



Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities Capitol Hill Briefing

November 29, 2023, 12 – 1 pm – CVC Room 200

Speakers Bios

Monica Porter Gilbert joined the Bazelon Center in 2022 as the Policy & Legal Advocacy Attorney, bringing experience working with communities on disability rights, housing and homelessness, and access to justice. Monica's previous work includes advocating with and on behalf of higher education students with mental health disabilities at Disability Rights Advocates, including issues related to leaves of absence, reasonable accommodations, and access to education and housing. At Homebase: The Center for Common Concerns, Monica worked with communities to increase capacity to end homelessness, including responding to COVID-19, increasing Census 2020 participation, and building cross-sector work through the Criminal Legal System Initiative. Monica holds a J.D. from The George Washington University Law School, and a B.A. in Social Welfare from U.C. Berkeley. Monica is also a proud AmeriCorps Alum, having launched her career in public service as a Bay Area JusticeCorps Fellow. Monica Porter Gilbert can be reached at monicag@bazelon.org. Learn more about the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law: <https://www.bazelon.org>.

Danica Gonzalves is an Advocacy Attorney at Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), where she fights for the rights of people with disabilities. She is also a co-chair of the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities (CCD) Transportation Task Force. With a focus on physical accessibility, Danica advocates for all individuals with disabilities to ensure they have full and equal enjoyment in their daily lives. Danica graduated from The George Washington University Law School, where she focused on disability rights in her legal studies and personal life. She was a speaker on a disability students speakers bureau, founded a law school student organization with a focus on student mental health, and presented at conferences and events. She received the Pro Bono Service Award and the President's Volunteer Service Award. After law school, Danica was awarded an Equal Justice Works fellowship and built a nationwide program for veterans with mental health conditions. Outside of her professional life, Danica volunteers with the DC Bar Association's Lawyer Assistance Program and is a member of the Lawyer Assistance Committee. Beyond advocacy, Danica is an aficionado of the performing arts and performs improv. Danica Gonzalves can be reached at danicag@pva.org. Learn more about Paralyzed Veterans of America: <https://pva.org>.

Nicole Jorwic is Chief of Campaigns and Advocacy at Caring Across Generations and a CCD Long-Term Services and Supports Co-Chair. At her core, Nicole is an advocate, from supporting her brother Chris who has autism to live his best life to fighting so that all people with disabilities, aging adults, family caregivers, and direct care workers have access to all that they need to succeed. As the oldest child of two oldest children, Nicole has watched her parents navigate not only her brother's care but the support of her three aging grandparents as well, something that fuels her passion for a better system for everyone. Nicole is inspired by the light in people's eyes when they "get it," and buys into the push for an integrated and caring society. Nicole is curious to learn from people with different viewpoints and perspectives, an offshoot of growing up with lots of aunts, uncles, and cousins who have a wide range of political viewpoints and opinions and aren't shy to express them. In her spare time Nicole loves to travel and experience new cultures, is an indoor cycling fanatic and has a soft spot for bad reality television to escape the stress of work. Nicole Jorwic can be reached at nicole@caringacross.org. Learn more about Caring Across Generations: <https://caringacross.org>.

Jennifer Lav is a Senior Attorney in the National Health Law Program (NHeLP)'s D.C. office, where she works on issues related to federal health care reform, Medicaid, and community-based mental health services and supports. Jennifer also serves as a CCD Long-Term Services and Supports Co-Chair. Before joining NHeLP, Jennifer was a staff attorney and then a managing attorney at Disability Rights D.C. at University Legal Services (DRDC) where she supervised the agency's mental health advocacy, focusing on increasing access to community-based services for youth and adults, investigating abuse and neglect in facilities, and protecting and expanding autonomy and choice for District residents with disabilities. Prior to joining DRDC, Jennifer was a staff attorney at the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program and a clinical lecturer at the University of Alabama School of Law. Jennifer received her B.A. from Hampshire College and her J.D. from Columbia Law School. Upon graduation, she clerked for Judge Myron H. Thompson, U.S. District Court, Middle District of Alabama, and was subsequently awarded the Bernstein Litowitz Berger & Grossmann LLP Postgraduate Fellowship in Civil Rights Law. Jennifer Lav can be reached at lav@healthlaw.org. Learn more about the National Health Law Program: <https://www.healthlaw.org>.

Carlean Ponder is the Director of the Autism Society of America's Center on Autism Advocacy, Empowerment, and Justice. Carlean brings to the community a wealth of experience and expertise, as an attorney and civil rights advocate, and is a former CCD Housing and Rights Task Force Co-Chair. Her most recent role as the Director of Disability Rights and Housing for The Arc of the United States, highlights her exceptional ability to navigate the intricate landscape of federal public policy. Previously, she was a senior advisor to the U.S. Social Security Administration. As a grassroots leader, Carlean co-founded a local coalition aimed at fostering transparency and accountability within state and local policing practices in Maryland, emphasizing the connection between disability rights and racial justice due to the criminal legal system's disproportionate impact on disabled people of color. Carlean holds a Juris Doctorate from the University of Illinois and Bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan. Carlean Ponder can be reached at cponder@autism-society.org. Learn more about the Autism Society of America: <https://autismsociety.org>.

Claire Stanley began at the National Disability Rights network (NDRN) as a Public Policy Analyst in December of 2020. Claire also serves as the CCD Vice Chair and a Transportation Task Force Co-Chair. Prior to her position with NDRN, Claire worked as an advocate with the American Council of the Blind where she advocated for the rights of blind and visually impaired persons, both on a direct level as well as on Capitol Hill. Claire has worked previously at two Protection & Advocacy Agencies: at Disability Rights California as a summer legal extern, and with Disability Rights D.C. at University Legal Services as a legal fellow under the PAMI program. Claire received her B.A. in political science and communication from the University of California Davis in 2011 and a J.D. from the University of California Irvine in 2015. As a person with a disability, Claire believes strongly in the rights of all persons with disabilities. Claire Stanley can be reached at claire.stanley@ndrn.org. Learn more about the National Disability Rights Network: <https://www.ndrn.org>.

Carol Tyson is the Government Affairs Liaison for the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), a national law and policy center. Carol currently serves as the Chair of CCD and is a former Co-Chair of the Transportation Task force. Carol works in coalition with disability and civil rights partners and industry stakeholders with a focus on transportation equity; healthcare; supports and services needed to remain in the community; education; and civil rights. Prior to joining DREDF, Carol served as the Director, Disability Policy for United Spinal Association and as a strategic researcher in the labor movement in the U.S. and Australia, contributing to campaigns for service and green energy workers. Carol is the recipient of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Dr. Rosalyn Simon Award in recognition of advancing the field of accessible transportation, and the National Council of Independent Living's 2021 Corey Rowley National Advocacy Award. Carol Tyson can be reached at ctyson@dredf.org. Learn more about the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund: <https://www.dredf.org>.