



Joint Meeting of the RAISE Family Caregiving and Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Advisory Councils

April 29, 2026

Speaker Bios



Ana Beltran is an attorney and director of the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network, the only federally funded national technical assistance center on the families. For over twenty-five years, Beltran has worked on the array of issues impacting kinship/grandfamilies, providing technical assistance and training to government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and the legal community. She is also a prolific writer who has authored many articles, reports, and resources to support the families. In a joint collaboration, Beltran co-authored the first set of comprehensive National Model Family Foster Home Licensing Standards on which the federal government “relied heavily” and was part of a team that created the Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval

Standards. She is also currently serving as an appointed member of the federal Advisory Council on Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. Prior to joining Generations United in 1999, Beltran worked in all three branches of the federal government and was a practicing attorney. She found her true passion when she began supporting kinship families. Beltran credits this passion to her amazing grandma who helped raise her.



Kari Benson As the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aging, Kari Benson leads the Administration on Aging in advocating on behalf of older Americans. In this capacity, she guides and promotes the development of home and community-based long-term care programs, policies, and services designed to afford older people and their caregivers the ability to age with dignity and independence and to have a broad array of options available for an enhanced quality of life. This includes the promotion and implementation of evidence-based prevention interventions proven effective in avoiding or delaying the onset of chronic disease and illness.



Kari's entire career has been in the aging network, most recently serving as the director of the Aging and Adult Services Division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services and as the executive director of the Minnesota Board on Aging. Through these dual roles, she oversaw the full range of federal- and state-funded HCBS for older adults, their families, and the friends, neighbors, and others who provide informal caregiving support. Prioritizing collaboration with the 11 tribal nations that share geography with Minnesota, as well as organizations reaching rural and underserved communities, was a hallmark of her leadership at the state level. She also partnered with the state's Disability Services Division to coordinate quality assurance and improvement strategies for the Medicaid waiver programs, strengthen maltreatment and critical incident remediation efforts for older adults and people with disabilities, and launch the state's universal LTSS assessment tool.

Kari holds a bachelor's degree in human ecology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a master's degree in public policy from the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.



Dr. Ali Caliendo is the founder and Executive Director of Foster Kinship in Nevada, where her work is grounded in the belief that children thrive when they can safely remain within their families and communities. Guided by this conviction, she developed an evidence-based Kinship Navigator model that has stabilized more than 13,000 kinship, adoptive, and birth families.

Under her leadership, Foster Kinship has helped reshape how children in non-parental care are understood and served. The organization integrates real-time data, rigorous evaluation, and lived experience to inform both practice and policy. This approach has influenced state policy, contributed to national research on kinship care, and strengthened Nevada's child welfare system.

Dr. Caliendo is driven by a responsibility to build systems that honor the worth of children and families, especially those navigating crisis. As Foster Kinship continues to grow, she is focused on ensuring this work is sustained, strengthened, and expanded so that it can reach more families and endure beyond any one role.



Jonathan Cottor is CEO/founder of the National Center for Pediatric Palliative Care Homes. He previously cofounded Ryan House, a successful freestanding respite, palliative, and hospice care home in Phoenix, Arizona. Proud dad of a son diagnosed with a rare disease who lived for 17 years, Cottor focuses on championing support for medically fragile children and their families. While these families make up a small percentage of the population and often get missed in policy discussions and health care priorities, he believes that solutions developed to meet their needs can have a broader impact. Cottor’s experience as a caregiver to his son informed the support he gave during his father’s recent dementia and hospice journey.



Dr. Moses S. Dixon, PhD, is a distinguished practitioner in Global Health and Social Medicine, recognized for his leadership across nonprofit, governmental, and academic sectors. Since 2019, he has served as President & CEO of Senior Connection, Inc., where his tenure has been defined by innovation and a steadfast commitment to advancing aging services.

In 2026, Dr. Dixon was appointed as a United Nations Representative to the AWWG at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In this global role, he contributes to advancing dialogue, policy advocacy, and multi-stakeholder collaboration aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a particular focus on sustainable development, inclusive growth, and international cooperation. He works alongside global leaders, policymakers, civil society organizations, and fellow representatives to support initiatives that create measurable, long-term impact.

His forward-thinking leadership has earned both national and international recognition. In 2025, he was named Healthcare Nonprofit Leader of the Year by Worcester Business Journal, for his transformative impact on the health and aging services sector. He also received the Forttuna Group Global Excellence Award for Health & Wellness for 2025, honoring his pioneering work in integrating global health delivery models, such as the CareExpress mobile health initiative, to improve healthcare access and social support for older adults and family caregivers.

Dr. Dixon’s expertise in global health delivery and aging policy, particularly his advocacy for “Grandfamilies” (grandparents raising grandchildren), has been recognized by



Harvard Medical School. Earlier in his career, he served in the public sector as a legislative fellow to former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid and as a legislative aide in the Massachusetts State House, where he deepened his grounding in public policy and community development.

In 2024, Dr. Dixon was selected as one of 60 scholars nationwide for the Presidential Leadership Scholars (PLS) Program, a cross-administration leadership initiative drawing lessons from the legacies of Presidents George W. Bush, William J. Clinton, George H.W. Bush, and Lyndon B. Johnson. Through this network, he continues to champion innovative, equitable solutions across sectors.

Dr. Dixon holds a Ph.D. in Community and Public Affairs from the State University of New York at Binghamton, a Master of Medical Sciences in Global Health Delivery from Harvard Medical School, a Master's in Community Development and Planning from Clark University, and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Howard University.



Molly Evans is the Senior Manager of Strategic Programs and Innovation at the Massachusetts Executive Office of Aging & Independence (AGE), where she leads statewide policy, strategy, and program initiatives focused on family caregiving and digital equity. Prior to this role, she held positions at the MassHealth Office of Long-Term Services and Supports, LeadingAge, and the AARP Public Policy Institute.



Wendy Fox-Grage is a senior director on NASHP's Aging and Disability team, working on long-term services and supports, family caregiving, and palliative care. She joined NASHP in September 2019. Previously, she worked as a senior strategic policy advisor for the AARP Public Policy Institute for 15 years and as a program principal for the National Conference of State Legislatures for nearly 10 years. She started her career as a Congressional Fellow for the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging. She has a BS in human development and social policy from Northwestern University and Master's degrees in both gerontology and public administration from the University of Southern California.



Nikaela Frederick is an Aging Services Program Specialist at the Administration for Community Living’s Office of Supportive and Caregiver Services, overseeing grants and contracts under Title III-E of the Older Americans Act. She brings over ten years of experience across the Georgia Aging Network at the local, regional, and state levels, including roles in wellness programming, information and referral, and policy advocacy. Prior to joining ACL in 2024, she served as Deputy Director of the Georgia Council on Aging. Nikaela holds a bachelor’s degree in Sociology and Spanish from Emory University and a Master of Public Health in Gerontology and Health Promotion & Behavior from the University of Georgia.



Lynn Gall is the Family Caregiver Support and Lifespan Respite Programs Manager, Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Lynn has managed state and federal programs for the State of Wisconsin for the past 26 years. She manages the Older Americans Act Family Caregiver Support Program and her state’s Lifespan Respite program.

During her career, Lynn has been responsible for administering state programs contracted to counties and tribes through the State Office on Aging and has served as a liaison for the DHS Tribal Affairs Office. She is a founding member of the Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance, co-chair of the Wisconsin Caregiver Alliance’s Employer Engagement Workgroup, and serves on the Respite Care Association of Wisconsin Board of Directors.

Lynn was appointed to serve on the R.A.I.S.E Family Caregiving Advisory Council in 2023. Her expertise lies in successful collaboration with partners to improve state policies across a wide variety of programs for older adults, people with disabilities, grandparents and older relatives caring for children, families caring for individuals with dementia, tribal members, and more recently employers and working caregivers.

Building partnerships that help businesses support their workforce is an issue Lynn cares about deeply. She believes that the public and private sectors can work together in the best interest of all people to reduce workplace stress, ease burdens on businesses and caregivers, and improve worker retention across Wisconsin.



Robyn Golden serves as the Associate Vice President of Social Work and Community Health and Chair of the Department of Social Work at Rush University Medical Center. She is the Co-Director of Rush’s Center for Excellence in Aging and the Center for Health and Social Care Integration. She is responsible for developing and overseeing health promotion and disease prevention, mental health, care coordination, and complex care models for many vulnerable populations such as older adults, family caregivers, people with chronic conditions, and those who are unhoused.

For over 35 years, Robyn has been actively involved in service provision, program development, interprofessional education, research and public policy aimed at developing innovative initiatives and systems integration to improve health and well-being. Robyn serves on the RRF Foundation for Aging and the Health and Medicine Boards of Directors. She was the John Heinz Senate Fellow for Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, and she is a Past Chair of the American Society on Aging.

Robyn has received the Knee/Wittman Outstanding Achievement Award from the National Association of Social Workers Foundation, the Gerontological Society of America’s Maxwell A. Pollack Award for Productive Aging, and the American Public Health Association’s Insley-Evans Public Health Social Worker of the year award. She founded and chairs the Coalition for Social Work and Health and served as a member of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) committee studying the integration of social needs care into the delivery of health care.

She is a National Association of Social Workers—Social Work Pioneer and a fellow of the Gerontological Society of America and of the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare. Robyn holds a master’s degree from the University of Chicago and a bachelor’s degree from Miami University.



Lisa Grodsky is a community services leader and advocate dedicated to strengthening families and supporting kinship caregivers across Michigan. She serves as a Supervisor at Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLHSA), a Community Action Agency she has been connected to since 2002 when she first began volunteering, and in January 2026, Lisa celebrated 21 years of employment with the organization.

Since 2013, Lisa has been a driving force of OLHSA’s Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program. In 2014, she became a founding member of the Michigan Kinship Care Coalition and currently serves on its Steering Committee,



working alongside partners statewide to expand resources, awareness, and educating policy makers on support for grandfamilies.

Lisa leads initiatives that connect grandparents and other relative caregivers with critical resources, education, and community. She has developed pioneered programs such as *Gigabytes for Grandfamilies* and *Kinship Care Respite*, the latter developed through the University of Michigan optiMize Social Innovation Challenge. These programs create opportunities for connection, respite, and intergenerational engagement while prioritizing the mental health and well-being of caregivers.

As a trauma-informed service provider, Lisa is a Michigan ACEs Community Champion and a Transitions to Success Coach. She also holds the Grandfamilies Leadership Certificate from the University of Maine. Through her commitment and management, Lisa continues to expand awareness of kinship care and build meaningful pathways of support for grandfamilies.



Bernice Hutchinson has more than four decades of experience in policy, program administration, and advocacy in the field of aging. Currently, she is on the staff of the U.S. Administration for Community Living, providing expertise in information access, caregiving, and improving communications for underserved older adults. Previously, she was appointed Deputy Secretary of the Maryland Department of Aging, where she led internal administration of the agency and the strategic direction for programs statewide. Prior to joining the Maryland Department of Aging, she dedicated more than two decades to the national aging network agenda. As Senior Policy Advisor for the National Association of State Units on Aging (now

Advancing States) she advised the nation's state leaders in aging, educated Congress, administered two national resource centers, and was a frequent guest speaker at national, state, and local conferences. She served as one of the founding architects of the Eldercare Locator, a public service of the U.S. Administration for Community Living that connects older adults and their families to local community services. She has authored numerous technical works for the Older Americans Act aging network. She is a graduate of Williams College, where she maintains a close connection having served on the College's prestigious Executive Committee and Regional Director of Alumni Relations.



Mary Lazare is the Principal Deputy Administrator, serving as the senior official performing the duties of the ACL Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging. She was sworn in on March 3, 2025, returning to the ACL following service from 2017-2021.

Throughout a career focused on improving the health and well-being of people with disabilities and older adults, Mary has led social services and health care systems in building partnerships across industries and all levels of government, modernizing system infrastructure and leveraging new technology, and creating opportunities for innovation in order to better meet the needs of the people they serve.

During her prior tenure at ACL, Mary led the agency's overall day-to-day operations and spearheaded several key initiatives, including an interagency task force focused on expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities; a public-private partnership to prevent social isolation; and cross-sector collaboration to align health care and aging and disability services to improve health outcomes and reduce costs. Before joining ACL, she served as Vice President for Home and Community-Based Services for Lutheran Senior Services, overseeing the operations of home health, hospice, and private duty services to improve patient outcomes and developed partnerships among aging services, health care systems and providers to better meet the individual needs of older adults. In earlier roles, she served as Vice President of Senior Care Facilities and Community Health Ministries at Ascension Health, Vice-President of Senior Services and Home Care Services at BJC Health Care, and Executive Director for the Jewish Center for the Aged. She also has served on the board of the Mid-East Area Agency on Aging Foundation of St Louis, the Continuum of Care Committee of the Catholic Health Association, the American Hospital Association Governing Council for Post-Acute Care Services, and a number of other civic and professional organizations.

Mary received her undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri, a master's degree in gerontology from Lindenwood University, and a Master of Business Administration and Management from Maryville University of Saint Louis.



Keith Lowhorne and his wife are raising five grandchildren, two of whom were born with drugs in their systems. The couple distributes food, school supplies, clothing, household items, and presents to more than 35,000 grandfamily members in Alabama. Lowhorne received the 2023 Angels in Adoption award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. In 2024, the Lowhorne family received the Casey Excellence for Children Kinship Caregiver Award. Chair of the SGRG Council, Lowhorne wants to bring awareness to the challenges faced by grandfamilies and kinship families, especially as they relate to education, food, and health.



Sarah Steenhausen serves as Deputy Director of the Division of Policy, Research and Engagement at the California Department of Aging. In this role, she collaborates with state departments and stakeholders in developing policy and research impacting older adults, people with disabilities and family caregivers to advance system change and realize the goals of California’s Master Plan for Aging. Previously, Sarah served as Director of Policy and Advocacy at The SCAN Foundation. She began her policy career in 2001 as a Consultant to the California State Senate Subcommittee on Aging and Long-Term Care.

Sarah holds a Master of Science in Gerontology from the University of Southern California, Davis School of Gerontology and a Bachelor of Arts in History from Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut.



Deborah Stone-Walls serves as the USAging Chief of Programs and Services to oversee the wide spectrum of USAging initiatives. Prior to joining the staff of USAging Deborah served on the USAging Board of Directors from 2009 to 2018 and as the Board president from 2018 to 2021. From 2008 to 2021 she held the position of Executive on Aging for the Maui County Office on Aging/Aging and Disability Resource Center. In her more than 30 years as a practitioner and administrator in the field of human services, Deborah served older adults, individuals of all ages with disabilities, and family caregivers with passion and a commitment to improving overall quality of life.



Jonathan S. Westin, MPA, is an Aging Services Program Specialist with the Department of Health & Human Services' Administration for Community Living (ACL). Over the past two decades, Jon has developed a strong track record in the long-term services and supports policy arena as a reliable source for the non-profit sector, government officials, and thought leaders on aging services delivery and financing reform.

Before joining ACL, Jon delivered strategic guidance to networks of health and aging providers and has worked with appointed and elected officials on pragmatic ways to improve the nation's health and aging delivery systems.

Jon received his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and his Master of Public Administration from American University in Washington, DC. For over a decade, he has been a member of the National Academy of Social Insurance which is comprised of the nation's leading professionals on programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. Jon is also the past Chair of the Partnership for Medicaid, a prominent national coalition focused on improving the nation's largest health insurance program.



Molly Wisniewski is the Family Caregiver Program Manager at the Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) and serves as Chair of the Maryland Commission on Caregiving. With over 20 years of experience in aging services, she began her career in a skilled nursing unit. There, a mentor inspired her commitment to improving the quality of life for older adults, especially those living with dementia. Her work focuses on equipping family caregivers with the tools, resources, and support they need to care for their loved ones while maintaining meaningful connections. Before her current role, Molly served as Associate Director of Elder Services at Civic Works, where she managed grant-funded initiatives, including the Housing Upgrades to Benefit Seniors (HUBS) program and its replication, BCAUSE.

Molly holds a Master of Arts in Management of Aging Services from the Erickson School at UMBC. She brings a passion for building partnerships, developing practical solutions, and advancing programs that strengthen support for caregivers and older adults across the state.



Jennifer Wolff is the Eugene and Mildred Lipitz Professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health where she directs the Roger and Flo Lipitz Center to Advance Policy in Aging and Disability and co-directs the NIA-funded Hopkins Economics of Alzheimer’s Disease and Services Center and a cross-school T32 training program Health Services and Outcomes Research for Aging Populations. Dr. Wolff’s research focuses on the care of persons with complex health needs and disabilities and applied studies and initiatives directed at better supporting them and their family caregivers within systems of care. She is a voting member of the RAISE

Family Caregiving Advisory Council.



Carol Zernial, M.A., Executive Director of the WellMed Charitable Foundation, has worked in the field of aging for 30 years and was a caregiver for her mother and her older sister. She currently travels regularly as the primary caregiver for her 93-year-old father who lives 500 miles away. Her personal experience as a working caregiver has strengthened her interest in government and workplace policy changes to expand options and support for caregivers. As a professional, she works to lift the voices of caregivers, those receiving care, and others who are supporting the implementation of the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers. This is her second term on the council.