IRVING HARRIS
FOUNDATION

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BEND THE ARC
jewish action

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

ON THE Horizon

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A NOTE FROM PHYLLIS GLINK

When Systems Work for Families, Lasting Change is Possible

When I was beginning my graduate studies in public policy at the University of Chicago, I was fortunate to hear Irving Harris give a welcome speech to incoming students. He asked if anyone had heard of Willie Sutton, the famous bank robber, and if we knew why he robbed banks. When no one raised their hand, he shared that Willie robbed banks because that is where the money was kept. That is why, Irving said, he invested in public policy and advocacy—because lasting change will only happen when we influence how governments invest our vast public resources.

A few years later, when I was fortunate to get hired by Irving to work at his Foundation, I came to realize that through every aspect of the

Foundation's work runs a deep commitment to understanding what children and families truly need to thrive, and helping build the systems, policies, and pathways required to meet those needs.

Inspired by Irving's work, the Foundation continues to focus on increasing public investments, improving policies, and streamlining systems that serve pregnant people and families with babies and young children so that all communities can flourish. Irving understood that advocacy and organizing help change hearts and minds while policy moves ideas into law, practice, and increased appropriations. Systems building ensures that services and support are not only available, but equitable, accessible, coordinated, and sustainable. Together, these approaches reflect a simple truth Irving understood well: philanthropic dollars alone are never enough. Real change requires significant increased and sustained public investments.

I often refer to the Foundation's approach as investing in "the whole blade of grass." It takes a strong ecosystem of people and organizations working in coalition to mobilize grassroots support and influence grasstops decision makers. We need inspired government leaders and enlightened public administrators creating solutions and streamlining our systems. We need dedicated program and practice innovators developing and implementing services that center what families and communities say they need. We need institutions developing and resourcing diverse pipelines of leaders who can work over time for change.

By supporting strong coalitions of advocates and organizers at the local, state, and federal levels, and by investing in community-led solutions, we help ensure that our partners are ready when the policy window opens to advance change that is informed by lived experiences.

In this issue, we highlight partners and initiatives that reflect how advocacy, policy, and systems building show up across our work—often through different approaches, but always grounded in collaboration, equity, and a shared vision for what's possible when systems are designed to truly support families.

We are grateful to walk alongside our partners as they imagine and advocate for meaningful change, and we remain committed to investing in approaches that strengthen systems so that babies, families, and communities can thrive.

Phyllis Glink
Executive Director

While the foundation supports advocacy and grassroots organizing, it in no way engages in or directly supports lobbying.

OUR NEXT CHAPTER

Celebrating the Journey, Imagining the Future

The Irving Harris Foundation is on an intentional journey to sunset in 2032. As we look ahead, we continue to listen closely to our partners and explore how to steward our resources for lasting impact beyond the Foundation's lifetime.

2023
Prepare
Lay the foundation.

2024-2025
Hold Space
Create space for processing, listening, and reflection while we work to build our sunsetting strategy.

2026
Amplify
Celebrate partners and share strategy.

2027-2031

2026 will be an important year for learning and connection. With the PDN convening in March, we look forward to gathering with friends old and new, sharing moments of joy and renewal, and continuing to dream together.

This year also marks our 80th anniversary—a moment to reflect on Irving's legacy and the decades of incredible work and partnerships that have shaped this journey.

Catalyze

Advance strategy and amplify stories of collective impact.

2032

Close

Finish spend-down and sunset operations.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Policy, Advocacy & Systems Building in Action

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & JUSTICE

PREGNANCY
JUSTICE

All pregnant people deserve the freedom to live with dignity and to make decisions about their own bodies. Criminalization of pregnancy, the policing of families through the child welfare system, and efforts to grant embryos and fetuses legal personhood at the expense of pregnant people's rights are issues Pregnancy Justice focuses on in its work. Those most impacted typically include people with low incomes, people of color, and people with disabilities.

For more than 20 years, **Pregnancy Justice** has partnered across movements at the state and national levels to defend and advance the dignity, safety, and rights of pregnant people—whether they give birth, experience a pregnancy loss, or have an abortion. Their work spans policy, advocacy, research, narrative change, and litigation strategies.

Maternal Health Dignity & Consent Act
Protect Pregnant New Yorkers Consent Builds Trust
VOCAL NEW YORK
NEW YORK STATE SENATE

Photo courtesy of Pregnancy Justice

> ***"The issues we seek to address—the criminalization of pregnancy and threats to bodily autonomy—have broader implications for gender justice and the ability for families to thrive."***

— **Lourdes A. Rivera**, *President of Pregnancy Justice*

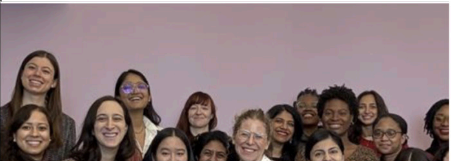
What sets Pregnancy Justice apart is its integrated approach. The team defends dozens of people each year facing criminal charges related to pregnancy outcomes while also working upstream to change systems, policies, and practices and, on occasion, laws that enable such prosecutions.

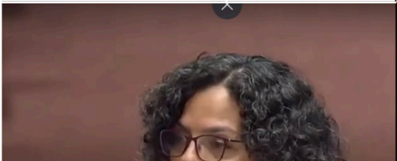
As just one example of its work, Pregnancy Justice is working in states to educate policymakers and practitioners on the harms that nonconsensual drug testing of pregnant people have on young families and children, including the separation of families, criminal prosecution of mothers, and poor maternal and infant health outcomes.

"Our policy efforts focus heavily at the state level because that's where pregnant people's lives are most impacted by laws and systems—and where we have the greatest opportunity to create change," says Dana Sussman, Senior Vice President.

Pregnancy Justice is also the only organization tracking pregnancy criminalization nationwide, publishing critical data that inform journalists, policymakers, and advocates. By centering the personhood of pregnant people, Pregnancy Justice is helping build a future where dignity replaces punishment and pregnant people can thrive.

For more information, visit: https://www.pregnancyjusticeus.org/





PREGNANCY JUSTICE
Ms. Lourdes A. Rivera

Photos courtesy of Pregnancy Justice

INFANT & EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Center *for the* Study *of* Social Policy
Ideas into Action

"Families don't experience their needs in silos," says Megan Martin, Chief Strategy Officer at the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). ***"The issues we work on—economic justice, health justice, child welfare, and family autonomy—are deeply interconnected. Our job is to connect the dots so families get what they need to thrive."***

For more than 45 years, **CSSP** has partnered with families, communities, and policymakers to challenge inequitable systems and advance approaches rooted in dignity, self-determination, and racial justice. Rather than treating families as recipients of policy, CSSP centers them as knowledge-holders—recognizing that those most impacted by harm also hold the wisdom needed for transformation.

Photo courtesy of Center for the Study of Social Policy

> **“Working with parents brings real accountability and keeps us focused on the big picture. Families are increasingly guiding us, and that changes the work in meaningful ways.”**
>
> **— Elisa Minoff**, *Director of Economic Security*

This commitment is reflected across CSSP’s efforts, from expanding the Child Tax Credit through the Automatic Benefit for Children (ABC) Coalition, to addressing discrimination within the child welfare system, to supporting equitable implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act—a law that prioritizes keeping children safely in their homes.

“The policy wins feel big, but the real impact comes from how families experience them in their communities,” Megan says. ***“Implementation often reveals opportunities for greater change.***

Being able to make incremental policy improvements nationally while supporting families locally—that's where CSSP's work truly makes a difference. ” By working nationally while remaining grounded in local realities and long-term relationships, CSSP helps ensure that change is not only enacted—but experienced.

For more information, visit: https://cssp.org

CARES
MOVEMENT
AKERS SUMMIT
Lead. Build. Partner.
Washington, D.C.
October 7-9, 2025

Photo courtesy of Center for the Study of Social Policy

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Advance ILLINOIS

CIVIC LEADERS FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN

illinois action for children

START EARLY
Champions for Early Learning

Latino POLICY FORUM

Illinois stands out for its sustained commitment to early childhood, and that commitment hasn't happened by accident. For decades, policy, advocacy, and systems-building organizations have worked with one another and often together with state government partners to strengthen systems for young children and families. These organizations have helped secure landmark wins from Preschool for All in 2006, to historic levels of early childhood public investments in 2023, to the creation of the Illinois Department of Early Childhood in 2024 and, most recently, a new Illinois law that strengthens protections for immigrant families with children attending child care centers.

Five organizations—**Advance Illinois, Civic Leaders for Illinois Children, Illinois Action for Children, Latino Policy Forum, and Start Early**—have built a uniquely enduring collaboration that's both fluid and highly strategic. Through informal, ongoing touchpoints, regular communications, and a larger quarterly forum that brings in other partner organizations from early childhood and related sectors such as health and economic security, as well as in their administrative advocacy and systems-building efforts, they coordinate strategies, align expertise, and advocate together on shared priorities. Members describe the group as "like a family," reflecting the trust, connection, and occasional lively debate that comes with working closely together over decades. The Irving Harris Foundation proudly supports their work, both as a funder and often as a partner at the table.

Photos courtesy of Illinois Action for Children and Start Early

So what makes Illinois' collaborative early childhood advocacy so effective? **Leaders from the five organizations recently came together to reflect. Here's what they shared.**

“Not every state is blessed with the kind of relationships we have here. We’ve learned to really pull together and hash out any differences we might have so that when we go to Springfield, we’re speaking with one voice in support of young children and families.”

— Sean Noble

Co-Director, Civic Leaders for Illinois Children

“As a group, we’re greater than the sum of our parts. We each bring different strengths and give each other space to lean into our areas of expertise. At the same time, we share knowledge and strategies. That cross-pollination is a big part of our success.”

— Kate Buchanan

Senior Policy Advisor, Early Childhood, Advance Illinois

“We’re not at the whims of election cycles, and that continuity helps us keep an eye on

systems change through shared, year-to-year initiatives. Even when the political climate shifts, we take another bite at the apple. That ensures the work keeps moving forward and the pressure stays on.”

— Erika Méndez

Director of P-12 Education Policy and Advocacy, Latino Policy Forum

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“The group develops early childhood policy leaders in an organic way—not through a formal program, but by learning from one another. It’s not always named, but for me, it’s a huge part of what this collaborative has created.”

— Angela Farwig

Vice President of Public Policy, Advocacy and Research,
Illinois Action for Children

“Illinois is fortunate to have a philanthropic community willing to invest in early childhood systems building and policy and advocacy work. Without that multi-decade commitment from funders, this wouldn’t be

happening."

— Ireta Gasner

Vice President, Illinois Policy, Start Early

For more information, visit:

https://www.advanceillinois.org/
https://www.ilcivicleaders.org/
https://www.actforchildren.org/
https://www.startearly.org/
https://latinopolicyforum.org/

JEWISH VALUES

THE COLLABORATIVE FOR JEWISH ORGANIZING

The Collaborative for Jewish Organizing shows what's possible when organizations come together to advance justice. A network of nine independent Jewish organizations across 16 states and Washington, D.C., the Collaborative organizes Jews and allies in partnership with communities of color to advance social, racial, and economic justice.

Members work across a range of issues, united by a shared commitment to human dignity that is best expressed by the value of *b'tzelem elohim*—the biblical teaching that every person is created in the divine image. The Collaborative strengthens the field by generating resources, building capacity, and advancing shared projects like the Dismantling Antisemitism Messaging Guide.

Since its founding in 2019, the Collaborative has raised more than $6.5 million, investing it in regrants and capacity building that strengthen member organizations and advance campaigns, civic engagement, and policy change nationwide. One recent win includes helping secure paid family leave for 2.5 million workers in Maryland—just one example of many that Collaborative member organizations have achieved with their partners.

DO NOT ENTER
OUR SOLIDARITY WILL
Defeat White Nationalism
PEDESTRIANS PROHIBITED
WRONG WAY
DO NOT ENTER

Photo courtesy of The Collaborative for Jewish Organizing

The Collaborative's work reflects the deep connection between organizing and advocacy. Organizing builds the people power and public will that make advocacy possible, while advocacy turns that momentum into lasting policy change. Core to the Collaborative's approach is centering partners and communities who are most impacted, while also finding strength in solidarity.

> ***"Our work weaves together the fight against antisemitism and racism, recognizing how deeply interconnected these issues are."***

— **Susan Lubeck**, *Director*

Through its combined focus on organizing, advocacy, and field-building, the Collaborative for Jewish Organizing is strengthening democracy, confronting antisemitism and racism, and building collective power for a more just society.

For more information, visit:
https://www.collaborativeforjewishorganizing.org/

NO BAN
NO WALL
NO RAIDS
NY IS FOR ALL
nyic
YOUR JEWISH
JEWS AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA AND ANTI-ARAB RACISM
RAMADAN KAREEM FROM YOUR JEWISH FAMILY
MIZRAHI JEWS AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA
JEWS AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA AND ANTI-ARAB RAC
MIZRAHI JEWS AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA
YOUR JEWISH FAMILY HAS YOUR BACK
RAMADAN KAREEM FROM YOUR JEWISH FAMILY
RAMADAN KAREEM FROM YOUR JEWISH FAMILY
YOUR JEWISH FAMILY HAS YOUR BACK
YOUR JEWISH FAMILY HAS YOUR BACK
MIZRAHI JEWS AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA
JFREJ Jews For Racial & Economic Justice

FAIR PAY
FAIR PAY
FAIR PAY
NY Executive
Essen
povert

The Things
Caregivers
Carry

Photos courtesy of The Collaborative for Jewish Organizing

ARTS & CULTURE

Arts
Alliance IL

Arts Alliance Illinois is grounded in the belief that art isn't a luxury—it's essential to thriving communities. When artists and arts organizations thrive, communities do too. That's why the Alliance works to strengthen the creative sector through advocacy, policy change, and connection to resources, ensuring Illinois' creative ecosystem is not only celebrated, but supported through the policies, funding, and systems that shape quality of life statewide.

One unique aspect of the Alliance is its commitment to advocating in all the places where change happens. That includes Washington, D.C., Springfield, and city halls across Illinois, but also living rooms, boardrooms, corporate offices, and community spaces where relationships are built and decisions are influenced. ***"We see public will as a real part of the policy landscape, and we organize accordingly,"*** says Andrew Schneider, Senior Director of Government Affairs.

the many
artsalliance.org

Photo courtesy of Arts Alliance Illinois

Recent wins highlight the impact of this approach. The Alliance helped expand eligibility for the Nonprofit Live Theatre Production Tax Credit, strengthening conditions for nonprofit performing arts organizations to sustain operations and employ creative workers. It also helped preserve Illinois Arts Council funding during a challenging budget cycle and launched a new partnership to improve access to employment resources for creative workers statewide.

Centering the voices of artists and creative workers is core to the Alliance's work. Through advocacy trainings, listening sessions, policy roundtables, and monthly organizing spaces, as well as its Public Funding and Creative Worker Help Desks, the Alliance ensures its priorities reflect what artists truly need.

> ***"We stand with and behind creative workers and organizations so they can bring their lived experience into decision-making and***

advance the causes most beneficial to arts and culture across Illinois."

— **Sasha Ongtengco**, *Program Director, Creative Organizers*

Looking ahead, Arts Alliance Illinois sees opportunities to embed arts and culture into broader policy agendas, from workforce development and aging services to economic development and education. These efforts help reframe creativity as not a luxury, but as essential infrastructure for thriving communities.

For more information, visit: https://artsalliance.org/

Arts Alliance
CREATIVE ECONOMY TASK FORCE (HB4959)
Our arts and culture sector...
HB4959 helps Illinois:

Photos courtesy of Arts Alliance Illinois

LEARNING TOGETHER

Highlights from Recent Conferences and Convenings

L to R: Carmen García, Courtney Lee, Albert Wat, Lisa Klein, Helene Stebbins, Denise Castillo Dell Isola, Joan Lombardi, Phyllis Glink

Alliance for Early Success CONNECT25 – A national convening bringing together advocates and early childhood policy experts from all 50 states to Salt Lake City to share strategies, successes, and lessons learned.

Who Attended: Denise Castillo Dell Isola, Carmen García, Phyllis Glink

L to R: Denise Castillo Dell Isola, Carmen García

Fall Early Childhood Funders Collaborative Member Meeting and Learning Tour – A powerful convening in Montgomery and Selma that invited members to explore how history and community leadership inform philanthropy, with site visits fostering even deeper

Who Attended: Denise Castillo Dell Isola,

Educare Chicago's 25th Anniversary Symposium: Meeting a Promise to Transform Lives – A milestone symposium reflecting on the principles behind Educare's growth—family engagement, professional development, high-quality teaching, and data-driven improvement—while looking ahead to the future of early learning.

Who Attended: Carmen García

Every Child Ready Chicago 2025 Annual Convening – An annual convening featuring highlights from the past year, partner presentations, workgroup updates, and collaborative planning on 2026 priorities and activities.

Who Attended: Carmen García

Maternal Mental Health Equity Fund Convening – Grantees and funders came together in Seattle to deepen relationships, further explore the integration of maternal mental health across services, and develop action plans for 2026.

Who Attended: Kirbi Range

Carmen García

L to R: Denise Castillo Dell Isola, Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro, Jennifer Juárez, Linda Xóchitl Tortolero, Carmen García

Latino Policy Forum's Latinos on the Move Policy Luncheon – An annual gathering spotlighting key issues facing the Latino community feathering Congresswoman Delia C. Ramirez and honoring former Latino Policy Forum CEO, Sylvia Puente.

Who Attended: Denise Castillo Dell Isola, Carmen García

HREE
onference

L to R: Stephanie Luca, Janina Clinton, Kirbi Range

Zero to Three Learn Conference – A national gathering of early childhood leaders offering seven learning tracks on emerging trends and best practices, with many IHF grantee partners featured.

Who Attended: Stephanie Luca, Kirbi Range

PMI Global Summit 2025 – The largest annual gathering of project professionals, bringing together peers from around the world to share knowledge and reaffirm their commitment to "elevating the world through project success."

Who Attended: Jacqueline Saldana-Refior

Illinois Action for Children: A Time to Shine
IHF was thrilled to be part of a beautiful evening celebrating IAFC's work on behalf of Illinois children and families.

L to R: Karen Berman, Denise Castillo Dell Isola, Allison Angeloni, Bryan Stokes, Cathy Main, Angela Farwig

TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

5 Questions with

Carmen García

Program Officer, Early Childhood

A driven advocate for children and families, Carmen brings lived experience

and nearly a decade of Illinois early childhood policy work to IHF. She values the foundation's collaborative, forward-looking approach to grantmaking and the deep learning and connection it fosters.

1. What value or commitment is central for you?

Responsibility. I feel a responsibility for justice, equity, and shifting power and resources. I also feel a responsibility to extend the table and to advocate for and give transparency to our grantee partners.

2. What drew you to the field of early childhood?

First, as the youngest of four children, I reaped the benefits of my older siblings participating in Early/Head Start—specifically, how it influenced my parents. I remember my mom taking me to the library regularly and reading everything and anything to me, including the local newspaper.

Second, I'm advocating for the little Carmens. In early childhood education, we often speak of the children and families that could best benefit. I'm that child and I come from that family: a child of immigrant parents, a non-native English speaker, and part of a family that's experiencing poverty, has low caregiver education attainment, and faces barriers due to culture and language.

3. How do advocacy, policy, and systems building show up in your work?

IHF has a long-held view that program sustainability depends on policy and systems change—the two are related. One distinct trait of IHF is its ability to both understand the importance of systems change, with the deep content knowledge of many staff, but to also fund advocacy, grassroots organizing, and movement-building organizations that bring the voices of the impacted to the table, along with policymakers and state agency leaders.

4. What opportunities do you see on the horizon?

There is a real opportunity to reimagine what it’s like to have and raise children, both across the country and in Illinois. Cities and states are acting locally to create better systems, services, and experiences for our youngest learners and their families. This is particularly true in Illinois with the newly formed state agency, the Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC).

5. What's something people might not know about you?

I went horseback riding on a dormant volcano, Mount Chimborazo, which is also the point on Earth closest to the sun. (It’s due to the location along the equatorial bulge!) I was fortunate to study abroad in Ecuador during undergrad—a truly magical experience.

CONGRATULATIONS

Cheers to Our Team

IHF is thrilled to celebrate our team members’ growth and leadership.

Fellowships & Professional Development

- **Ausannette García-Goyette** was accepted to the Justice Funders’ 2026 Just Transition Investing Academy.
- **Ileana López-Martínez** became a certified Family Planning Health Worker.

Let's keep building a more just world for every baby, family, and community.

IRVING HARRIS
FOUNDATION