

## Commissioner Biographies

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### Ed Lazere

Chair, DC PERFC

Executive Director, DC Fiscal Policy Institute

Ed Lazere has led the work of the DC Fiscal Policy Institute since it was established in 2001. Prior to that, he was a policy analyst for 12 years at DCFPI's parent organization, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP). At CBPP, he worked on numerous issues at both the state and federal level, including state spending choices under the TANF block grant and other issues related to welfare reform implementation; state-level tax policy, particularly State Earned Income Tax Credits; and affordable housing. Ed holds a master's degree in public policy from the University of Maryland.

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### Jennifer Comey

Research Associate and Deputy Director of NeighborhoodInfo DC

The Urban Institute

Jennifer Comey is a research associate in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center at the Urban Institute. Jennifer's areas of expertise include neighborhood indicators, children and youth indicators, and residential mobility. As deputy director of NeighborhoodInfo DC, a neighborhood data and civic engagement partnership for the District of Columbia, Jennifer conducts DC-specific research such as the interconnections between quality schools and neighborhoods, the effects of foreclosures on public school students, and the annual Kids Count report. She is also managing the Urban Institute's involvement in the District of Columbia Promise Neighborhood Initiative, one of the few groups to receive a U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhood planning grant. Jennifer has managed multiple public school-related technical assistance projects for OSSE and DCPS such as public school enrollment projections and criteria for school closings. She also has extensive experience in federal public housing transformation initiatives such as Moving to Opportunity and HOPE VI. Jennifer received a master's degree in public policy from Johns Hopkins University and a bachelor's degree in government from Cornell University.

*Opinions expressed by Jennifer Comey are hers and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.*

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### Justin Constantino

Budget Counsel

Mayor's Budget Office

Justin Constantino has been the budget counsel in the Mayor's Office of Budget and Finance since Mayor Gray assumed office in January 2011. Prior to joining the Executive Office of the Mayor, Justin was a staff member in the office of Councilmember Jack Evans and, more recently, the budget counsel for the DC Council's Office of the Budget Director under then-Chairman Gray. As budget counsel, Justin focuses on budget and finance related issues and legislation, such as the annual Budget Support Act. In addition, he oversees the issues and budgets of agencies in the Public Education cluster, including DC Public Schools, DC Public Charter Schools, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the University of the District of Columbia, the District of Columbia Public Library, Non-Public Tuition, Special Education Transportation, and the Deputy Mayor for Education. Justin graduated *cum laude* from the University of the District of Columbia, David A. Clarke School of Law, where he was a senior law review notes editor and a recipient of the Dean's Fellowship. He graduated from Ithaca College in 2004 where he received a bachelor's degree in politics.

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## Celine Fejeran

Program Analyst  
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education

As program analyst in the District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, Celine manages special projects and advises the Deputy Mayor on policies and initiatives to strengthen the District's cradle-to-career continuum. Celine began her career in public service as a classroom teacher in DC Public Schools. Since then, she has worked with local education organizations to conduct research on the District's charter school facilities as well as DCPS school and classroom resource allocation. Most recently, Celine worked as a policy analyst for the DC Alliance of Youth Advocates, during which she collaborated with member organizations, District government agencies, and public officials to develop and advance policies aimed at increasing the city's high school graduation rate and enhancing youth workforce development opportunities. Celine holds a master's degree in education policy from George Washington University and a bachelor's degree in elementary education from American University.

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## Mary Filardo

Executive Director  
21st Century School Fund

Mary Filardo, executive director, founded 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund (21CSF) in 1994 to provide the District of Columbia and other urban communities with leadership, innovative financing solutions, research, and public policy analysis of school facility issues. She is a leading national authority on school facility planning, management and public private development. She has helped plan innovative projects in Washington, DC — J.F. Oyster Elementary School public private partnership (2001), Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School campus development (2005), School Without Walls high school university and public partnership (2008), and Savoy Elementary School (2008) and Savoy and Thurgood Marshall Academy Sports and Learning Center (2009). She has written extensively on public school facility issues and developed software to support long-range facilities master planning. In 1994, she advocated for and then led the first city-wide educational facilities planning process in Washington, DC in nearly 30 years, leading to the Preliminary Educational Facilities Plan in 1995, which laid the foundation for regular educational facility master planning in the District of Columbia and more than \$2 billion spent to improve and build DCPS and public charter school facilities. In 2001, Mary founded the Building Educational Success Together (BEST), a collaborative learning community of urban education reform organizations dedicated to building the public will and capacity to improve urban school facilities so they support high quality education and community health. She received a bachelor's degree in philosophy and mathematics from St. John's College, and a master's degree in public policy and finance at the University of Maryland. She is a 1979 Truman Scholar from the District of Columbia. On a personal note, all three of Mary's children attended DCPS from preschool through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

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## Timothea Howard

Director, Community Engagement and Learning  
CentroNia

Timothea Howard is the director of community engagement and learning at CentroNia a community-based, bilingual, multi-cultural learning center in Washington, DC. Timothea is a former early childhood teacher who served as a co-teacher at School for Friends in Washington DC. Upon leaving School for Friends, she served as a labor organizer with the American Federation of Teachers, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees-Council 31, Illinois, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and as a campus recruiter for the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute. Timothea served as the lead organizer for the Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative an intermediary community based organization serving the Columbia Heights, Shaw and Georgia Avenue-Petworth neighborhoods of



Washington, DC. As a trainer, she conducted community organizing trainings for the National Organizers Alliance, Black Radical Congress, the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, DC VOICE, Mothers on the Move, LISTEN, Inc., the Michigan Coalition against Domestic Violence - Women of Color Caucus, DC Rape Crisis Center, the Congressional Hunger Project Institute for Policy Studies, ONE-DC and the Religious Action Center- Jeremiah Project. Timothea serves on the board of directors of the Nuclear Information and Research Service, The Praxis Project and City Blossoms, Inc.

Timothea is a graduate of Corcoran School of Art. In addition to a career in the visual arts, she has worked as a production stage manager, properties master and stage hand for the Source Theater Company, DC Stage, Gala Hispanic Theater, The New Arts Theater, Sanctuary Theater, the Kennedy Center Opera House and Programs for Children and Youth, the National Theater, New Playwrights Theater, Horizon Feminist Theater, Dance Place, the Pola Nirenska Dance Company, the Primary Movers Performance Company and Anacostia Repertory Company.

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## Allison Kokkoros

Chief Academic Officer

Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School

Allison R. Kokkoros, chief academic officer of the Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School, has worked in the field of education for over 18 years. She is proud to serve the Carlos Rosario School, an accredited and award-winning national model in adult education that has been transforming lives in the community for more than 40 years. The School serves a diverse student body with students who come from over 72 different countries and speak over 37 different languages. As chief academic officer, Allison is responsible for oversight of matters such as curriculum, accountability, and expansion. In her previous role as principal of the School, she oversaw the comprehensive educational programs and support services provided to over 3,000 adult students each year. Allison has a master's degree in business administration with a focus in nonprofit management from George Washington University and a bachelor's degree in English with an education certification from Eastern Mennonite University. She has been honored with various awards for her leadership including receiving the DC STARS Tribute Most Outstanding Adult Principal award in 2011 and the DC Learns Mike Fox Literacy Leader award in 2005. She holds positions on various boards including founding board member and secretary of the DC Public Charter School Association and Commissioner of the Middle States Accreditation Association of Colleges and Schools. Allison is a proud wife and parent, and a resident of Washington, DC.

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## Hosanna Mahaley

State Superintendent of Education

Office of the State Superintendent of Education

Hosanna Mahaley serves as state superintendent of education for the District of Columbia. In this role, she is implementing the rollout of common core standards for DC's schools, managing the District's Race to the Top initiatives, and overseeing federal education grants for the District. In her previous role, Hosanna served as senior partner and adviser to school systems working with Wireless Generation, ensuring that these collaborations help to measurably advance district plans for improving student achievement. Hosanna spent eight years in Chicago working primarily on education issues, initially out of Mayor Richard Daley's office as Special Assistant to the mayor and subsequently out of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) where she held numerous leadership positions, including Chief of Staff to then-CEO Arne Duncan. At CPS, the nation's third largest school district, she coordinated virtually all of the policy, leadership, organizational structuring, operational, and external affairs issues; she also managed Renaissance 2010, Chicago's reform initiative to close underperforming schools and to open 15–20 new schools per year. After leaving Chicago in 2007, Hosanna moved to Atlanta to become president of the Atlanta Education Fund (AEF), chartered by the mayor and top Atlanta business leaders to focus on galvanizing community and business support for the school system's reform initiatives. Hosanna earned a bachelor's in history from Marquette University, a master's in education from University of Illinois–Chicago, and an executive master's degree in business



administration from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. She is a proud graduate of public schools and received her teaching certificate from the University of California.

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## Lisa Raymond

Senior Education Advisor

DC City Council Committee of the Whole

Lisa Raymond has dedicated her career to improving the lives of others as an elected official, nonprofit leader, and advocate, and has over 18 years of experience in the field of education. Lisa currently serves as senior education advisor to DC Council Chairman Kwame R. Brown. In this role, she provides counsel to and supports the Chairman and the Committee of the Whole on all DC education matters. Through the Committee of the Whole, Ms. Raymond helps lead education agency oversight in partnership with the Council Budget Office. She is responsible for drafting education legislation for the Chairman and reviewing all education legislation introduced to the Committee. From January 2007 until January 2011, Ms. Raymond served on the DC State Board of Education as the elected member representing first Wards 5 and 6 and then Ward 6 alone. She served also as both President and Vice President of the State Board. During her time on the State Board, she focused primarily on the issues of early education and teaching quality and was one of the members of the senior advisory team that developed the District's successful Race to the Top application. Prior to her current position, Lisa was a senior consultant for Collaborative Communications Group, where she provided strategic consulting to public school superintendents and boards of education in districts that included Nashville, TN; Naples, FL; and Harford County, MD; and completed projects for the Prudential Foundation in Newark, NJ and for the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA). As one of the original leaders of the Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools for Public Policy, Lisa helped build the school from 60 students in 1998 to a thriving charter school network that now serves over 1,400 students in grades 6-12 on three campuses. She served as the school's first public policy director, chief of operations, and chief operating officer. Lisa has taught and volunteered in schools in the District of Columbia, New York City, Israel, and England. She has worked for numerous nonprofit organizations, including the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund and the Urban Institute, focusing on the areas of family violence, child welfare, poverty, and women's health. She has also served as an independent consultant to public and public charter schools. Lisa received a master's degree in public administration from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and her bachelor's degree in psychology from Indiana University. She lives on Capitol Hill with her husband, Josh, and her seven-year old twins, who are DCPS students.

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## Lisa Ruda

Chief of Staff

District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)

In July 2007, Lisa Ruda was appointed chief of staff to Chancellor Michelle Rhee as part of the historic mayoral takeover of the District of Columbia Public Schools. In the Nation's capital, Lisa serves as the acting chancellor in the Chancellor's absence and continues to manage the day-to-day operations of the 47,000 student school system. She oversees the offices of school operations, food service, logistics, compliance, media and critical response team. She is responsible for critical, complex initiatives including but not limited to school opening and school budget development. As chief of staff, Lisa was the highest ranking District official and oversaw all District department and divisions and the District's 8,000 full time employees, 100 school buildings, \$600 million general fund budget and \$1.5 million capital budget. District offices reporting to the Chief of Staff includes the following: academic programs, security, finance, legal, communications, facilities, employee services and capital programs. In August 1998, Lisa was appointed chief legal counsel for the Cleveland Municipal School District, Ohio's largest public school district. At age 28, Lisa was one of the youngest individuals to be appointed Chief Counsel in the Nation. She was responsible for all legal matters as well as supervision and coordination of outside legal counsel. She served as Chief Legal Counsel from August 1998 to June 2000. Lisa received her juris doctorate *summa cum*

## Presenter Biographies

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### Elizabeth Partoyan

Vice President, Collaborative Communications Group

Elizabeth Partoyan is a Vice President with Collaborative Communications Group, a Washington, DC-based strategic consulting firm focused on improving outcomes for children and youth. She provides strategic counsel and thought leadership to clients and within the firm, as well as deep education and social policy content expertise and consensus building through facilitation, particularly on highly visible, political and nuanced work. Partoyan serves on several local, state, and national advisory committees, facilitates a variety of community- and state-level boards and commissions, and presents around the country on a range of education and social policy issues. Prior to joining Collaborative, Partoyan was on the leadership team of the Council of Chief State School Officers as Strategic Initiative Director for Next Generation Learners. She previously served as Director of Research, Training, and Member Services at the National School Boards Association, where she started as Program Manager for the Extended-Day Learning Opportunities program. Partoyan has also served as a coordinator for the Institute for Educational Leadership's Education Policy Fellowship Program. Partoyan has worked at the Academy for Educational Development and Educational Research Service, as well as in the District of Columbia Public Schools, Chicago Public Schools, and the Washington State Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. She has direct-service experience in special education, Montessori education, after-school programs, and outdoor education. Partoyan has a Bachelor of Education degree in human development and social policy from Northwestern University, and a Master of Education degree in educational psychology from Howard University.

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### Cheryl D. Hayes

President & CEO, The Finance Project

Ms. Hayes is the Founder, President and Chief Executive Officer for The Finance Project. Ms. Hayes is a respected national expert on financing for education, family and children's services and community building and development. Ms. Hayes has more than 35 years of experience in public policy research, development and technical assistance. Before launching The Finance Project, she served as Executive Director of the bipartisan National Commission on Children, which developed a broad national policy agenda for America's children and families on behalf of Congress and the President. Prior to her Commission appointment, Ms. Hayes directed the policy research program on children and families at the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council. She serves as an advisor and consultant to government agencies, private foundations, non-profit corporations and community organizations on strategic planning, financing and sustainability. She also is the author and editor of numerous books and articles on public policies for children and families and on human services financing. Her most recent publication **EARLY LEARNING: A Guide to Federal Funding for Grade Level Reading Proficiency**, is a comprehensive guide to identifying and accessing federal funding to promote early learning and early grade-level academic success. Ms. Hayes received an MBA from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, a MA in American Family Studies from Georgetown University and a BA from Skidmore College.

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## Matthew H. Joseph

Project Director, Family Economic Success  
The Finance Project

Mr. Joseph oversaw an educational equity and adequacy study conducted in support of the Maryland Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence. The analysis used the professional judgment approach both to calculate the foundation funding needs and also the extra funding needed to specialized populations. He is leading fiscal mapping of District of Columbia spending for children in support of the D.C. Promise Neighborhoods Initiative. He has also conducted several analyses of K-12 education funding and spending, with a focus on adequacy and equity. He has authored studies and articles and has taught law school classes on education funding and policy. He has a J.D. from University Maryland School of Law.

