

# *Pre-Apprenticeship Webinar #3*

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## Being an Early Childhood Advocate

April 9, 2024

# Building Bright Futures

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- Statewide initiative providing **resources and support** for students interested in or currently pursuing a career in **early childhood education** through pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship.
- Offer **enrichment opportunities** to learn more about topics related to ECE.

# Friendly Reminders

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- Please keep mics muted
- Recording and slides will be available this week
- Ask questions in the chat

# Valerie Williams

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**Family and Consumer Sciences Education Consultant**  
*Curriculum and Assessment*

Office of Career and Technical Education  
NC Department of Public Instruction

# Elaine Zukerman

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**Advocacy and Communications Director**

NC Early Education Coalition



Elaine Zukerman



# Susan Butler-Staub

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NC Early Education Coalition



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EARLY EDUCATION COALITION**

# **Using Your Voice!**

**Advocating for Yourself and for Change in the Early Childhood Field**

Susan Butler-Staub  
NC Early Education Coalition



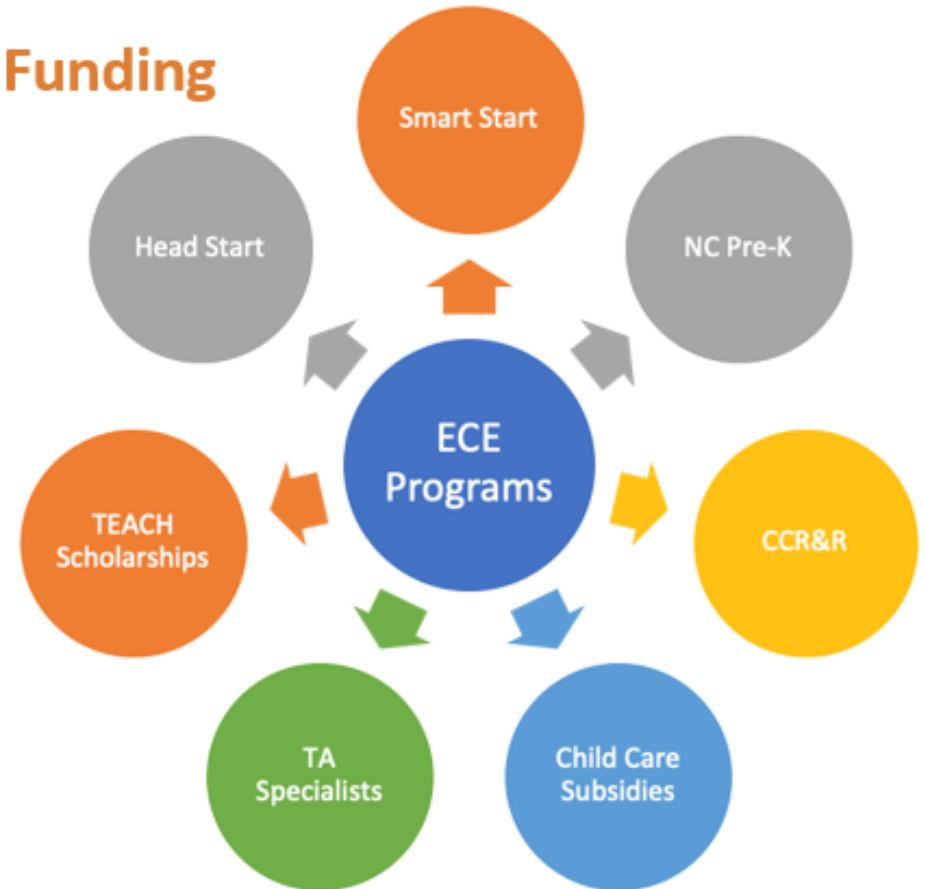
# Why Should You be an ECE Advocate?



# ECE Advocacy Created These!

## Public Policy = Laws, Policies, Rules, Programs and Funding

- Smart Start
- NC Pre-K
- Child Care Subsidies
- Head Start and Early Head Start
- Child Care Resource and Referral
- Infant Toddler Specialists
- Healthy Behavioral Specialists
- And more!



# How Public Policy Happens

**Public policy - law, policy, rules, money - is influenced and developed by:**

- Citizens and Advocates
- Professional Experts and Practitioners
- Research and Data
- Federal and State Law and Funding
- The Governor – Leadership and Executive Order
- U.S. Congress and North Carolina Legislators
- NC Commissions Through Rules



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# **Today's Early Childhood Issues**

# Early Care & Education Policy Framework

## ECE Policy Goal

High-quality early childhood programs should be available to all families who want or need their service at a price that each family can afford.

## ECE Dilemma

How to balance 4 inter-related components:

- **Quality**
- **Affordability**
- **Availability**
- **ECE Workforce**





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# **Your Role in the Process**

# You have the Power to Advocate!

## Change Requires Action

- To be effective, advocates need to get actively involved in the political policy-making process.
- Yet most people are not engaged at all and don't like politics or politicians.
- Only 20% of young people, ages 18-24, consider themselves politically active.
- 18% of all people approve of the job Congress is doing, and 1/3 approve of NC legislators.

## Low political participation has its consequences

- “Politics obviously determines who gets what, when and how. Democracy is supposed to promote the interests of the people as a whole, but political institutions are responsive to those who mobilize and act in politics.” - *Brookings Institute study*
- “Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you.”  
– Pericles

# Relationships Are Key

- Get to know your legislators!
  - Websites
  - Social media
  - Subscribe to emails and newsletters
- Build a relationship
  - Introduce yourself
  - Share resources – you are the experts!
  - Turn them into champions for early education

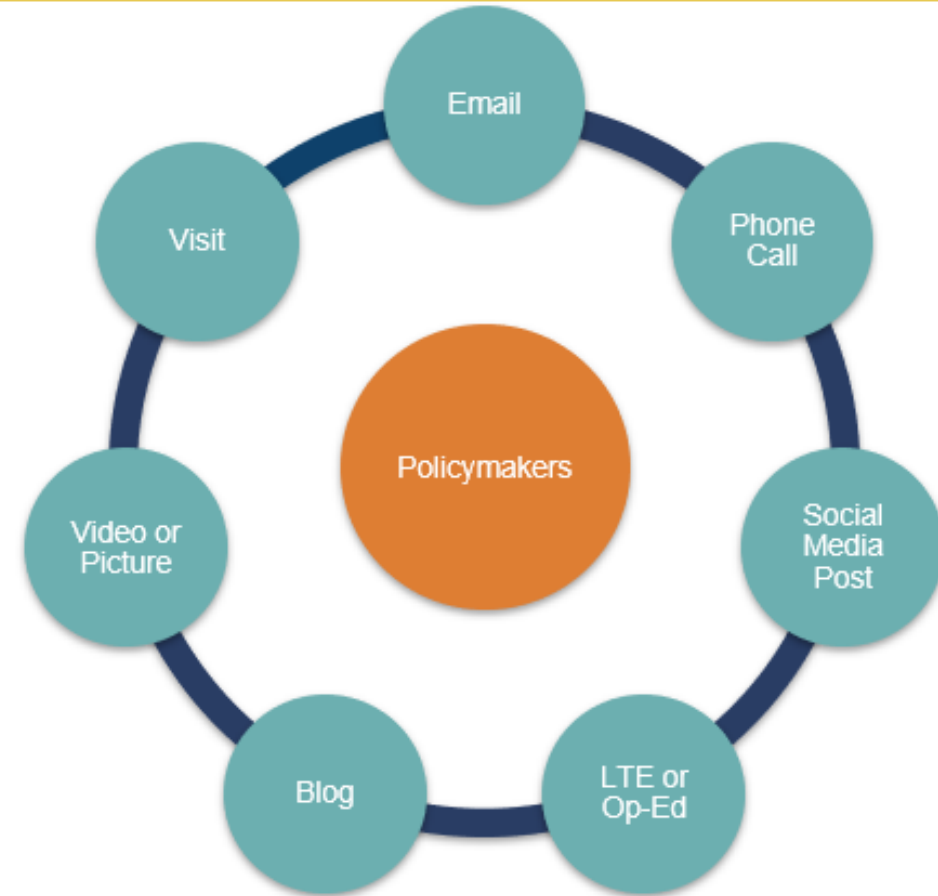




# Sharing Your Story

## A Surround Sound Approach:

- Send an email to your legislators (our [Action Center](#) makes it easy!)
- Call your legislators
- Post a message on social media – and tag your legislators
- Visit your legislators (in-person or virtual) – we can help!
- Record a short video or post a picture on social media – and tag your legislators
- Write a blog or newsletter article and share it
- Write an LTE or Op-Ed for your local newspaper
- Share a story with us through our Action Center that we can use in our conversations with policymakers



# Cassandra Brooks

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Owner, Little Believer's Academy

Author, *From Silence to Strength: Empowering  
Communities Through Advocacy*

# Cassandra Brooks M.Ed.

In my journey through both personal challenges and professional achievements, I've dedicated myself to the field of childcare and advocacy. Leading Little Believer's Academy, my goal has always been to provide exemplary early childhood education and support to families in need, especially within low-income communities. The pandemic highlighted the critical nature of our work, pushing me to advocate for essential resources, champion Medicaid expansion, and underscore the importance of community health and resilience. My story weaves through moments of loss and milestones of success, all driving towards a future where every child and family has the support they need to thrive.



# CASSANDRA BROOKS - ACHIEVEMENTS

## Owner and Operator Little Believer's Academy

Established two five-star childcare centers focusing on high-quality early childhood education for primarily low-income communities.

## Advocated for Childcare During COVID-19

- Kept centers open during the pandemic
- Secured essential supplies
- Advocated for support for childcare facilities statewide.

## Champion for Medicaid Expansion

- Led advocacy efforts for expanding Medicaid in NC to close healthcare coverage gap, motivated by personal losses among staff to preventable conditions.
- Facilitated dialogue with legislators
- Participated in roundtable with Gov. Cooper to discuss Medicaid expansion.

## Award Recognition

- Tom V. Child Advocacy Award for commitment to children's welfare and contributions to the community
- NC Dogwood Award
- CCSA 2023-24 Owner of the Year

## Community Engagement and Leadership

- Vice chair of NC Partnership for Children
- Board Member of Johnston Co. Partnership for Children
- Various committees and organizations

## Authored "From Silence To Strength: Empowering Communities Through Advocacy"

Released a book focusing on the empowerment of communities through advocacy, further extending influence and sharing insights and experiences with a broader audience.

# UNDERSTANDING CHILDCARE ADVOCACY

Childcare **advocacy** involves working to ensure that every child has access to **high-quality** early education and care. Advocates push for **policies, resources, and practices** that support families, children, and childcare providers.

## KEY ASPECTS OF CHILDCARE ADVOCACY

- **Policy Reform:** Advocating for laws and regulations that improve childcare quality, affordability, and accessibility
- **Community Support:** Mobilizing community resources and support to meet the diverse needs of children and families
- **Awareness & Education:** Raising public awareness about the importance of early childhood education and care

## BENEFITS OF CHILDCARE ADVOCACY

- **Improved Child Development:** High-quality childcare supports cognitive, emotional, and social development, laying a strong foundation for future learning and growth.
- **Economic Support for Families:** Affordable child care enables parents to work or pursue education, contributing to family stability and economic growth.
- **Professional Growth for Providers:** Advocacy leads to better support and resources for childcare providers, promoting professional development and quality care.
- **Stronger Communities:** Quality child care programs can transform communities by fostering a nurturing environment for the next generation.

Childcare advocacy is not just about **supporting children and families**; it's about **investing in our future**. By ensuring that children have access to quality early care, we're building a **stronger, more equitable society**.

# UNLOCKING POTENTIAL THROUGH ADVOCACY

## *A MESSAGE TO HIGH SCHOOLERS*

*As high school students, you stand at the threshold of significant life transitions, armed with the power to shape the future. My journey in child care advocacy exemplifies the profound truth that every individual, regardless of age, holds the potential to enact significant change within their communities.*

- **Empowering Voices.** My story began with a personal mission, which amplified into a community-wide movement. My work underscores the importance of raising our voices for the causes we believe in.
- **Advocacy in Action.** Through advocacy for Medicaid expansion and support during the COVID-19 pandemic, I demonstrated how determination and persistence can lead to tangible improvements in people's lives.
- **A Guide for the Next Generation.** My book, *From Silence To Strength: Empowering Communities Through Advocacy*, serves as an invitation to all young individuals to join the advocacy journey, offering insights and inspiration drawn from my own experiences.
- **Joining Forces for Change.** These achievements remind us that when we come together, driven by a shared purpose, we can overcome challenges and create lasting impact.

# LITTLE BELIEVER'S ACADEMY

DREAM, BELIEVE, ACHIEVE

STEM PRESCHOOL- SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATH

You are not just the leaders of tomorrow, you are influencers today. Whether it's through engaging in dialogues about childcare, participating in community service, or simply advocating for positive change within your schools and social circles, you have the power to make a difference. Let my journey inspire you to explore the realms of advocacy, leadership, and community engagement, and discover how you, too, can contribute to shaping a brighter, more inclusive future.

***THANK YOU!***

# Thank You!

Your feedback is important to us.  
Please scan the QR code to complete a brief survey.

For more information on Building Bright Futures,  
please contact:

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