

**Annual Early Childhood Education Summit:
Supporting Today's Workforce For Tomorrow**

Wednesday, May 18 | 9:30 -11:30 AM CT

Speakers



[Texas Rep. Angie Chen Button](#) (District 112), Chair, House Committee on International Relations & Economic Development

Angie Chen Button is currently serving as State Representative for House District 112 which includes portions of Garland, Richardson, Rowlett, Sachse, and Dallas in Dallas County. She currently serves as Chair of the International Relations and Economic Development Committee and as a member of the Ways and Means Committee. Representative Button worked for Texas Instruments (TI) where she promoted American products internationally as an International Marketing Manager. She is also a CPA with Masters' degrees in Public Finance and Management Sciences. Before her election to the Texas House, Rep. Button had a long record of public service and community involvement in the Metroplex. She served in leadership positions with chambers of commerce, citizen coalitions, and for other civic and non-profit organizations. Representative Button was born in Taipei, Taiwan. As a child, her seven person family lived in a 300 square foot, one-room hut without a kitchen or running water. She credits education with bringing her a better life. Rep. Button met her husband Darcy as a graduate student at the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD). They have lived in Richardson and Garland for 30 years and are the proud grandparents of two. Angie's life has been the American dream-Texas style.



Kim Kofron, Director, Early Childhood Education, [CHILDREN AT RISK](#)

Kim Kofron is the Director of Early Childhood for Children at Risk. Previously, she served as the Executive Director for the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children from 2014-2021. She hails from the great state of Illinois receiving her Bachelor of Science in Child Development from the University of Illinois but found her way to Texas where she received her Master's in Education in Early Childhood Special Education from the University of Texas. Ms. Kofron has worked in many capacities in early childhood, working in both for-profit and non-profit child care settings as a 3-year-old teacher to Director to Manager of Education for a multi-site statewide child care company in Texas. Kofron has served on Governor Perry's Commission on Licensing Standards and currently serves on Governor Abbott's Texas Early Learning Council. Kim lives in Round Rock, Texas with her husband, Paul, is the proud mom of their two children, Margaret and Benjamin.



Makia Thomas, Associate Director, Early Childhood Education, [CHILDREN AT RISK](#)

Makia grew up in Rhode Island and is a proud graduate of the University of Pittsburgh (go Panthers!), where she received her B.S. in Applied Developmental Psychology and M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education. She has a passion for early childhood education that started while working with Jumpstart, an AmeriCorps program. A former teacher, she began her classroom career in 2010 at KIPP Legacy and went on to serve as a Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Dual Language teacher before transitioning into the assistant principal role in 2016. Makia loves traveling with her husband with their favorite trip being to Grand Cayman. She's a great fit with the C@R team because she loves going out to eat – brunch is a particular favorite – especially the grilled chicken sandwich at Leeland House in EaDo.



Cody Summerville, Executive Director, [Texas Association for the Education of Young Children](#)

Cody Summerville is the Executive Director of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children (TXAEYC), a professional membership association that works to advance early childhood education and the early childhood workforce across Texas. He began his career as a kindergarten teacher and has served in a variety of roles within the early childhood programs, state government, and educational technology, each providing a unique opportunity to support the quality of early childhood education. During his time at the Texas Education Agency, Cody led the implementation of the Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five, which increased coordination and collaboration across multiple state agencies with early childhood programming and engaged over 10,000 Texans in statewide strategic planning efforts. Most recently, Cody served as the Senior Content Expert at Hatch Early Learning where he was responsible for designing child facing technology that supported data-driven instruction in prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. In addition to professional roles, Cody has served in several leadership roles such as Chair of NAEYC's Young Professionals Advisory Council and Board Member for TXAEYC.



Krista Olson, Research and Policy Associate, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, [UC Berkeley](#)

Krista Olson is a Research and Policy Associate at the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at UC-Berkeley. Krista's work at CSCCE focuses on multi-state research about the systems and policies that shape the work and lives of the early care and education workforce. Her recent work has focused on collecting and sharing how agencies use public funds to support and reward the workforce (the Compensation Strategies Database). She co-authored the most recent Early Childhood Workforce Index. Prior to joining CSCCE, Krista worked as a researcher on large-scale evaluations of policies and programs in education and labor for state, federal and nonprofit clients. Krista holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Wellesley College and a master's degree in Comparative Human Development from the University of Chicago. Krista lives in San Francisco with her husband and enjoys making pottery and attending local arts events in her spare time.



Marica Cox Mitchell, Senior Director, Early Learning, [Bainum Family Foundation](#)

Marica Cox Mitchell is Senior Director, Early Childhood for the Bainum Family Foundation, where she leads the Foundation's efforts to build quality, comprehensive early childhood services in the District of Columbia and in other communities throughout the country. Before joining the Foundation, Cox Mitchell worked for the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), where she most recently served as Deputy Executive Director, Early Learning Systems. In this role, she led a portfolio encompassing public policy and advocacy, accreditations of early learning programs, higher education accreditation and the Power to the Profession initiative. Prior, was Senior Director, NAEYC Accreditation for Higher Education Programs. She also worked for the District's Office of the State Superintendent of Education from 2009 to 2012 — serving as Director, School Preparedness Division and Supervisor, Professional Development Unit. She began her career as a teacher — working in various early learning settings as well as with young children birth through age 8. Cox Mitchell holds a Master of Science in Educational Administration as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education.



Dr. Rania Salman, Associate Professor and Assistant Department Chair, [Child Care and Development, Austin Community College](#)

Dr. Rania Salman is an Associate Professor and the Assistant Department Chair of Child Care and Development at Austin Community College. She received her B.S.Ed. from Baylor University and both of her graduate degrees from the University of North Texas. Rania was born in Beirut, Lebanon, but has been a “native” Texan for over three decades. Rania studies the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, and how these impact young children, their families, and the early childhood community. Her current professional interests center on developing inclusive policies for classrooms and centers. Dr. Salman’s energy comes from mentoring her students, as well as any individual interested in early childhood, and is consistently kept on her toes by her partner, Scott, their 3 year-old daughter, Cami, and their rescue pup, Baylor.



Catherine O'Brien, ABD, Lecturing Professor, Texas A&M San Antonio; Vice President of Advocacy and Public Policy, [TXAEYC](#)

Catherine has worked in the field of early childhood education for 25 years. She is a Lecturer in the Department of Educator and Leadership Preparation at Texas A&M University San Antonio. Holding a BA in ECE and Business Administration, MA in Education emphasizing Early Childhood, pursuing an Ed.D. in Teaching and Learning, Catherine is also a lifelong learner, passionate about supporting educators. Her roles as the VP of Advocacy and Public Policy for TXAEYC and the Past-President of the SA Chapter of the TXAEYC, allows her to stay abreast of and active in public policy and advocacy efforts in the early childhood field. Catherine’s research areas of interest include advocacy, developing apprenticeship programs around the state, workforce compensation, early childhood degree articulation, access to affordable high-quality early childhood education for all children and families, cooperative learning, and developing ecologically sustainable community partnerships.



Dr. Sharla Snider, Professor and Interim Chair, [Texas Woman's University](#)

Sharla Snider was a classroom teacher of young children and library media specialist in the state of Texas prior to her appointment in higher education. This academic year marks 35 years of service in education. At Texas Woman's University, she teaches students in early childhood development and education at undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels. Her research interests involve understanding the nature of emerging technologies in the lives of young children in home, school, and community settings. Additionally, she is interested in how technological teaching practices in higher education enable and empower the core academic mission of teaching, learning, research, and scholarship. She has secured and directed several grant projects including awards from the United States Department of Education and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to examine these issues. Dr. Snider has presented at numerous state, national and international conferences such as the American Osteopathic Pediatric Annual Conference and the American Educational Research Association Conference. Her work can be found in various journals, textbooks, and annuals including Case Studies for Integrating Technology, Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood Education, and Mobile Pedagogy and Perspectives on Teaching and Learning. She is currently serving as Professor and Interim Chair for the Department of Literacy and Learning where the degrees for Early Childhood Education are housed.



Dr. Jennifer Quong, Visiting Assistant Professor, [Texas Woman's University](#)

Jennifer Quong, PhD is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Literacy and Learning at Texas Woman's University. She teaches undergraduate students and is working on educational partnerships. She joins as the BS in Early Childhood Education degree is being created and implemented. Her passion is providing high quality care and education to young children through teacher education.

Dr. Quong began her career with the Dallas ISD's Regional Day School Program for the Deaf as a preschool deaf education teacher and parent advisor collaborating with ECI. Dr. Quong was also the Texas Rising Star Mentor for Workforce Solutions Texoma, and is currently the chairperson for the Region X Head Start/Early Head Start Education Advisory Council. She began teaching in higher education at Grayson college and was the program director for the child development program and spearheaded their NAEYC accreditation twice.



Kolby Monnig, State Director, TX, [Council for A Strong America](#)

Kolby Monnig joined Council for a Strong America in 2020, and currently serves as Texas State Director. Kolby brings a decade worth of experience engaging her community to get involved in issues important to them and having their voice heard at the Texas State Capitol. Kolby's career began in Education, helping to shape and write policy in the Texas Legislature. She has served as a campaign manager for local and statewide campaigns, where she gathered knowledge of fundraising, community engagement, leadership and overall management skills. Kolby understands what it takes to make a difference in her community by identifying ways to improve the lives of every

Texan. She spends her spare time giving presentations in her community on the topics of citizen lobbying and voter registration. She is a proud graduate of Austin Community College and has served on their alumni board as secretary. She was appointed to the Quality of Life for Students Committee at City Hall by Austin City Council, is recognized by the Department of Defense as a defender of veteran causes, and is a graduate of the distinguished program, Leadership Women. She is currently wrapping up her degree in Sociology with a focus on social inequality at Texas Woman's University.



Jim Spurlino, President and CEO, Spurlino Materials, CSA Board, [PN3 Policy Impact Center](#)

Jim Spurlino is the former CEO and owner of Spurlino Materials, a nationally recognized construction materials company with plants in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana, as well as a national division operating throughout the U.S. The company was founded in 2000 and grew to 12 plants and 200 employees. He is the author of Business Bullseye, a book written for entrepreneurs and C-suite executives looking for the tools, insight, and guidance to launch their business to new heights. His latest book, Losing Our Elections, is due out in the fall of 2022 and captures what life is really like for political candidates as

well as a compelling roadmap for getting our country back on track. He is active in and supportive of many early childhood initiatives and organizations. This includes currently serving on the Boards of Every Child Succeeds, Ready Nation, Council for a Strong America, The Prenatal-To-Three Policy Impact Center, and Ohio Kids First. Jim graduated from the University of Dayton with a B.S. in Business Administration and a M.B.A.



Nancy Fishman, National Director, [Ready Nation](#)

Nancy Fishman started at ReadyNation in 2015 and, as National Director, leads this business leader network of approximately 3,000 cross-sector executives. Since 2006, ReadyNation has supported its members to encourage increased public investments in education (from “cradle to career”). Our core work promotes public policies and programs that build a stronger workforce and economy through smart investments in infants, toddlers, older children and families. Prior to joining ReadyNation, Nancy was the State Director of the Pennsylvania Governor’s Early Learning Investment Commission. The Commission, composed of 75 senior-level business executives across the commonwealth, supports public investment in high-quality early care and education as a workforce and economic development strategy. Previously, Nancy was the Director of Success By 6, the early childhood initiative of the United Way of Carlisle and Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. Nancy served for 12 years as an elected school board member in PA.



Leila Melendez, CEO, [Workforce Solutions Borderplex](#)

Leila Melendez is CEO of Workforce Solutions Borderplex, a Texas Workforce Commission network partner. She works closely with local businesses, educators, community partners, and economic developers to improve our region’s skills & competitiveness. Leila has been with WSB for seven years and began her role as CEO at the start of the pandemic. Over the last two years as CEO, she has led Workforce Solutions through a leadership change and a significant economic disruption with agility, innovation, and inspiration.



Aaron Demerson, Commissioner Representing Employers, [Texas Workforce Commission](#)

Aaron Demerson currently serves as the Commissioner Representing Employers for the Texas Workforce Commission. Governor Greg Abbott appointed him to the three-member Commission on August 20, 2019 and reappointed him in February 2021. He was confirmed by the Texas Senate on April 28, 2021. In his role, Commissioner Demerson serves as an advocate for over 620,000 Texas employers and over 3 million small businesses. Commissioner Demerson’s team is devoted to serving as a key resource for all Texas employers. His office provides a variety of tools including employment law conferences, and an employer hotline to help businesses grow and thrive in Texas. Demerson is also devoted to supporting the workforce, economic development, and education efforts that help ensure the skilled workforce that Texas employers demand. Demerson was also appointed Chair of the Governor’s Advisory Council on Cultural Affairs by Governor Abbott in November 2019. This advisory council is charged with raising public awareness of major issues affecting the state due to the rapid growth of the state’s Hispanic population and other issues resulting from changes in demographics. Prior to his appointment, Commissioner Demerson was the Director of the Office of Employer Initiatives at the Texas Workforce Commission. Prior to employment at the Texas Workforce Commission, he served as a Senior Advisor to Governor Rick Perry and Executive Director of the Economic Development & Tourism Division in the Governor’s Office, leading a team that marketed the State of Texas as a premier destination for both business and travel. He has also served as the Director of Business Development, the Director of Administration, and managed the Finance Division for the Texas Economic Development Agency. In addition, Demerson managed the state’s innovative prepaid tuition program (formerly-The Texas Tomorrow Fund) at the State Comptroller’s Office and was employed as a Commercial Finance Analyst and

Loan Administration Officer with Texas Bank (former name) in San Antonio, Texas. Demerson has been and continues to be involved in numerous social and civic organizations including the Board for the Austin Lyric Opera, the Austin Area Urban League, the Capitol Credit Union Nominating Committee, membership in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Delta Sigma Pi Business Fraternity, the Texas Economic Development Council, and 100 Black Men of Austin to name a few. Commissioner Demerson has a BBA in Finance from Texas A&M University-Kingsville. He also received a general banking diploma from the American Institute of Banking, is a '91-'92 graduate of Leadership Austin, and recently had the distinct pleasure of completing the Army War College Commandants National Security Program for civilians