



News Release

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New Senior Policy Experts Join Connecticut Voices for Children *Jaime Mills, Wendy E. Waithe Will Focus on Budget, Education Issues*

NEW HAVEN -- Connecticut Voices for Children is welcoming two new directors to our team to further strengthen our research and advocacy work in budget and education issues in the state. In addition, Voices is bidding farewell this month to the members of the Associate Policy Fellow Class of 2018 and to the Communications Assistant, as well as welcoming an incoming Associate Policy Fellow Class of 2020.

Attorney Jamie Mills, J.D., (“Jamie”) will join Voices effective May 21, 2018, as the Director of Fiscal Policy and Economic Inclusion. A respected lawyer, policy analyst, political advisor, and advocate for decades, Jamie worked most recently as a Senior Advisor for Policy Analysis for the Office of Policy and Management. Jamie will lead the work on the budget, tax, and economic inclusion, working closely with the Fiscal Policy Fellow, Dr. Rachel Silbermann, to help establish a fiscal and policy roadmap to advance shared economic prosperity, interstate economic competitiveness, equity, and opportunity.

Dr. Wendy E. Waithe Simmons, Ph.D., (“Wendy”) will join Voices on June 12 as the Director of Education and Equity. Dr. Simmons has worked to advance excellence and equity in education across Connecticut for more than a decade, most recently in leadership roles at the State Education Resource Center (SERC) and the SERC Foundation. A former teacher, she is a psychologist by training with research and clinical practice experience. She will play a leading role working to advance strategies to ensure equity in access to quality public education from cradle to career for all children and youth in our state.

Besides welcoming new senior staff, Connecticut Voices for Children is bidding farewell to two Associate Policy Fellows as they complete their two-year fellowship this month.

Ray Noonan, Associate Fiscal Policy Fellow, played a leadership role in fiscal policy and analysis during his two years with Voices, serving as the lead or co-author on papers including a statewide property tax proposal, numerous revenue options briefs, the annual State of Working Connecticut, and Census analysis. For the past year, Ray coordinated the budget analysis work, developing and sharing expertise in matters ranging from the Bond Lock and volatility cap to the Earned Income Tax Credit. Ray will enroll at Yale Law School in August.

Nicole Updegrove, Associate Harford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG) Policy Fellow, developed an expertise in early childhood issues during her two years at Voices. She also provided a strong voice on child welfare matters and worked with staff at the HFPG to integrate her research and advocacy learning with an understanding of the role of philanthropy in policymaking. Nicole’s advocacy and tireless work have contributed to significant victories over the past two years, including legislation requiring the Department of Children and Families to give notice to children in foster care before a placement change and increased funding for Care 4 Kids. Nicole has also led or co-authored several publications, including a two-part report with Ray on the value of early childhood education in the state, two policy briefs about foster care, and the last two editions of our annual State

of Early Childhood report. Nicole will continue working in policy in Connecticut next year before she begins a public policy graduate program at the University of California, Berkeley in the fall of 2019.

Besides these departures, Connecticut Voices for Children will welcome an incoming Associate Policy Fellow, **Jessica Nelson**, who will join Voices on July 9, 2018. Ms. Nelson graduated from Yale University this May with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. She will work with senior staff to advance thriving children and families and equity and excellence in education.

Finally, Voices also bids farewell to its Communications and Development Assistant, **Nipuni Gomes**, who will leave Voices at the end of this week to pursue a Master of Public Health at Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health. Nipuni has played an outsized role in Voices' communications work and offered support across innumerable projects.

About Connecticut Voices for Children: Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. In furtherance of its mission, Connecticut Voices for Children produces high-quality research and analysis, promotes citizen education, advocates for policy change at the state and local level, and works to develop the next generation of leaders.