Speaker and Panelist Bios / Financial & Non-Financial Disclosures
Stronger Together 2.0: Partnering for a Better Future



Dr. Deborah Ross-Swain, Ed.D., CCC-SLP, BCS-CL
Early Intervention Committee Summit Chair, California Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Dr. Swain is the CEO of the Swain Center for Listening, Communicating and Learning. She is immediate past VP of ASHA for Government Affairs and Public Policy and a past president of the California Speech-Language-Hearing Association (CSHA). She is ASHA, National Academies of Practice and CSHA Fellow, as well as CSHA Honors recipient. Dr. Swain is recognized for her advocacy efforts and accomplishments in Early Intervention, auditory processing and learning differences.

She is author of numerous standardized tests including the RIPA-2, RIPA-G, RESCA-E; several books and manuals including Auditory Processing Disorders: Assessment, Management and Treatment-4th Edition and The Listening Inventory. Dr. Swain has received numerous awards for leadership, clinical service, advocacy and service to professional organizations.

Financial/Non-Financial Disclosures
Dr. Deborah Ross-Swain is Chair of the EI Summit and Chair of the Episodic Care Committee for the California Speech-Language Hearing Association.



Virginia Castor Early, MPA
Administrator of the Policy Office, California Department of Education's Early Education Division

Virginia Castor Early has been the Administrator of the Policy Office within the California Department of Education's Early Education Division since 2019. In this role, she is responsible for overseeing a team charged with analyzing the budget for early education, conducting bill analysis and programmatic data analysis and research for policy, developing reimbursement rate policy through collective bargaining with the child care unions, and leading statewide planning efforts and overarching policy development.

Virginia and her team have also been deeply involved in the development of guidance and regulations and initial phases of policy implementation on all major policy changes in CA, including implementation of Universal PreK for all four-year-old children in CA, implementation of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), efforts to increase inclusion of children with disabilities, and efforts to reduce suspension and expulsion. Prior to holding this role, Virginia was a Consultant in the Policy Office, and before that, served as the Fiscal and Policy Analyst at the California Legislative Analyst's Office.

Viginia has a Masters of Public Administration (MPA) from the Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and a Bachelor's in Liberal Arts from St. John's College in Annapolis, MD.

Financial/Non-Financial Disclosures
No relevant relationships to disclose.



Paul H. Dworkin, M.D.
Founding Director, Help me Grow National Center

Paul Dworkin served as Executive Vice President for Community Child Health at Connecticut Children's and Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. For 15 years, he previously served as Physician-in-Chief at Connecticut Children's and Chair of Pediatrics at UCONN. Dr. Dworkin's interests are at the interface among child development, child health services, and child health policy. Dr. Dworkin's honors include teaching awards form both universities he has served, visiting professorships, and named lectureships. He was the Editor of the Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics from 1997 – 2002 and was a member of the first entering class of the Academy of Distinguished Education at the UCONN School of Medicine.

In 2003, Dr. Dworkin received the prestigious C. Anderson Aldrich Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics in recognition of his achievements in the field of child development. His vision led to the creation of Help Me Grow, a Connecticut statewide initiative to promote the early detection of children at risk for developmental and behavioral problems and the linkage to programs and services that is currently being replicated in more than 30 states.

Dr. Dworkin serves as Project Director for the North Hartford Ascend Pipeline, a US Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods grantee. He received his bachelor's degree from Rutger's University and his medical degree from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He completed his pediatric residency and fellowship training at Boston Children's Hospital. He earned a certificate in policy analysis from the University of North Dakota. Dr. Dworkin has served on the boards of numerous community-based organizations, recently completed his tenure as Chair of the Board of the Urban League of Greater Hartford, and currently serves on the Board of the Institute for Child Success in Greenville, South Carolina.

Financial/Non-Financial Disclosures
No relevant relationships to disclose.



Pradeep Gidwani, MD, MPH, FAAP
American Academy of Pediatrics, California Chapter 3

Pradeep Gidwani is a pediatrician who works at American Academy of Pediatrics, California Chapter 3, San Diego and Imperial Counties (AAP-CA3) on a team that provides Countywide Coordination and Support for Healthy Development Services and First Step Home Visiting funded by First 5 San Diego.

Over the last 21 years, these Countywide programs have reached over 370,000 children and their families. He serves on the San Diego Foundation's Board of Governors and the Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences (HOPE) National Advisory Board.

Financial/Non-Financial Disclosures
No relevant relationships to disclose.



Michi Gates, Ph.D.
Chief Deputy Director of Program Services, California Department of Developmental Services

Michi Gates has dedicated herself to the field of developmental services for the past 30 years. She began her career as a Service Coordinator at North Bay Regional Center in Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties.

Over her 21 years working there, she served in several different positions, culminating in the position of Associate Executive Director. In 2018, she became the Executive Director of Kern Regional Center in Kern, Mono, and Inyo Counties. Working to fulfill the intent of the Lanterman Act, increasing self-direction, community integration and access to supports and services that empower individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, is her focus.

In 2024, she became the Chief Deputy Director of Program Services at the California Department of Developmental Disabilities where she can engage with statewide policy issues that sustain and improve California's developmental services system. Michi lives in the wonderful city of Bakersfield with her husband.

Financial/Non-Financial Disclosures
No relevant relationships to disclose.



Letizia S. Hendrickson, M.S., CCC-SLP, ADHD-RSP
Clinical Coordinator and Supervisor – The Learning Grove

Letizia Hendrickson has been a Speech-Language Pathologist working with individuals across the lifespan for nearly two decades in schools, medical, and private practice settings.
Currently, she is the Clinical Coordinator and Supervisor at The Learning Grove private practice overseeing the Speech and Child Development departments and clinical externs from a variety of universities.

She is also a part of the Adjunct Clinical Educator at West Coast University, where she teaches clinical methods for communication disorders graduate students. She is the President of CSHA, serves on CHADD's National Education Advisory Committee, CHADD's National Policy and Advocacy Advisory Committee, and is a member of the MSLP Advisory Pack Board.

As a clinician she specializes in diagnostics and cognitive-linguistic based executive function disorders as a certified ADHD-RSP. She is passionate about mentoring the next generation of speech therapists, early intervention, assessment and treatment of neurological disorders, serving individuals with ADHD, advocacy, neurodivergent-inclusive approaches and neuro affirming practice.

Financial/Non-Financial Disclosures
Letizia Hendrickson is a Licensed Speech Language Pathologist employed as a Clinical Coordinator and Supervisor at The Learning Grove private practice working with pediatric and adult populations. She is also employed as an Adjunct Clinical Educator at West Coast University's CDS Master's program



Assemblymember, Mia Bonta, District 18

Assemblymember Mia Bonta is honored to serve California's 18th Assembly District, which includes the people of Oakland, Alameda, and Emeryville, and currently serves as the Chair of the Assembly Health Committee.

Assemblymember Bonta's journey is a testament to the transformative power of education. Education was the only constant in her life. Growing up, she moved 13 times in 16 years, and with every move she carried what was most precious to her: a crate of books. A proud Black Latina, Mia was raised by activists who protested outside the halls of power so that people like her could one day have a seat at the table inside. Education was life-changing for Mia and planted the seeds that inspired her to become a public servant. Mia earned a B.A. in Psychology from Yale University, an Ed.M. from Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a J.D. from Yale Law School.

Before being elected to the State Assembly in 2021, Mia served as the CEO of Oakland Promise, a cradle-to-college and career preparation initiative across Oakland public schools, and as the President of the Alameda Unified School District School Board.

Assemblymember Bonta is committed to utilizing her office to combat the cracks in the system and amplify the needs of the most vulnerable members of our community. Her legislative priorities have surrounded transformative criminal justice reform, tackling food insecurity, protecting high-quality health care, and ensuring all Californians have a roof over their heads, among many other issues.

Financial/Non-Financial Disclosures
No relevant relationships to disclose.



Aishah Y. Patterson, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Interim Associate Dean of Student Success and Personnel
Dr. Patterson is an Associate Professor, researcher, and Speech-Language Pathologist with over 20 years of clinical experience. She has provided diagnostic and therapeutic services across the lifespan. Her early intervention experience has included supporting rural and agricultural communities in Northern California, Illinois, and New Mexico.

Dr. Patterson is currently serving as the Interim Associate Dean of the College of Health and Human Services and Director of the Center for Health Practice Policy Research (CHPPR) at Sacramento State.

Financial/Non-Financial Disclosures
Aishah Patterson is a full-time employee of California State University, Sacramento and has no relevant nonfinancial relationships to disclose.



Yvette Baptiste, Ph.D.,
Executive Director, Eastern LA Family Resource Center, Interim Executive Director, Family Resource Centers Network of CA

Dr. Yvette Baptiste is a clinical psychologist and mother to 3 children who have special healthcare, behavioral and developmental needs. She has over 35 years of the provision of Early Intervention services and training, clinical and quality management of services provided by a large non-profit. Dr. Baptiste is Executive Director of the Eastern Los Angeles Family Resource Center. ELAFRC supports families and their children with special health care and developmental needs and is a council member agency for Family Voices CA, California's family to family health information center.

Dr. Baptiste has held leadership positions in Los Angeles County and the State of California, including Co-chair of the Community and Family Engagement Workgroup for the early design and planning of HMG-LA, Co-facilitator for the Patient and Family Centered Care Committee of the LA County Children's Medical Services, and Interim Executive Director of the Family Resource Centers Network of CA (FRCNCA) representing the 45 Part C funded centers serving families whose children receive early intervention services.

Financial/Non-Financial Disclosures
Yvette Baptiste is an employee of Heluna Health AKA PHFE and has no relevant nonfinancial relationships to disclose.



Aubyn Stahmer, Ph.D.
Executive Director, UC Davis MIND Institute

Dr. Stahmer is a child clinical psychologist and behavior analysis practitioner specializing in early identification and intervention for children with autism and other developmental disabilities. She has special clinical interest and expertise in parent coaching and naturalistic developmental behavioral interventions (NDBI).

Dr. Stahmer's research and academic interests include effective early intervention strategies, dissemination and implementation of evidence-based ASD interventions to community settings and low resource areas.

Financial/Non-Financial Disclosures
No relevant relationships to disclose.



Kimberly Martini-Carvell
Executive Director, Help Me Grow National Center

Kimberly Martini-Carvell has served in the role of Executive Director of the Help Me Grow National Center for the past 10 years. During her tenure, she has partnered with the National Affiliate Network and the National Center team to accelerate and elevate the impact of Help Me Grow. The National Center – now housed at the Institute for Child Success – was previously embedded within the Office of Community Child Health at Connecticut Children's, where Kimberly also served as an organizational senior leader focused on the advancement of novel approaches to systems of early childhood and family support, health, and well-being.

Prior to joining the National center, Kimberly worked as the Associate Vice President for programs at The Village for Families and Children in Hartford, where she created and managed prevention and early intervention programs. She also worked as a child and family development consultant for the United Way of Central & Northeastern Connecticut, as director of the CT Family Development Institute of the Children's Trust Fund, and as an adjunct professor for the University of Connecticut's School of Family Studies.

During her career, Kimberly has served on the national ZERO TO THREE Policy Committee, the National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network's Birth-6 Workgroup, and the leadership team of the Connecticut Parent Educator's Network and the Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health. Currently, Kimberly is part of numerous national and international advisory committees that are focused on universal promotion and prevention systems of care. Kimberly has presented the Help Me Grow Model at national and international convenings, including the biannual World Association for Infant mental Health Congress.

Financial/Non-Financial Disclosures
No relevant relationships to disclose.