

Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention
Children's Trust Fund of Alabama



Parent Advisory Council

The Alabama Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is a strategic partner with the Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention/The Children's Trust Fund. The PAC ensures there are strong parent voices in shaping programs, services and strategies that result in better outcomes for children and families. Parent council members bring a diverse range of expertise in prevention strategies and resources and in helping support families across the state of Alabama.

BIOGRAPHIES



Vilma Blanco
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2

Vilma Perez-Munoz is a mom of 4 and was born and raised in Puerto Rico. Sadly, her breast cancer came back and its now stage 4, however, she looks at it as another opportunity to value the life she has right now and take it one day at a time. She is currently working part-time as an office manager for a cabinet/builder shop. She is trying to work in building a healthy relationship with her husband and breaking cycles of abuse.

Growing up in Puerto Rico with her parents and two siblings, her childhood wasn't perfect but it taught her how to be compassionate and humble to others. Mental health was a huge struggle but things are better now.

Family has always been a priority for her. She is forever grateful for the commitment of her parents to provide us with the best life they could provide, given the resources they had in hand at the time.

Vilma has always wanted to be involved with her peers and community since childhood. She is always striving to learn

ways to be a better woman, wife, daughter, sister, mother, and friend. This past year has been an amazing experience as a member of the PAC and representing her district.

She treasures being involved in the Exchange Center and many other organizations to bring awareness to parents about all the resources available.

She prays she can continue to live by example and leave a love mark in everyone's life she meets.



Herman Boleware
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2

Herman is the proud father of four children ranging in ages from five to 22 years. Although all of his children are doing well today, he recognizes how the early years of parenting were some of the most challenging times for him. Fortunately, he

received support from the Family Guidance Center. Herman shares how the Guidance Center was so important in many aspects of his family's life – from receiving groceries, learning new parenting skills to career development and resume writing.

The parenting classes were especially valuable in helping Herman deal with stressors and learn new and effective parenting strategies to address the different developmental stages and ages of his children. Today, he continues to refer families to the Family Guidance Center because of his own positive and supportive experience that he and his family had.

Herman has been working as a manager at Big Lots Distribution Center for the past six years. He uses his knowledge he gained from Alabama State University where he obtained his bachelor's degree in public relations and his master's degree in business. He also enjoyed his previous employment as an assistant pastor. He was unable to continue this work because of the pandemic. He loved being there and giving back to his community with barbecues and family events.

Herman enjoys meeting other members of the community and sharing resources with them. This is one reason he is interested in serving on the Alabama Parent Advisory Council. He recognizes how important it is for others to have a supportive place to go when they need help. In addition, he sees the valuable role fathers play in their children's lives and is hoping that he can encourage more fathers to join the council.



Sarita Edwards

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 5

Sarita is a mom of five children ranging from 23 to four years of age. They live in Madison, Alabama. In 2017, Sarita gave birth to a son prenatally diagnosed with a rare chromosome abnormality named

Edwards Syndrome, Full Trisomy 18. This was when Sarita began focusing on advocacy and public policy related to children and families. Sarita and her husband, Kareem, established the E.WE Foundation, a 501(c)(3) healthcare advocacy organization to create better healthcare outcomes for families affected by Edwards Syndrome.

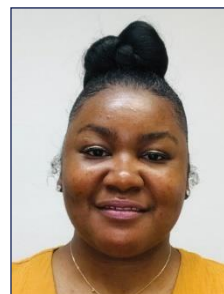
After participating in a 6-week parenting course, *Every Person Influences Children* (EPIC) to strengthen her knowledge of childhood behavior, positive reinforcements, and effective communication, Sarita and her husband launched the Literacy, Education, Advocacy, and Policy Program (LEAP). The LEAP program is an instructional resource program promoting health literacy, community education and patient advocacy. Today, Sarita is the CEO and President of the E.WE Foundation. In addition to the

work she does with the foundation, Sarita is a host of the Being Rare podcast, a rare disease legislative advocate and

a member of multiple coalitions and work groups promoting health and medical equity. She serves as a community congress member providing advice and insight on urgent policy initiatives. She also serves on the executive board for other nonprofit community organizations and is a member of advisory councils within the state and across the country. Sarita and her family were recognized as a 2020 Madison Family of the Year Nominee and received Commemorative Coins from Madison City Council because of their contributions to the community and their positive impact to the city.

In addition, Sarita was recognized as a Rocket City Mom in 2021 and also received the Awesome Mom of Huntsville award.

Sarita is looking forward to serving on the Alabama Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and hopes that together they can identify community resource needs and areas needing improvement. She believes the PAC will promote the parent perspective to create a more proactive approach to crisis prevention, interventions, identify resource accessibility and identify challenges and barriers that delay implementing services.



Rosezina Kelley

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 1

Rosezina is a single mother of four children who all reside in Mobile, Alabama. In their spare time, they enjoy going to the beach and sitting on the pier to meditate and

journal. Afterwards, they have open conversations about current events or situations they want to vent about. This is how Rosezina and her children stay connected and up-to-date on personal issues that each of them face. This is also an opportunity to share how they each overcome challenges they may have. Another activity they enjoy is walking the nature trails at the local Medal of Honor Park to soak up the sun and get some exercise.

At the age of 27, Rosezina decided to take a stand for herself and her children by leaving a toxic long-term relationship. With only a few dollars saved and limited clothing for each child, she made her way back to Mobile to stay with her mother and get back on her feet. After a year of struggling to find employment, she swallowed her pride and applied for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). Although she felt embarrassed because

of the stigma society places on welfare recipients, it was the best decision she ever made. She participated in the JOBS program, which helped prepare her for job readiness. After six months of participating in the program, she was successful in finding a job and that jump started her new life journey of becoming an independent single mother.

Today Rosezina is an Administrative Assistant for Coastal Family Partners, a nonprofit organization that serves the community through mission work, free respite services for caregivers of children with special needs and free parenting workshops. She is currently working on her bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Human Resource Management. As a member of the Alabama Parent Advisory Council, she hopes to address poverty and bring awareness and resources related to mental health issues to families in urban communities.



Christy McDaniel CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3

Christy is a devoted wife to new husband Jeffrey

since August of 2022, and a devoted mother to her 12-year-old daughter named Rose. They reside in Goodwater, a small town in Coosa County. Christy started out in the HIPPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) program with her daughter. The HIPPPY program provided her with services such as home visitation, parent involvement and school readiness tools to help her prepare Rose for success in school and beyond. Christy also took parenting classes with Safe Family Services and was grateful for the support and saw how valuable this program is in helping families.

She then started participating in the Alabama Parent Leadership Network and has been a member for the past five years and works as a parent educator. In addition to making a lot of great connections with other parent leaders in Alabama, the network has provided Christy with some excellent opportunities such as being able to participate in the Alabama Parent Leadership Academy each year. Most importantly, she appreciates being able to develop her own skills and knowledge as a parent leader in Alabama. Christy served on the Alabama Children's Trust Fund Parent Advisory Council Planning Committee and played a major role in helping to develop the new Parent Advisory Council (PAC) on which she now serves. Christy's new goal in life is to be a better wife and mother and parent educator. She lives by the saying "GOD is not done with me yet. God has something in store for everyone and for me that is being a parent educator and friend."



Churmell Mitchell CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3

Churmell Mitchell is a single father of two beautiful children, Prince and Princess. He has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Activity and Health from Auburn University.

Currently, he is pursuing his Master's Degree in Physical Education. He completed his Pastoral Degree from Highlands College with anticipation of getting his Doctoral Degree in Ministry in Theology.

He is a highly sought-after national Fatherhood speaker. He recently received mentoring through Eric Thomas and his team who are recognized as the number one speaker resource in the world. He currently serves and represents the Alabama Parent Advisory Council for District 3 with the Children Trust Fund. He has provided not only his voice but his presence in Alternative schools and juvenile detention centers and prisons for men and women from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. He has spent over 15 years in a variety of positions in the community, government affiliated programs, schools from all ages, even college students, and corporate businesses training their staff at the level needed. This led him to start his own 501(c)(3) called A Father's Voice Matters. In his efforts he helps men in their development who are seeking to become a stronger leader in their home.

As a single father of two children who was attending college and experiencing homelessness for three months, he developed many skills that helped him fight through adversity. There was no instruction given to Churmell about his superpower of being a single father and a parent in general. Gaining primary responsibility for two children, he was told he would not be a successful parent, and that caused him to try to defeat that belief from others and in his head for many years. As a result of evaluating and applying healthy skills to his parenting he found his experience created a superpower rather than a problem. Understanding that he had a superpower, he later was able to provide many individuals in different stages of life a code for improving their purpose as a strong father in the home. He has proven his skillset has worked by the testimonials from students k-12, college students, teachers, college professors, athletes, and business professionals.

In his free time, he loves to speak, sing, play instruments, cook and travel – and he loves people. His favorite food is anything spicy, sushi, hot wings, and ramen with a bottle of Crystal hot sauce to add some spice. He has a weak spot for any candy in gummy form. His dreams include traveling the world developing fathers into strong leaders in their home.



Kayla Starr Etie CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 4

Kayla Starr Etie, born and raised in Northwest Alabama, is an energetic, full time, very proud mother to 2 children, ages 12 and 4! She devotes most of her time helping her children develop character and skills they need

to navigate life through creative play and open discussion. Kayla and her family enjoy being outside in nature, traveling, music, and making art. She is a people person and teaches her kids to be aware of other's circumstances to ensure they are always spreading love where it is needed most. Kayla Serves as the Parent Leader on the Alabama PAC where she helps organize, and facilitate advisory council duties, along with traveling to represent our PAC!

In her spare time, she is a substitute teacher with Sheffield City Schools, where she enjoys the nostalgia of her Alma Mater. Kayla also helps facilitate a mentoring program called Z-Factor, with children ranging from 5th to 12th grade, where she teaches life skills, as well as promotes problem solving and critical thinking. She serves on the PTO at Deshler Middle School in Tusculumbia, volunteers with other community outreach programs, and is an advocate for many.

She believes success equals happiness and everyone has a purpose they can find through their struggles. Kayla became involved with the Alabama Parent Advisory Council after being nominated through a grantee in 2020. After leaving a violent environment, with nothing but a baby on her hip, she began to feel the weight of her decisions and over time found herself in need of community resources. While involved in a parenting class, she was shaken by the sadness in the room and motivated by seeing so many people struggling.

As the parent representative for district 4, Kayla's goal is to support grantees in areas of improvement and success by providing a parent's point of view and feedback on issues and processes. Her hope is that every family, child, and grantee she works with will feel empowered, capable, and worthy of all they wish to accomplish. Empathy always wins!



Jerijanniece Walker CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 6

Jerijanniece Walker, a mother of two, was born and raised in Alabama. Jerijanniece always knew that no matter what she did in life that she would be a voice for the people. As a child facing many adversities, being raised by a single

mother who worked all the time, she struggled trying to find

her way. When Jerijanniece became an adult trying to raise two kids on her own she started seeing the same cycle repeated and decided she wanted her children's life to be different than hers. She started volunteering at churches and community centers to be an advocate for kids. Learning on her own how to be self-sufficient, she developed her own program S.W.E.A.T.S (Sisters With Every Aspect To Succeed). It specializes in placing women and children with the right resources. She also became interested in bringing more awareness to heart disease, so she started her own foundation, Loads of Love, which is going on its 6th year of donating cards and bears to Children's Hospital. Her dream is to expand the project into developing recipients so that people will be able to get a better insight into the struggles of a heart patient. She is also working towards a patent for the project as well. Jerijanniece has always developed different projects and ideas to help others. From her own experience of suffering from anxiety and depression, she created Class Sessions of Strokes, an art class that is targeted towards adults and kids who suffer with depression. Her end goal is to make this a government funded therapeutic class, with classified therapy professions.

Her hopes and dreams with the PAC are to bring forward all of her creativity and ideas to life and ultimately bridge gaps between people and resources. She hopes to direct people to the right resources to become self-sufficient. Sometimes people who fall between the cracks often lose hope, but it's never too late. There is help and there are resources available.



Paula Bowman CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 6

Paula has a 6-year-old daughter and husband. They live in Alabaster, Alabama. Paula was born into a dysfunctional family, and was taken into DHR custody as a toddler, then again as a teenager. As a 1.5-year-old she suffered from malnourishment and neglect. By the time she was 13, the list of abuse had doubled to also include being a victim of domestic violence, verbal and sexual abuse. Her parents were addicted to prescription pills and were asleep most of the time.

Although Christmas and birthdays were never recognized at home, the teachers and school would make sure the presents made it to Paula's house. Since her parents never worked, her family depended on government programs, and church drives for food and clothing. At the age of 13, DHR intervened and due to her mother's noncompliance with years of DHR intervention, she was placed in a forever foster home at 15 years old. It took some time to find the perfect fit. At the age of 17 she remembers her foster mom saying, "I love you" and broke down crying because it was the first time she ever heard those words and knew they were real. She had prayed to God for

years to have a family, to be loved, to belong, and be like a “normal” kid. Her foster mom is Mexican-American and she was quickly exposed and emerged into the culture.

At the age of 19 she was emancipated out of foster care and found herself in survival mode again. She became a victim of domestic violence, and suffered from homelessness as an escape from the abuse. She was getting her bachelor’s degree at the time and knew that education was not only power, but a way to break the cycle of poverty and government dependence. She went on to get her degree in Spanish, and a minor in Sociology, and Social Work. She is part of the 3% of foster children that complete college. She has worked with many social problems within the Hispanic community such as: homelessness, addiction, immigration, domestic violence and sexual abuse. She spent many years as a volunteer ESL teacher, and community interpreter. Currently she is a contract interpreter, an advocate, and educator.

She teaches EPIC parenting classes, and drug court in Spanish. She continues to advocate for equal services, cultural awareness, and advocacy within the Hispanic community. She speaks up when she sees a need or when others are silenced or voiceless. Her daughter has learned to pay it forward, and has received several awards for being the biggest helper and a leader at school! Paula has taught her daughter to be kind, and humble. As a family they enjoy board games, singing Selena Quintanilla songs, and reading books in Spanish & English. Spending time together is the most important thing. As one of the EPIC participants said, “Children spell love - T-I-M-E”.



Vadonna Williams

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 7

Vadonna is a devoted mother of two sons and a wife to husband, Leonard, since 1997. Being married at 18 years of age and having her first child at 19, prompted Vadonna to quickly learn what community resources were available for new parents. From Medicaid and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) appointments to Parent Leadership training, Vadonna successfully navigated many systems and gained a wealth of knowledge about prevention.

She became a dedicated advocate for children and families in Tuscaloosa and throughout Alabama after obtaining both a BS in Early Childhood Education and a MS in Human Development and Family Studies, from the University of Alabama. She has nearly 16 years of parent leadership experience. Some of the roles she has taken on include being a Parent Leadership Coordinator, Peer Leader and Facilitator of parenting classes.

Her past experience with Tuscaloosa’s One Place as a Director of the Parenting Department, provided her with many opportunities to train both staff and parents on the use of parent leadership resources. Because of her strong leadership skills, Vadonna was appointed by the Governor of Alabama to serve as the Parent Representative on the Board of Directors for the Alabama Partnership for Children. She is also a founding member of the Alabama Partnership’s Family Advisory Committee.

On a national level, she serves as a steering committee member for the National Early Childhood Family Network. She also serves on the FRIENDS Parent Advisory Council (PAC). FRIENDS, the National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), provides training and technical assistance to Federally funded CBCAP Programs. As a PAC member, Vadonna provides useful overall program direction and guidance to the activities of the National Center. She also shares her experience and expertise in child abuse prevention and family strengthening. Serving on the Alabama PAC, since 2020, has given Vadonna another opportunity to strengthen her parent leadership skills, as well as be a support, mentor, and advocate for the families in Alabama. Her goal is to continue to use her voice with families to share information and resources about child abuse and neglect prevention.



Alabama Parent Advisory Council

The Alabama Parent Advisory Council (PAC) advises the Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention/The Children's Trust Fund (department/children's trust fund) about funding community-based prevention programs that help support and strengthen families. The PAC members provide their ideas and perspectives to help shape the future directions of the department. Parental involvement in decision-making is the key to having policies and programs that support families' strengths and needs. The department/children's trust fund is committed to partnering with the PAC to:

- Strengthen and support families
- Engage all community sectors in child maltreatment prevention strategies and activities.
- Reduce the need for out-of-home placement of children

The PAC is a diverse group of parents from across the state who have a range of expertise and personal experiences with prevention programs and resources in helping to strengthen their own families and overcome challenges in their lives. The PAC serves as a strategic partner with the department/children's trust fund to inform services and practices and to provide a greater understanding of family needs and service gaps. The PAC ensures there are strong parent voices in shaping programs, services and strategies that result in better outcomes for children and families. The PAC will assist in:

- Fostering parent leadership development
- Advocating on behalf of parents and other caregivers to promote improvements in prevention programming
- Modeling the value of partnerships between parents and staff

Role of the Parent Council Members

1. Actively advise the department/children's trust fund work related to prevention services provided in the community to families before they interact with the child welfare system.

2. Serve as a representative voice for parents in promoting improvements in prevention services and practices.
3. Advise the department/children's trust fund on developing meaningful parent roles in its various service areas of prevention, family supports, in-home services, and other resources/ services.
4. Develop resources to assist the staff in developing supportive, strengths-bases strategies in their work with parents.
5. Promote and support implementation of the protective factors framework.
6. Serve in various other roles bases on emerging needs of the department and the children's trust fund such as co-trainers, public speakers, reviewers of funding proposals, contributors to written materials, etc.
7. Participate, if interested and time permits, in the work of the Birth Parent National Network (BPNN), a diverse network of birth parents and organizations that promote policy and practice.



The Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention/ The Children's Trust Fund is partnering with the

Children's Trust Fund Alliance to coordinate the work of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). The role of the Alliance is to support the needs of council members, to promote birth parents and practice change and provide outreach, communication, coaching, mentoring, and one-to-one support.

The Alliance is the national membership organization for state Children's Trust and Prevention Funds (CTFs). IT provides technical assistance, tools, and resources for those working to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. Through its commitment to partnering with parents, the Alliance advocates for and supports strong parent voices related to strategies that ensure the safety and well-being of children throughout the country.

The Alliance is:

- A thought leader in the movement to strengthen and promote the well-being of children, families and communities
- A strong partner with parents
- A provider of training and technical assistance that translates knowledge to practice

Learn more about the Alliance and its parent partnership work at:

ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents