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VISION & MISSION

Mission: To Overcome Homelessness Through Education

Vision: Children and youth experiencing homelessness, birth through higher education, will have full access to quality learning, so they will never be homeless as adults, and the next generation will never be homeless.

OUR WORK

We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with early childhood programs, schools, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

RESPONSIVE & EFFECTIVE POLICY ADVOCACY
- A strong voice for effective and responsive federal and state policies rooted in the realities of local communities
- Timely updates and analyses

PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE
- Tools and resources for early care, pre K-12, and higher education
- Weekly newsletter with Q&A and practitioner voices
- In-person and online training on hot topics featuring national, state, and local presenters

YOUTH LEADERSHIP
- Scholarships and support to youth who have experienced homelessness
- Full and authentic integration of young people into all areas of our work
MEET OUR NEWEST TEAM MEMBERS!

SHC WELCOMED SIX NEW TEAM MEMBERS IN 2023, GROWING OUR TEAM TO HELP MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES.

Lance Bordelon
Digital Marketing & Communications Associate

Bree Levy
Federal Policy Fellow

Camille Fleming
Controller and Senior Manager of Operations

Anasofia Trelles
K-12 Senior Program Manager

Thomas J. Lucas (TJ)
Senior Manager, Federal Policy

Sarah Vrabic
Early Childhood Senior Program Manager
EARLY CHILDHOOD

In October 2023, the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences published a study revealing that the Americans who are the most at risk of eviction are babies and toddlers, and that children under the age of 5 make up the largest group by age of people whose households have had an eviction action filed against them.

These findings are consistent with data showing that the person who is the most likely to stay in a homeless shelter in the U.S. is an infant under the age of one.

Despite the disproportionate risks of homelessness faced by infants, toddlers, and pre-school age children, and the harmful impact of homelessness on their health, development, and future learning, these young children are invisible to the public, policymakers, and, all too often, even to the early childhood programs that could mitigate the impact of homelessness on child development and connect families to housing and services.

In 2023, SHC responded to these challenges by:

LAUNCHING A COMMUNICATIONS AND RESEARCH PROJECT

SHC launched a communications and research project to raise awareness and build understanding of early childhood homelessness in both the homelessness and early childhood development sectors, so that each sector prioritizes and serves infants and toddlers who are homeless, and works together for holistic, two-generation support to ensure that children and families thrive.

WORKING WITH SIX STATES TO DEVELOP ACTION PLANS

SHC worked with six states to develop action plans for increasing the enrollment of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness. As a result, one state added training on homeless identification to their statewide Home Visiting conference.

CONTINUING TO PILOT A REFERRAL APP

SHC continued to pilot a referral app to increase the enrollment in Head Start of children experiencing homelessness in eight states.
PUBLISHING THE FIRST-EVER STATE DATA ANALYSIS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON INFANT AND TODDLER HOMELESSNESS.

Despite research showing the injurious impact of homelessness on our youngest children, there were no estimates of how many infants and toddlers experienced homelessness, or how many participated in high-quality early learning programs—until now. SHC’s ground-breaking report establishes a set of benchmarks against which to assess progress, and provides a policy and practice roadmap at the local, state, and federal levels for increasing access to life-changing high-quality early learning programs.

BRINGING ON SARAH!

We welcomed Sarah Vrabic as SHC’s Early Childhood Senior Program Manager, who is dedicated exclusively to increasing support for young children experiencing homelessness. She brings with her a decade of experience in cross-systems collaborations, including roles as a Community Consultant and Early Childhood Education Specialist at The BELL Project. Her leadership in the Everyday Learning Play Spaces initiative at HopePHL reflects her commitment to integrating trauma-informed design and playful learning environments into shelter settings.

ADVOCATING AT THE STATE AND FEDERAL LEVEL FOR STRONGER POLICIES AND MORE RESOURCES.

SHC advocated at the state and federal level for stronger policies and more resources to support young children and their families experiencing homelessness. Specifically, SHC:

- Led the drafting and submission of public comments, signed by twenty organizations, on proposed federal regulations to improve access to federal child care assistance for children experiencing homelessness and children with child welfare involvement.
- Advocated successfully for the U.S. Department of Education to clarify the use of American Rescue Plan funding to support young children experiencing homelessness, and worked in partnership with the Office of Head Start to amplify this guidance.
- Assisted state partners in their efforts to reform state legislation, including supporting the enactment of H147, a Massachusetts bill championed by Horizons for Homeless Children that would codify automatic child care assistance to families experiencing homelessness in the shelter system, expand access to child care assistance for doubled-up families experiencing homelessness, and expand automatic eligibility for Early Intervention services for children aged 0-3 who meet the McKinney-Vento Act’s education definition of homelessness.
WORKED WITH SIX STATES TO DEVELOP ACTION PLANS FOR INCREASING THE ENROLLMENT OF INFANTS/TODDLERS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

PRESENTED AT 12 NATIONAL AND STATE CONFERENCES

CONTINUED PILOTING THE HEAD START REFERRAL APP IN EIGHT STATES, AND CONFIRMED OUR FIRST ENROLLMENTS THROUGH THE APP!

SUBMITTED FEDERAL CHILD CARE NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING (NPRM) COMMENTS WITH SIGN ONs FROM 20 ORGANIZATIONS
More than 1.2 million children and youth experiencing homelessness were identified by public schools in 2021-22, a 10% increase over the previous year. These students continue to suffer in the aftermath of the pandemic. The chronic absenteeism rate of students experiencing homelessness is now over 50%, more than double the rate of all students. Students experiencing homelessness graduate from high school at a rate that is thirteen percentage points below students from families with low incomes who are stably housed. This puts them at great risk for experiencing homelessness as an adult.

Student homelessness is also a matter of life and death. In 2023, for the first time, the Centers for Disease Control—in response to advocacy coordinated by SchoolHouse Connection—made homelessness questions part of the 2021 standard high school Youth Risk Behavior Survey questionnaire for all states. The data revealed that high school students who experienced homelessness were nearly twice as likely to have seriously considered suicide or made a suicide plan during the past year, and more than three times as likely to have attempted suicide during the past year.

In 2023, SHC responded to these challenges by:

LEADING NATIONAL EFFORTS TO HELP STATE AND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES EFFECTIVELY USE PANDEMIC RECOVERY FUNDING (KNOWN AS AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH” OR “ARP-HCY” FUNDS)

SHC led national efforts to help state and local educational agencies effectively use pandemic recovery funding (known as American Rescue Plan Homeless Children and Youth” or “ARP-HCY” funds) to identify and support children and youth experiencing homelessness. SHC advocated vigorously for these funds – which are eight times greater than the annual federal appropriation for homeless students – because most children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness were left out of previous pandemic relief funding packages. In 2023, we rolled up our sleeves to help schools make the most of ARP-HCY to meet urgent needs and to set the stage for lasting changes in how schools and communities respond to child and youth homelessness. Specifically, SHC:

• Advocated successfully for new federal guidance to clarify and broaden the permissible uses of ARP-HCY funds, including writing and organizing a letter to the U.S. Department of Education that was signed by twenty major national education associations and that was reported on by Politico.
• Produced and disseminated 10 new resources and conducted 14 training sessions on the effective use of ARP-HCY funds.
  ○ SHC’s resources and trainings are tailored to practitioners and feature concise, replicable, “plug and play” strategies that demonstrate not only what can be done with ARP-HCY funds, but how to make it happen in local educational agencies of various sizes.
• Provided in-depth practical assistance and consultation to 23 state agencies and nine local agencies on ARP-HCY funds.

**In addition to our work on ARP-HCY, SHC:**

• SHC directly answered over 500 questions from educators and service providers on a wide range of topics, from how to respond to specific situations encountered by individual children and youth to how to implement stronger programs and practices. We publish our answers in a searchable format on our website to help others who may have the same questions.
• Supported the unique and pressing needs of specific populations.
  ○ **Native American Students:** According to the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, American Indian high school students are 4.7 times more likely to experience homelessness than white youth. In the 2021-2022 school year, 4.6% of students experiencing homelessness identified by public schools were Native students and 6.3% of students attending Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools were identified as homeless. SHC is excited to have launched a partnership with the Bureau of Indian Education in 2023 to increase identification and support for students experiencing homelessness in BIE schools.
  ○ **Immigrant and Migrant Students:** School districts across the country are witnessing increasing numbers of immigrant children and youth, many of whom are situations that meet the definition of homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. In 2023, SHC produced new and updated resources and trainings to support the educational needs of newcomer students and migrant students.
• Advocated at the state and federal level for policies and resources to support preK-12 children and youth experiencing homelessness and their families. For example, SHC:
  ○ Mobilized support for a bipartisan “Dear Colleague Letter” signed by 89 U.S. Representatives concerning appropriations for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, which is the only federal education program that specifically removes barriers to the identification, enrollment, and success of children and youth who experience homelessness. As of December 2023, both the House and Senate FY2024 appropriations bills maintain last year’s increased investment in the EHCY program.
SchoolHouse Connection has provided the best professional development and resources for ARP-HCY that I have found. I thank you for the wonderful resources. I use them daily!
- Anonymous, Homeless Liaison, North Texas

- Provided assistance to support K12 state legislation that crossed the finish line in two states:
  - Legislation in the state of Kansas to protect students experiencing homelessness from potentially exclusionary nonresident enrollment policies in SB113.
  - Legislation in Maine that established a $2 million student homelessness prevention pilot program allowing McKinney-Vento school district liaisons to pay for emergency housing-related needs.

Image above: This Politico article discusses the challenges educators face in distributing the $800M allocated by the American Rescue Plan for homeless K-12 students, as the September 2024 deadline approaches.
HIGHER EDUCATION

Approximately 4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness on their own every year. These unaccompanied homeless youth face unique barriers to accessing and completing higher education. Lack of family and support, coupled with histories of neglect, abuse, trauma, mobility, and deep poverty, create roadblocks to their path to and through postsecondary education. Yet some form of education beyond high school is increasingly necessary to obtain employment that pays enough to maintain housing stability.

Federal data released in 2023 show the devastating impact of the pandemic on the higher education prospects of youth experiencing homelessness. Between 2019-2020 and 2021-2022, the number of unaccompanied homeless youth Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) determinations decreased by 23%. Over this same period, the requests for homeless determinations for the 2021-2022 application cycle increased by 28%. As a result of these continuing FAFSA hurdles, youth experiencing homelessness may delay or even forgo higher education, which increases their risk of continued homelessness and poverty.

In 2023, SHC responded to these challenges by:

**LEADING NATIONAL EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT THE NEW POLICIES FOR HOMELESS AND FOSTER YOUTH IN THE FAFSA SIMPLIFICATION ACT, THE PASSAGE OF WHICH REMAINS ONE OF SHC’S MOST SIGNIFICANT POLICY VICTORIES.**

These reforms expand the number of entities that can make determinations of a youth’s homelessness; remove burdensome requirements to prove homelessness every year; and require financial aid administrators to accept third-party determinations. Specifically, SHC:

- Advocated successfully for strong federal guidance, which was issued in April 2023, to help financial aid administrators understand and implement these changes to remove barriers for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness.
- Produced and disseminated six resources and conducted 15 trainings on the FAFSA changes for diverse audiences, including school district liaisons, financial aid administrators, and service providers. Our May webinar featuring presenters from the U.S. Department of Education drew over 3,000 registrants.
- Answered direct questions from youth and those advocating for youth to help them overcome hurdles to financial aid.
- Advocated successfully for new federal guidance to clarify and broaden the permissible uses of ARP-HCY funds, including writing and organizing a letter to the U.S. Department of Education that was signed by twenty major national education associations and that was reported on by Politico.
LAUNCHING A NATIONAL HOMELESS HIGHER EDUCATION LIAISON NETWORK.

Many institutions of higher education are designating liaisons for students experiencing homelessness. Similar to their counterparts in K-12 education, homeless higher education liaisons support students by connecting them to available resources on and off-campus, and removing barriers to their college retention and success. In 2023, SHC brought together more than 90 homeless higher education liaisons from 8 states to provide an opportunity for homeless higher education liaisons to share best practices for supporting students experiencing homelessness and engage in professional development activities. We also organized four collaborative events designed to facilitate the exchange of best practices within the network.

PARTNERING WITH STATES AND STATE SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS.

In May 2023, during his SUNY State of the University address, Chancellor John King Jr. announced that each SUNY campus president will appoint a homeless liaison. SHC was proud to be selected to support these liaisons through a Campus Homeless Liaison Learning Network. We also assisted the Illinois State Board of Education to implement a new state law requiring the designation of homeless liaisons on every campus.

ADVOCATING AT THE STATE AND FEDERAL LEVEL FOR POLICIES AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE TRANSITION TO AND THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION FOR YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS.

Specifically, SHC:
- Wrote and submitted two sets of public comments to the U.S. Department of Education on the proposed 2024-2025 FAFSA form— in April and most recently in October.
- Advocated successfully for the U.S. Department of Education to clarify the use of American Rescue Plan funding to support the postsecondary transition of youth experiencing homelessness.
- Helped to advance state policies on higher education and homelessness in Nevada, New Hampshire, New York.
- Organized support for the reintroduction of the bicameral Fostering Success in Higher Education Act, legislation to improve college access, retention, and graduation rates for foster and homeless youth.

3000+
NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS FOR OUR FAFSA WEBINAR

15
NUMBER OF HIGHER ED TRAININGS (IN PERSON + VIRTUAL)
Thank you for all the information provided in this webinar. It was one of the most helpful ones I’ve viewed in recent history that actually addressed our concerns and questions. Thank you to all the presenters. Keep up the great work!

- Lara Clifton, Northern Michigan University

[Left] Jillian Sitjar, SHC's Director of Higher Education Partnerships, presented at two sessions at the 2023 NAEHCY conference in New Orleans.

[Left] Jordyn Roark, Director of Youth Leadership and Scholarships, and Jillian Sitjar, Director of Higher Education Partnerships, presenting at the National Network for Youth conference in Washington, DC.

[Left] Roshanda Pinson, SHC’s Youth Leadership and Scholarships Program Manager, and Jillian Sitjar, Director of Director of Higher Education Partnerships, presenting at the NASPA conference in Boston, MA.
RESPONSIVE AND EFFECTIVE FEDERAL POLICY ADVOCACY

Our 2023 federal policy accomplishments are highlighted in each of the sections above, from prenatal through postsecondary, to illustrate the connection between our practice work and our policy work. We believe that federal policy reform must be rooted in the experiences of local communities, and informed and shaped by practitioners, youth, and parents.

Advancing State Policies to Support Youth Experiencing Homelessness

State policy change is an essential strategy to remove barriers to education, housing, employment, medical care, and education faced by unaccompanied homeless youth, and to solve youth homelessness. Many of the laws that most directly impact youth who experience homelessness on their own – the rights of minors, health care, housing, employment, education, and child welfare – fall within the purview of state legislatures, and can only be addressed through changes to state law.

In addition to the state policies related to early care and education described above, SHC also worked with state partners to advance policies to allow youth who are homeless on their own to consent to their own routine medical care and treatment; to facilitate their access to housing, shelter, and related services; and to improve access to vital documents such as birth certificates and driver’s licenses.

[Above] TJ, Barbara, and Erin represented SchoolHouse Connection at the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) showcase, where they discussed the bipartisan amendment in the American Rescue Plan, aiming to allocate $800 million to assist children and youth experiencing homelessness.

[Above] SHC’s Director of State Policy, Rodd Monts, and National Network for Youth’s Executive Director, Darla Bardine, presenting at the Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services conference.
Some of our 2023 state policy highlights related to services and housing include:

**Arkansas** - SHC provided direct assistance to the sponsor of HB 1462, legislation that increases access to vital documents, including by waiving fees for driver’s permits, driver’s licenses, state identification cards, and college transcripts. The bill will impact 11,871 youth experiencing homelessness and 4,300 youth in foster care.

**Oregon** - SHC provided written testimony and advocated alongside the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, the Oregon Housing Alliance, and Oregon Housing to continue a host home project that we helped to establish in 2021. The 2023 bill provides another $2.4 million for a Host Home Demonstration Project that supports long-term and short-term host home initiatives for at least 8,258 unaccompanied homeless youth.

**Wisconsin** - In collaboration with the Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services (WAHRS), SHC is working on a package of bills that would provide needed support and protections for the 13,450 youth experiencing homelessness in the state. This includes bills to protect youth from human trafficking, to extend additional time to service providers to assist runaway youth, and to provide minors the ability to consent to their own medical care and treatment, including parenting teens.

**Kansas** - SHC helped pass SB113 ensuring the rights of the 5,632 students experiencing homelessness to enroll in districts where they are considered nonresidents.

**Maine** - SHC provided written and oral testimony, as well as talking points, in support of a bill that established a $2 million student homelessness prevention pilot allowing McKinney-Vento school district liaisons to pay for emergency housing-related needs.

**Michigan** - SHC helped draft HB4087 that would provide minor youth experiencing homelessness (age 14 and over) the ability to consent to medical care and treatment for themselves and their children. This would dramatically improve the health of 26,867 youth experiencing homelessness who cannot access care when needed. SHC also drafted amendments to the FAFSA completion bill SB463 to help more homeless and former foster care youth get the appropriate support they need to maximize financial aid and improve college affordability.

**New York** - SHC helped draft S4287/4248 and A4029 in the legislature requiring designation of homeless liaisons on university campuses and providing additional support for homeless college students.

**Pennsylvania** - SHC provided advocacy training and organizing support for a coalition of advocates working on youth homelessness legislation concerning driver’s licenses, higher education support, and minor consent.

**Number of Congressional Engagements**: 100+

**Number of Congressional Briefings**: 2

**Congressional Meetings Led by SHC’s Youth Leaders**: 10+

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YOUTH LEADERSHIP & SCHOLARSHIP

SHC’s Youth Leadership & Scholarship (YLS) program provides scholarship recipients with a scholarship award, college completion resources to meet emergency needs, one-on-one help navigating college and life, and a stable peer and adult support network.

2023 YLS highlights include:

- Hosting five in-person trips for YLS scholars— including a newly added third trip for scholars as they transition into the workforce.
- Creating a database of over 125 reputable scholarships for which most students experiencing or having experienced homelessness are qualified.
- Engaging scholars to educate policymakers on barriers to education and services that are created by homelessness, as well as solutions for those barriers.
  - The 2021 cohort met with political appointees and career staff within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Office of Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to share their views on how federal funds can best support K12 students experiencing homelessness.
  - Our 2022 cohort participated in two advocacy meetings with lawmakers about the unique needs of students experiencing homelessness, including access to education, housing, and other services.
  - For the first time in SHC’s history, scholars from all YLS cohorts convened in Washington DC for policy-related activities, including participating in a Congressional briefing co-sponsored by U.S. Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and attended by nearly 200 people.

6 NUMBER OF SCHOLARS WHO COMPLETED A POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL IN 2023

93% PERCENTAGE OF SCHOLARS WHO ARE ON TRACK TO COMPLETE A POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL.

90% PERCENTAGE OF SCHOLARS WHO HAVE STABLE HOUSING, RELIABLE HEALTH CARE, MENTAL HEALTH CARE, AND FOOD SECURITY; AND ARE ACCESSING CAMPUS AND/OR COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAMS.

76% PERCENTAGE OF SCHOLARS WHO ARE ENGAGED IN VOLUNTEERING, ORGANIZING, AWARENESS RAISING, OR PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY AT LOCAL, STATE, OR FEDERAL LEVELS.
I was reflecting today on my way to class and I just wanted to say that I am really appreciative of the opportunities that have come up through SchoolHouse Connection. I would have never imagined I would be co-presenting and sharing my experience with Roshanda and Jillian at the Boston Convention Center, or that I would be a part of a webinar for a group of organizations like Bellwether and All4Ed or even participating in a presentation for Wisconsin staff about homeless youth. It really has been a pleasure working with you and just wanted to write something to thank you.”

- Juan, SchoolHouse Connection Scholar
RAISING AWARENESS OF CHILD AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Child and youth homelessness is largely hidden from sight – from the public, and from the practitioners and policymakers who are best positioned to help. The early care and education challenges created by homelessness are also unrecognized, contributing to a failure to prioritize the educational needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

In 2023, SHC responded to these challenges by:

- Responding to media requests and proactively reaching out to reporters, resulting in over 30 stories that cited our work or quoted our staff, including, among others, articles in the Washington Post, Politico, AP News, FutureEd, Inside Higher Education, EdSource, Teen Vogue, US News, Education Week, NPR, and Chalkbeat.
- Publishing, with the Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan, searchable data profiles that made available for the first time data on child and youth homelessness at county and congressional district levels, as well as national, state, and school district levels.
- Expanding our reach on digital platforms.

- The data profiles were also accompanied by two analyses: Seen and Served: How Dedicated Federal Funding Supports the Identification of Students Experiencing Homelessness and The Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness: Current Trends, Challenges, and Needs.

30 MEDIA MENTIONS IN 2023

535% PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN FACEBOOK REACH FROM MARCH-NOVEMBER 2023, COMPARED TO THE PRECEDING 9 MONTHS.

51% PERCENTAGE IN FACEBOOK PAGE VISITS FROM MARCH-NOVEMBER 2023, COMPARED TO THE PRECEDING 9 MONTHS.

6000% PERCENTAGE IN INSTAGRAM REACH VISITS FROM MARCH-NOVEMBER 2023, COMPARED TO THE PRECEDING 9 MONTHS.

1200% PERCENTAGE IN INSTAGRAM PROFILE VISITS FROM MARCH-NOVEMBER 2023, COMPARED TO THE PRECEDING 9 MONTHS.
# 2023 Preliminary & Unaudited Financials

## Revenue & Support

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<td>Earned Revenue</td>
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## Expenses

### Programs:

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### Support Services:

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<td>Total Expenses</td>
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## Change in Net Assets

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<td><strong>Net Assets at the Beginning of the Year</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets at the End of the Year</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Change in Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$794,017.79</strong></td>
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Jennifer Pringle - President
- Viviana Otoya - Treasurer
- Phillip Lovell - Secretary
- Jill Sallows - Board Member
- Lynda Thistle Elliott - Board Member
- Melinda Dyer - Board Member

STAFF MEMBERS

- Barbara Duffield - Executive Director
- Lance Bordelon - Digital Marketing & Communications Associate
- Camille Fleming - Controller and Senior Manager of Operations
- Nikki Hannon - Education Initiatives Specialist
- Leconte Lee - Director of Communications and Marketing
- Bree Levy - Federal Policy Fellow
- Thomas J. Lucas (TJ) - Senior Manager, Federal Policy
- Rodd Monts - Director of State Policy
- Erin Patterson - Director of Education Initiatives
- Roshanda Pinson - Program Manager, Youth Leadership & Scholarships
- Karen Rice - Senior Program Manager of Education Initiatives
- Jordyn Roark - Director of Youth Leadership & Scholarships
- Jillian Sitjar - Senior Program Manager, Higher Education
- Kevin Spears - Director of Revenue & Operations
- Anasofia Trelles - K-12 Senior Program Manager