

2026 TAI Speaker Bios:

Session 1: Administration on Disabilities, Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Federal Updates

Speaker: Rebecca Hines, Ph.D.

Commissioner, Administration on Disabilities

As Commissioner of the Administration on Disabilities (AoD), Rebecca Hines provides overall leadership for AoD's programs and initiatives focused on direct services, research, capacity building, and systems change that improve the quality of community living for people with disabilities. In this role, she oversees disability programs designed to create lasting change and improve the lives of the estimated 61 million people with disabilities in the United States by advancing inclusion and participation in community life, employment and financial well-being, independence, and self-determination.

Rebecca brings extensive experience in disability research, program administration, and workforce development, with a career focused on strengthening systems that support individuals with disabilities and their families. Prior to joining ACL, she served as a tenured Associate Professor at the University of Central Florida, where she provided leadership for undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs in special education. Her work included program and curriculum development, doctoral supervision, and partnerships with state and local education agencies and community-based organizations.

Rebecca has served as a principal investigator and co-principal investigator on multiple federally funded projects supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, including initiatives focused on personnel preparation, inclusive practices, and the use of technology and artificial intelligence to improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Her work reflects a strong commitment to evidence-based practice, research-to-practice translation, and cross-sector collaboration.

Rebecca holds a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization in teacher education and special education from the University of South Florida.

Speaker: David Jones

David Jones currently serves as the Director of the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities within the Administration for Community Living (ACL) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to joining ACL, David served in two federal agencies focused on disability employment. At the U.S. Department of Labor,

David oversaw the administration of Disability Employment Initiative grants and technical assistance contracts to help strengthen the capacity of American Job Centers serve people with disabilities. At the U.S. Department of Education, David monitored state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies and was a Program Officer for two Protection and Advocacy programs (PAIR and PAAT). Prior to his career focus on the disability inclusion work, David served within the Inspector General (IG) community for three federal agencies and the United Way of America. Originally from Pennsylvania, David holds a Bachelor's Degree from Bucknell University and a Masters of Public Administration from George Mason University.

Speaker: Sara Newell-Perez

Sara Newell-Perez serves as a Program Specialist for the Administration on Disabilities (AoD) within the Administration for Community Living (ACL) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). She leads federal monitoring of the State Councils on Developmental Disabilities formula grant program, supporting performance, accountability, and national impact. As a Contracting Officer's Representative (COR), she manages contracts central to supporting AoD programs, including NACDD's Information Training and Technical Assistance Center (ITACC) and the Program Information and Resource Management (PIRM) contract, advancing data-driven decision-making and program effectiveness. Prior to joining HHS in 2006, Sara worked with The Arc New York and as a disability advocate in Washington, DC. She is a graduate of the State University of New York at Albany.

Session 2: ACL Operational Drivers – Scalability and Speed

Speaker: David Jones

David Jones currently serves as the Director of the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities within the Administration for Community Living (ACL) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to joining ACL, David served in two federal agencies focused on disability employment. At the U.S. Department of Labor, David oversaw the administration of Disability Employment Initiative grants and technical assistance contracts to help strengthen the capacity of American Job Centers serve people with disabilities. At the U.S. Department of Education, David monitored state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies and was a Program Officer for two Protection and Advocacy programs (PAIR and PAAT). Prior to his career focus on the disability inclusion work, David served within the Inspector General (IG) community for three federal agencies and the

United Way of America. Originally from Pennsylvania, David holds a Bachelor's Degree from Bucknell University and a Masters of Public Administration from George Mason University.

Speaker: Rena Harris

Rena Harris is the Chief Program Officer at the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), where she leads statewide efforts to drive systems change, elevate the voices of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and ensure the Council's work reflects Georgia's diverse disability community. With more than 25 years of experience in disability rights and human services, she brings expertise in policy advocacy, organizational leadership, and community engagement. Rena began her career as a Direct Support Professional and spent over two decades in Georgia's provider network before moving into a leadership role within the state's protection and advocacy system. In her current role at GCDD, Rena builds strong partnerships with advocates, families, providers, and policymakers to advance meaningful, lasting change.

Speaker: Lauren Pearcy

Lauren Pearcy has served as the Executive Director of the TN Council on Developmental Disabilities since 2022, after serving as the Council's public policy director for six years. Before joining the Council on Developmental Disabilities, Lauren worked in leadership roles at Tennessee's Medicaid Agency, TennCare, in the Long Term Services and Supports division. Lauren started her career in Washington, DC at the National Governors Association (NGA). During her tenure at the NGA, Lauren was assigned to staff the chair of the association, Governor Jack Markell (Delaware). Governor Markell's Chair's Initiative, "A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities," changed the trajectory of Lauren's life by introducing her to disability policy.

Lauren has a Master's in Public Policy from the George Washington University and a Bachelor's degree from the University of California, Davis.

Speaker: Beth Stalvey

Beth Stalvey has served as Executive Director for the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities since 2015. Her career has included academic research on transportation, health, and mobility, as well as public policy roles for the state unit on aging and state

developmental disability agency in Texas and other states. She received both her master's and doctorate degrees in Public Health.

Speaker: Melissa Swartz

Melissa Swartz has 34 years of experience in intellectual and developmental disabilities. Melissa joined the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) in 2000. At the Council, Melissa's responsibilities have included program management, quality assurance and improvement coordination, and systems change management. She manages initiatives and is a content expert on leadership, advocacy, and direct support professional credentialing. She also serves as the staff liaison to the NCCDD Advocacy Development Committee and supports the initiative planning committees. Melissa has coordinated the Council's development and guidance of the NCCDD's 5-Year State Plan, the collection of outcomes data, and the submission of the Annual Program Performance Report. Before joining the Council staff, she was a residential service provider in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Melissa received her doctorate in Social Psychology in 2019.

Session 3: Strategies to Impact: Transitioning to a New 5-Year Plan

Speaker: Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre

Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre is the Executive Director of the New Hampshire Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Speaker: Dr. Susan Kabot

Susan Kabot, EdD, CCC-SLP is the Chief of Programs and Research for the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council. Prior to that, she was a Council member and Council Chair for 10 years. Before joining the Council staff, she spent 34 years at Nova Southeastern University where she developed and administered several programs for young children with autism as well as a specialized college support program. She continues to teach courses in autism and developmental disabilities at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels. She is a member of the Panel of Professional Advisors for the Autism Society of America. Her commitment to the field is fueled by Michael, her adult son with autism and co-occurring mental health conditions and intellectual disability.

Speaker: Sheila Gritz-Swift

Sheila Gritz-Swift serves as a consultant to the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. (FDDC). Her major services include the provision of support and technical assistance to Council staff in updating annual state plan work plans and developing the annual Program Performance Report, project scopes of work, data collection tools, and the 2027-2031 Five-Year State Plan.

Sheila was employed by the FDDC between October 2012 and January 2024 in various positions that included Program Manager for Employment and Transportation, Deputy Director of Programs and Compliance, and Senior Director of State Plan and Evaluation.

Prior to 2012, her career encompassed 25 years in the field of Exceptional Student Education in Florida as a practitioner, statewide trainer, special grants and projects coordinator, and state level Program Specialist for Secondary Transition. Her employers included the Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System; Hamilton County School District; The Transition Center at the University of Florida; and the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services.

Speaker: Jolene Sharp

Jolene Sharp is Chief Strategy Officer for the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, where she oversees leadership development, public policy, and communications work. Jolene's professional background is in communications, with a decade of prior experience in the healthcare sector. She holds a B.A. in editorial print journalism. Jolene is passionate about creating change through human connection. She has been married to her high school sweetheart for 23 years and is mom to two pretty awesome kids with disabilities. In her spare time, you'll find her running (very slowly) in the neighborhood with her dog, gardening and watching birds in her backyard, knitting, baking, reading with a great cup of coffee, or traveling to new corners of the globe.

Speaker: Chelsea Burke

Chelsea Burke, a former council member, currently serves as the Operations Manager for the Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. She brings experience in strategic planning, program development, and cross-system collaboration, supporting initiatives that strengthen services for Alaskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her work focuses on advancing systems change, improving access to services, and supporting self-determination through Alaska's Shared Vision. Chelsea also brings lived experience as a parent of a child with a developmental disability,

grounding her work in both policy and real-world impact. Chelsea lives in Eagle River with her husband and their four boys, and in her free time enjoys collecting LEGO and participating in Alaska's pageant community.

Session 4: Strategy to Impact: Communicating Results

Speaker: Jill Jacobs

Jill Jacobs is a distinguished disability rights activist with over 30 years of dedicated advocacy and activism resulting in systems and social change at local, state, and federal levels. Her ability to spot trends and analyze emerging data combined with an advocate's heart and a gift for creative problem-solving has led to better outcomes for countless members of the disability and aging communities nationwide.

A passionate and deeply committed changemaker for people with disabilities, Jill is known for her willingness to dive headfirst into even the most daunting efforts. In 1997, she became a key organizer in a campaign to get a statue of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt seated in his wheelchair at the national monument in Washington, DC. In 1998, when son was being segregated from his neighborhood school, Jill organized an effort around inclusion of children with disabilities in Fairfax County public schools. From that point on, she has been a grassroots organizer in the disability arena.

In collaboration with disability justice groups, disaster relief organizations, but mostly alongside a whole bunch of individual human beings, Jill has organized healthcare protests, human rights campaigns, and disaster relief efforts for the most marginalized communities. She led disaster response efforts following Hurricanes Harvey and Maria, securing and coordinating rescue and relief by ground, sea, and air, resulting in lifesaving outcomes for disabled people in Houston and Puerto Rico. During Covid, her work ensured access to supplies, daily support, and vaccines for people with disabilities, their families, and support workers in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In 2021, Jill was appointed by the Biden Administration as the Commissioner of the Administration on Disabilities and has played a key role in pivotal and historic work to advance disability rights nationwide, particularly around Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). Prior to this prestigious Presidential Appointment, Jill held executive roles at a variety of private sector entities, to include the ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia, Booz Allen Hamilton, United Cerebral Palsy of Washington and Northern Virginia, and Ability Unleashed, a company she founded and lead for 16 years, that provided HCBS to people with disabilities in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Jill currently holds the position of Executive Director of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

(NACDD). NACDD is the national association that represents and supports the nation's Councils on Developmental Disabilities (DD Councils) across the United States and its territories. DD Councils receive federal funding to support programs that promote self-determination, integration and inclusion for all people in the United States with developmental disabilities, and every Governor in the country appoints leaders from their state as DD Council members.

Jill has served on numerous boards and committees including the National Council on Independent Living, the Moses West Foundation, UCP of Washington & Northern Virginia, and the University of Central Texas (A&M) Social Work Association. Jill was a military spouse for more than twenty years, and for her work advancing rights and access of disabled military family members, the United States Army awarded Jill the Dr. Mary E. Walker Medal. Jill attended the University of Arizona, is a graduate of Texas A&M at Central Texas and received Social Work training at Army Social Work Services at Fort Cavazos (formerly Fort Hood), Texas.

Jill enjoys expressing herself creatively not only through advocacy, but also via the arts. She is an accomplished visual artist whose work has shown in New York, New Orleans, Washington, D.C. and elsewhere in the US.

Jill considers her four children to be her most important accomplishment. She lives in Northern Virginia, and her family – including her grandchildren - live nearby.

Speaker: Genessee Klemm

Genessee Klemm is the Director of Community Engagement for the Texas Council for Developmental Disability. Her professional background includes work as a speech-language pathologist in medical and education settings and experience in the nonprofit sector.

Speaker: Mary Willard

Mary Willard is the Operations Director for NACDD. She has 18 years' experience in the disability space, including grassroots Independent Living experience and experience as a National Training and Technical Assistance provider for Rural Independent Living. Before coming to NACDD, Mary enjoyed facilitating strategic planning sessions for non-profits, team building exercises, and participatory evaluation as a private consultant.

Session 5: Strategy to Impact: Effect Governance Practices

Speaker: Matthew Shapiro

As a person with a disability, **Matthew Shapiro** has spent most of his life motivated to teach those he has met how to better understand the disability community and inclusion. Through this work, it has become his life's mission to educate others regarding disability related issues. With this thought in mind, in December of 2014, he created 6 Wheels Consulting. Working with those in both the private and public sectors, he hopes to expand their understanding of disabilities and inclusion to give them the tools they can use in any environment. Matthew has had the privilege of sitting on numerous disability boards and speaking at a variety of conferences, both locally and nationally.

Speaker: Brent Watkins

Brent Watkins has been working in the Developmental Disabilities community for 30 years. Brent spent the first 11 years working for a community non-profit that provided a variety of services and supports to people with Developmental Disabilities. Brent worked for the Oregon Office of Developmental Disabilities Services for 18 years before being named the Interim Executive Director for the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities in August 2024. Brent has a wife, four children, two grandchildren, and a dog. He is also an avid runner and sports enthusiast.

Speaker: Sierra Whiteside

Sierra Whiteside is the current chair of the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Speaker: Daintry Bartoldus

Daintry Bartoldus serves as the Executive Administrator of the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities. With over two decades of leadership in disability rights, public health, and systems transformation, she is deeply committed to building inclusive communities across the state. Daintry leads statewide initiatives that elevate self-advocate voices, bridge partnerships between the aging and disability networks, and embed cultural relevance into strategic planning. Her work has been instrumental in strengthening cross-sector collaboration, advancing ABLE Savings education, and incorporating real-life stories

into policy and program goals. She brings to this session a passion for people-centered planning rooted in Hawai'i's values of inclusion, kuleana, and aloha.

Speaker: Kirsten Murphy

Kirsten Murphy is the Executive Director of the [Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council](#) (VTDDC). She also serves as the President of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD).

Ms. Murphy began her career in non-profit management working on behalf of unhoused youth in New York City in the 1980's. She shifted her focus to disability when her middle child was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). She led the New Hampshire Committee on Autism Spectrum Disorders, securing insurance coverage for common therapies for ASD. She began her work in Vermont in 2013 as the Policy Analyst for VTDDC and became Executive Director in 2016.

Ms. Murphy lives in Cabot, VT, where she enjoys gardening, walking her dog, and fixing up her old Vermont home.

Speaker: Jeremy Murphy

Jeremy Murphy is a Michigan native and has lived there his entire life. Married to his wife Aimee for almost 23 years, they have two children ages 21 and 17 with Fragile X syndrome. Their four dogs graciously allow the family to live with them. Jeremy is a Central Michigan University Grad. He is entering his seventh year on the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council, and his fifth serving as the Chair. He is currently the Chief Financial Officer of a CMHSP in Mid-Michigan.

Speaker: David Deuel

Dave Deuel PhD, a parent and brother-in-law to people with IDD, is an academic in applied linguistics. He is Academic Dean Emeritus for the Master's Academy International and Senior Research Fellow Emeritus for the Joni Eareckson Tada Disability Research Center. He formerly served on the Disability Integration Leadership and Development Team for the American Red Cross and on the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities. He currently serves as Chairperson for the New York State Council on Developmental Disabilities as well as other disability focused boards, committees, and working groups.

Session 6: Strategy to Impact: Prioritizing Strategic Policy Engagement

Speaker: Johnny Callebs, MSW, CSW

Johnny Callebs has worked in the disabilities field since 1988 and joined Kentucky's Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities (CCDD) as the Executive Director in April 2023. Serving in a variety of roles, he has worked to protect children from abuse and neglect, advocated for and protected the rights of adults in the state guardianship system, developed and supervised regulatory functions for Kentucky's Supports for Community Living Waiver, served as the Regional/Executive Director for an all-service waiver provider and foster care provider for almost sixteen years, served as Executive Director of the Kentucky Association of Private Providers (KAPP), served as Executive Director of a statewide case management provider and did discharge planning at the University of Kentucky's Chandler Medical Center.

Throughout his career he has participated as a member of several community and professional organizations including NACDD, the American Network of Community Options and Resources, Children's Alliance of Kentucky, Mortality Review Advisory Committee at DBHDID and held leadership positions on the Council on Elder Maltreatment Prevention, Kentucky Guardianship Association, Medicaid Technical Advisory Committee for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and KAPP.

Johnny has a Bachelor's degree in sociology from Eastern Kentucky University and a Master's degree in social work from the University of Kentucky. He is a native Kentuckian and lives in Lexington with his wife of 37 years. They have two adult children and a puggle named Henry.

Speaker: Austin Nugent

Austin Nugent is the Public Policy Public Policy Coordinator for the Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities (Kentucky). Austin has more than 15 years of specialized experience in disability and public policy. She has held various roles across the Developmental Disability Network, including Kentucky's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Kentucky Protection and Advocacy, and the National Disability Rights Network. She holds a Master of Public Administration with a concentration in disability policy and a graduate certificate in developmental disabilities. Her work is fueled by her personal experience supporting and advocating for family members with developmental disabilities. Austin works on behalf of the Council to be a resource for Kentuckians and legislators on disability-related policy issues.

Speaker: Allyson McCain

Allyson McCain serves as Deputy Director of the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities (KCDD) and leads the Health Equity and Outcomes Coalition. She brings a strong background in disability services, including prior leadership as Executive Director of GiGi's Playhouse Annapolis and experience as a caregiver and advocate. Allyson is passionate about eliminating barriers for people with disabilities and advancing equitable healthcare access.

Speaker: Sara Hart Weir

Sara Hart Weir is the Executive Director of the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities (KCDD) and a nationally recognized disability policy leader. Formerly President & CEO of the National Down Syndrome Society, she led the passage of the bipartisan ABLE Act and helped launch ABLE programs nationwide. With more than two decades of advocacy experience, Sara is known for advancing policies that expand economic opportunity and independence for people with disabilities.

Speaker: Josh Alters

Josh Alters is Vice Chair of the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities and an active leader in the disability community. He also serves as an Inclusive Leadership Coordinator with Special Olympics Kansas, where he supports athlete leadership and advocacy. A longtime Special Olympics athlete, Josh is recognized for his leadership, public speaking, and commitment to advancing inclusion and self-advocacy.

Speaker: Tina Wiseman

Tina Wiseman graduated from Marshall University with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education (K-8) and Special Education (K-12). She has 33 years of experience in the human service field primarily advocating for people with developmental disabilities. Currently, she is the Executive Director of the West Virginia Developmental Disabilities Council. She served over ten years as West Virginia's first Olmstead Coordinator. In this role, she established an Olmstead Council, secured Gubernatorial approval of the state Olmstead Plan, contracted a statewide study on rebalancing the State's long term care service system, and funded a grant program that helped over 400 people leave or avoid

institutional placements. Tina most valued position was to facilitate the closure of West Virginia's last state institution for people with developmental disabilities. This included the development of community-based supports and services. Prior to this work, Tina was the state's Legal Aid Advocate at the state's last institution for people with developmental disabilities. Other positions held include, Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator for West Virginia's IDD Waiver Program, IDD Waiver Provider Regional Manager, Day Habilitation Teacher, and County Homebound Teacher.

TAI Planning Committee Members (not provided elsewhere):

Gary Arnold is an Events Program Specialist with the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (ICDD). ICDD is an Illinois State Agency dedicated to leading change in Illinois so all people with developmental disabilities exercise their right to equal opportunity and freedom. With ICDD since July of 2023, Arnold works to support leadership development and inclusion within the Illinois Developmental Disabilities community.

Before ICDD, Arnold worked at two different Chicagoland Centers for Independent Living. He worked as the Public Affairs Manager at Access Living, which serves Chicago, and as the Program Director for Progress Center, which serves Suburban Cook County in Illinois.

Arnold identifies as disabled and a person with dwarfism. He sat on the Little People of America (LPA) Board of Directors for 11 years. Little People of America is a national membership organization for people with dwarfism. Gary lives with his wife Katie and his son Matthew in Oak Park, Illinois

Vaness Blais serves as the Director of Policy and Planning for the NH Council on Developmental Disabilities. She is the Chair of the Manchester City Library Board of Trustees, where she works to promote and protect what she believes is the most important democratic institution in our country. She is an environmental justice advocate serving on the Community Loan Fund's Environmental Justice Advisory Committee as a representative of the Janesville Neighbors. She proudly serves as Selectman for her Manchester, NH, Ward 4 neighbors, working with her team to ensure that everyone in her ward has the opportunity to exercise their right to vote.

Kari Harding M.S.W., L.S.W., is an accomplished public service leader with nearly two decades of experience in Pennsylvania state government. As Deputy Director of the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council, she plays a key role in all aspects of the

Council's work, including communications, budgeting, grant oversight, and support for staff and Council members.

A strategic thinker, Kari is deeply committed to creating a society where all people are valued and thrive. She is a licensed social worker who holds a Master of Social Work, with a concentration in management and planning, from Temple University, and a Bachelor of Social Work from Juniata College.

David Ingram is a seasoned leader in the field of disability and health policy, serving as the Director of Operations at the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD). With over 20 years of experience - from Direct Support Professional to Employment Services Director at a non-profit to Employment First Project Manager within NC DHHS - he has been a consistent advocate for employment and inclusion alongside individuals with intellectual and/or other developmental disabilities (I/DD) in NC. Ingram co-led an Employment First Project of National Significance effort in NC with ODEP, co-drafted NC's Employment First Executive Order, and collaborated on NC DHHS' recent Memorandum of Understanding on Competitive, Integrated Employment with Disability Rights NC and the Center for Public Representation.

Dr. Harry Nelson serves as Deputy Director of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, where he provides strategic leadership and oversees the management of federal and state appropriations, agency operations, and policy compliance. With extensive experience in public sector finance, grants management, and organizational governance, he plays a key role in budget development, fiscal oversight, and long-term strategic planning. He has led major fiscal process improvements, implemented a strategic financial stabilization plan, and strengthened compliance with federal regulatory requirements. Early in his career, Dr. Nelson worked as a Job Coach supporting adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), and brings lived experience as a family advocate for an adult with I/DD.

Prior to joining the Council, Dr. Nelson held leadership positions at the University of West Georgia, where he managed grant operations, institutional budgets, and policy development across multiple academic and administrative units. His work included developing innovative financial reporting tools, restructuring budget processes, and contributing to university governance and policy modernization.

Dr. Nelson brings a multidisciplinary academic background that supports his work in public service and organizational leadership. He earned a Doctorate in Public

Administration with a concentration in Public Sector Management from Valdosta State University, as well as graduate and undergraduate degrees in music performance. In addition to his administrative leadership, he teaches public administration, public finance, administrative law, and nonprofit management courses and has remained actively engaged in community service and nonprofit leadership. His career reflects a strong commitment to public service, fiscal accountability, and strengthening organizations that serve individuals with I/DD and their communities.

Kate Thompson (Operations Administrator for the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities) received an undergraduate degree in English and Sociology & Anthropology from Lewis & Clark College then began her career in arts non-profit administration. While she loved her time working in the arts, Kate's true professional passion is public service. In 2023, Kate completed her Master of Public Policy at Portland State University, with a focus on policy analysis and social policy. There, Kate developed a love and respect for state, county, and local governments, and their respective power to impact people's lives.