

## Office of Early Childhood Care and Education

### Authority/History

Louisiana's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Advisory Council was created through Act 868 of the 2014 Regular Legislative Session to inform policies related to the unification launched by Act 3 of the 2012 legislative session, which established unified expectations for child care, Head Start, and pre-kindergarten programs.

### Meeting Dates

- Wednesday, February 12, 2025
- Wednesday, May 7, 2025
- Thursday, July 17, 2025
- Wednesday, September 17, 2025
- Wednesday, November 12, 2025

### Roles & Appointing Authorities

**Chair:** Dr. Paula Polito

**Vice Chair:** Maria Blanco

| Role                            | Appointing Authority              | Member             | Title/Organization   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Type III Early Learning Center  | State Superintendent of Education | Tafta Miller       | Owner/Director, The Cub House Early Learning Center and Cub House on the Bayou                         |
| Type III Early Learning Center  | State Superintendent of Education | Arielle Hughes     | Owner/Director, Carousel Preschool   |
| Type II Early Learning Center   | State Superintendent of Education | Brigit Bryant      | Director, Blue Skies and Butterflies Academy   |
| Type I Early Learning Center    | State Superintendent of Education | Amy E. Moran       | Director, St. Thomas More Early Learning Center  |
| Head Start Program (LEA)        | BESE                              | Jane C. Hamilton   | Program Administrator, Beauregard Parish School Board Head Start Program                               |
| Head Start Program (non-LEA)    | State Superintendent of Education | Antoinette Hoard   | Grant Director-Louisiana, Innovative Network of Knowledge  |
| Local Education Agency          | BESE                              | Kristy Bennett     | Early Childhood Coordinator of the Washington Early Childhood Network, Washington Parish School System |
| Local Education Agency          | BESE                              | Carmen Brabham     | Early Childhood Coordinator, Tangipahoa Parish School System   |
| Nonprofit Advocacy Organization | State Superintendent of Education | Jonathan P. Pearce | Legislative Chair, Child Care Association of Louisiana   |
| Nonprofit Advocacy Organization | State Superintendent of Education | Dr. Paula Polito   | Member, Ready Start Louisiana and Jefferson Chamber of Commerce  |
| Nonpublic School                | BESE                              | Norma Palma        | Director of Admissions, Gardere Community Christian School   |

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|---|--|------------------------------|---|
| Nonpublic School  | BESE   | Dr. Shanda Theriot           | Principal,<br>Resurrection of Our Lord School   |
| Professional or Faculty Member with early childhood expertise                                       | Commissioner of Higher Education                                   | Dr. Michelle DeMeulenaere    | Assistant Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Student Success, Louisiana Board of Regents   |
| Louisiana Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics   | President, Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics | Dr. Ashley Lucas             | Pediatrics Medical Director for OLOL Physician Group  |
| Advocacy or Service Organization, focusing on children with disabilities                            | State Superintendent of Education                                  | Maria Blanco                 | Director of Early Childhood Initiatives and Assistant Professor of the Human Development Center, LSU Health Sciences Center                           |
| Representative of Louisiana Business or Community Org   | BESE   | Jen Roberts                  | Chief Executive Officer, Agenda for Children  |
| Parent of a child current enrolled in publicly-funded early learning center                         | BESE   | Jodie Joseph                 | Parent  |
| Designee from House Committee on Education  | Ex-officio member  | Rep. Kim Carver              | State Representative of District 89, House Education Committee  |
| Designee from Senate Committee on Education   | Ex-officio member  | Sen. Rick Edmonds            | State Senator of District 6 and Chairman of Senate Education Committee  |
| Designee from House Committee on Health and Welfare   | Ex-officio member  | Rep. Jason Hughes            | State Representative of District 100, House Health and Welfare Committee  |
| Designee from Senate Committee on Health and Welfare  | Ex-officio member  | Dr. Libbie Sonnier           | Executive Director, Louisiana Policy Institute for Children   |
| Designee from Department of Children and Family Services  | Ex-officio member  | Shannon Wyche                | Director of TASC K-5 Truancy Program, Volunteers for Youth Justice  |
| Director of the Louisiana State Head Start Collaboration Project                                    | Ex-officio member  | Kahree A. Wahid              | Director of the Louisiana Head Start Collaboration Office, Louisiana Department of Education  |
| Representative of state agency responsible for programs under Section 619 or Part C of the IDEA Act | Ex-officio member  | Caroline Nailor-Oglesby      | Director of EarlySteps and Part C Coordinator for Early Intervention, Louisiana Department of Health  |
| Director of Maternal and Child Health Program at the Department of Health and Hospitals             | Ex-officio member  | Amy Zapata                   | Director of the Bureau of Family Health and Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant Program State Administrator, Louisiana Department of Health |
| Director of the Child and Adult Care Food Program at the Department of Education                    | Ex-officio member  | David Thibodeaux             | Director of Child and Adult Care Food Programs, Louisiana Department of Education   |
| Designee of the Louisiana State Fire Marshal  | Ex-officio member  | Deputy Chief Nicholas Heinen | Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal  |
| Representative from the Office of Sanitarian Services at the Department of Health and Hospitals     | Ex-officio member  | Aimee Ewing                  | Buildings and Premises Program Manager, Louisiana Department of Health-Office of Public Health  |
| Representative from the Louisiana Workforce Commission  | Ex-officio member  | Jim Garvey                   | Executive Legal Counsel, Louisiana Workforce Commission   |
| Representative from the Louisiana State Police Bureau of Criminal Identification and Information    | Ex-officio member  | Capt. Adam Albright          | Bureau of Criminal Identification and Information, Louisiana State Police   |