



Nathan Deal
Governor

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner

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Media Contact: Reg Griffin
404-656-0239
reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov



Aspen Institute Names Bernhard to 2018 Ascend Fellow Class

*Diverse Leaders Selected for their Groundbreaking Work
Advancing Opportunity for Children and Families with Low Incomes*

ATLANTA, Ga., (September 6, 2018) – Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform at Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), is among 20 leaders selected by the Aspen Institute to be a part of the Aspen Institute Ascend Fellows for the Class of 2018.

“I’m thrilled to be joining this impressive cohort of leaders advancing strategies to lift children and their families together,” said Bernhard, who joined DECAL in 2014. “I look forward to bringing back knowledge to inform Georgia’s own two-generation efforts. We know this approach will help more families in Georgia access opportunity and achieve economic self-sufficiency.”

As Deputy Commissioner for System Reform, Bernhard is responsible for statewide initiatives to improve and assess the quality of child care by administering the network of child care resource and referral agencies; Quality Rated, the state’s tiered quality rating and improvement system; initiatives and grants targeting access to quality child care; consumer education and community outreach through the state’s child care search website and free call center; and a field-based community partnership unit. Before joining DECAL, she served as education policy advisor to Governor Nathan Deal and worked in the policy office of Governor Sonny Perdue.

“The Ascend Fellowship is a premier leadership program at the Aspen Institute that exemplifies our commitment to advancing opportunity and equity,” said Dan Porterfield, president and CEO of the Aspen Institute. “We are proud to welcome these extraordinary leaders who are moving ideas to action for children and families in the US.”

“The goal of my participation will be to strengthen and support our agency’s existing two-generation work that began as a part of the Parent and Children Thriving Together (PACT) grant,” said Bernhard.

The Parents and Children Thriving Together: Two-Generation State Policy Network was implemented in 2016 as a way of promoting the learning of children and supporting the success of their parents as breadwinners. The goal of this policy is to work towards permanently moving the family out of poverty.

Ascend at the Aspen Institute is the national hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations that move children and their parents toward educational success, economic security, and health and well-being. We take a two-generation approach to our work - focusing on children and their parents together. We bring a gender and a racial equity lens to our analysis. For more information, visit <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org>

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. The Institute is based in Washington, DC; Aspen, Colorado; and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It also has offices in New York City and an international network of partners. For more information, visit www.aspeninstitute.org.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages Quality Rated, Georgia’s community powered child care rating system.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.dec.state.ga.us.