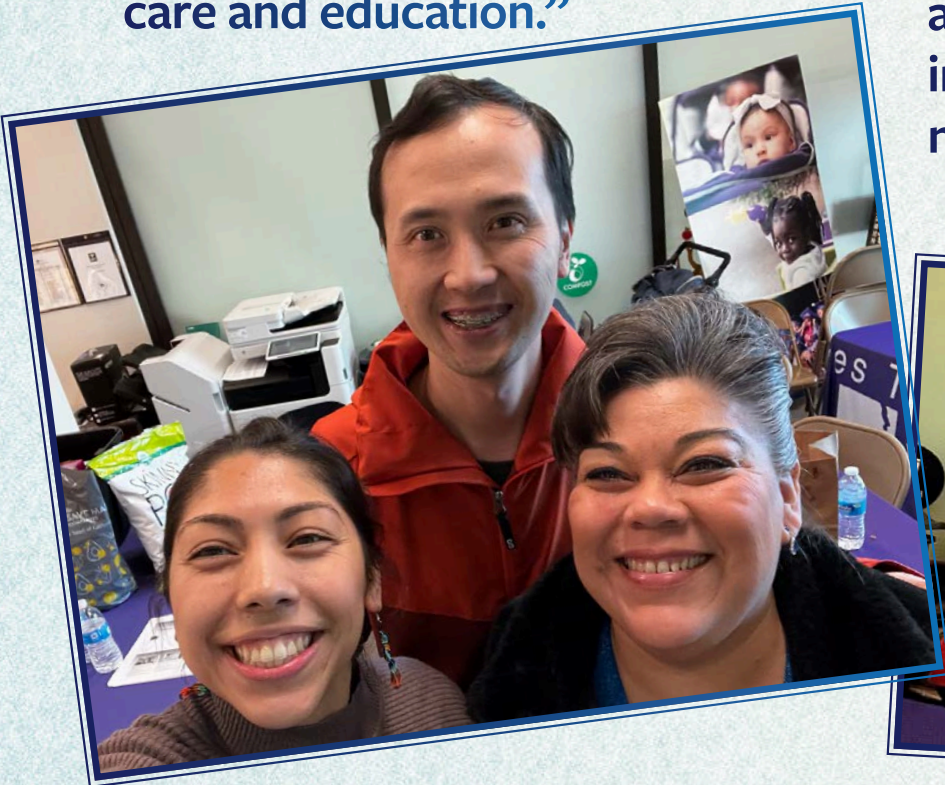
“LIIF is an organization that helped NYC providers **keep their doors open** without red tape.”



“LIIF is **positioned to uplift ECE**, drive policy and create a new narrative towards its North Star.”



“LIIF is a **key for change** in every state that looks at the needs of the ECE community and families.”



“LIIF is **bringing people and resources together** to educate and advocate for early care and education.”

“LIIF is a vehicle that can **uplift the sector** and advocate for those who don’t get a seat at the table by using its platform as an advocate and a leader in pushing the field to the next level.”



“LIIF is a **power player** with experience in grant funding, data collection, and advocacy to support communities working together in a powerful way to shape policy.”