



Common Start Forum—February 5, 2022

Our Panelists

State Senator Susan L. Moran, the co-lead Senate sponsor of the Common Start legislation, represents the Plymouth & Barnstable District, including Bourne, Falmouth, and Sandwich on the Upper Cape. Senator Moran has been a leader in the legislature on issues related to economic development such as childcare, transportation, education, and environmental protection. She is Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure, Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee on Advanced Information Technology, the Internet and Cybersecurity, Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Health, and a member of several other committees. Living and working for decades on the Upper Cape as a lawyer for small businesses, an owner of a real estate company, and a leader in local and county government, she is deeply experienced in the needs of her district. She is currently a Senate appointee on the Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission and an active member of nine legislative caucuses. Senator Moran also serves as a board member of the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators.

State Representative Kip Diggs, a House sponsor of the Common Start legislation, represents the Second Barnstable House District. He successfully ran for state representative in 2020 and won a close election for the Second Barnstable against the incumbent Republican candidate. Since taking office in January 2021, he has been appointed to seven legislative committees, including the Joint Committee on Education. He is a member of the Black and Latino Legislative Caucus and does charity work locally for veterans and the Meals on Wheels program. Representative Diggs grew up in Osterville, Massachusetts, and graduated from Barnstable High School. He became a world boxing champion, subsequently formed his own construction business, and became a construction operator for the Barnstable Department of Public Works.

Lynda V. Allen has been the Executive Director of Crystal Garden Children's Center in Hyannis for the past 21 years, with responsibilities for administrative management of the Center, staff recruitment and training, community relations, licensing compliance, and assuring a nurturing, healthy, safe environment for children, teachers, and parents. She has served as Professor and a Department Chair at Roxbury Community College, taught in the Boston Public Schools, held several consulting positions in early childhood education, and worked at the Commonwealth's Office of Child Care Services as Day Care Assistant Coordinator and as its Day Care Enforcement Specialist. She holds a M.S. in Education from Wheelock College.

Rafaela Fonseca has operated a Family Child Care service for seven years, working full days with one *great* assistant and, currently, 10 beautiful children. She has provided emergency childcare services at her facility since the beginning. She also has two children of her own, a husband, and a dog. Originally from Brazil, she has lived on Cape Cod since 2005. Rafaela is studying at Massasoit Community College for her Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education. Rafaela loves travelling, watching movies, reading, and making new friends. She also loves to eat, especially new and different foods, but admits that she doesn't like going to the gym.

Janae Mendes is the Action Team Member for Common Start Coalition Cape & Islands Chapter, the mother of her 7-year-old daughter Brielle, and a full-time student at Southern New Hampshire University. She is honored to help to engage the community in discovering how the Common Start legislation (H.605 & S. 362) can meet the many challenges of the child-care crisis. Janae is working towards a bachelor's degree in human services to extend her gift of helping others in a caring and positive way.

Debra Murphy is Early Childhood Coordinator at Cape Cod Community College. She started working with young children in 1972 and has been a professor since 1989. As president of Associate Degree Early Childhood Teacher Educators (ACCESS), she represented educators and students on the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) *Power to the Profession Task Force* from 2016 to 2019. She represents community college teacher-educators and students on the newly formed Commission for Professional Excellence in Early Childhood Education that creates national policy and support for the early childhood education profession. Debra is also an editor for NAEYC's online journal *Voices of Practitioners*.

Amy O'Leary is Executive Director of Strategies for Children, a non-profit organization that works to ensure that all Massachusetts children, from birth to five, can access high-quality early education and care programs. Amy joined SFC in 2002 as the early childhood field director and has served SFC in many roles. Prior to that, Amy worked as a preschool teacher and program director at Ellis Memorial in Boston's South End. She serves on the adjunct faculty at Boston University and Cambridge College and has been elected twice to serve on the Governing Board of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), once as its President. Amy is a member of the Massachusetts Kids Count Advisory Council and the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Advisory Committee. Amy also serves on the Board of Directors of the Children's Investment Fund in Boston and holds a MPA from Suffolk University.

Noelle Pina is the Chief of Staff at the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce. At the Chamber, she leads government relations & public policy development, guides organizational alignment, has general oversight of all departments, and supports the work of all Chamber pillars. Noelle is a 14th generation Bahamian who moved to Cape Cod from Nassau in 2010, where she started the Southcoast Young Professionals Network and CHOICES, a high school dropout prevention program. In 2013, she became Executive Director of the Orleans Chamber of Commerce, directing all Chamber operations, publishing the award-winning *Truly Orleans* lifestyle magazine, managing 35+ events annually, and navigating the Chamber through the COVID-19 pandemic. While in Orleans, she completed the U.S. Chamber of Commerce prestigious Institute for Organization Management program and the Tufts University Institute for Nonprofit Practice. She lives in Mashpee with her husband and two sons and serves on the Mashpee Affordable Housing Committee and on the board of the Homeless Prevention Council.

