

## Children’s Leadership Council June 21, 2023 Convening Speaker Bios

### Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors

**Candace Andersen** was first elected to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors in June 2012. In June 2016 and March 2020, she ran unopposed and was re-elected to four-year terms. She will be running again in 2024. Previously, Candace was on the Danville Town Council from 2003 through June 2012, serving two terms as Mayor. In her role as County Supervisor, Candace currently sits on 28 local and regional boards and commissions addressing planning and land use, transportation, pensions, mental health, healthcare, reuse and recycling, economic development and public safety. Candace also served on the Morgan Hill City Council in the early 1990's. She is an attorney licensed to practice law in California and Hawaii and began her legal career as a Prosecuting Attorney in her hometown of Honolulu. She put her legal career on hold to serve the community and raise her family. Candace received both her B.A. in Public Policy (1982) and Juris Doctorate (1985) from Brigham Young University. She attended Punahou School in Honolulu, Hawaii from K-12.

**Ken Carlson** was elected to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors on November 8, 2022 and took the Oath of Office on January 2, 2023. His election was historic as he is the first LGBTQIA+ member of the Board. Ken has a long history of public service with deep roots in Contra Costa County. He attended schools in both Pleasant Hill and Concord. Ken first stepped into the County Supervisor’s office when his grandfather, James Moriarty, was County Supervisor. Ken graduated from Brigham Young University with a B.A. in Communications. In December 1988, he graduated from the Los Medanos College Law Enforcement Academy and began his career as a Concord Police Officer where he served for 29 years, retiring in 2017. Before joining the Board of Supervisors, Ken served on the Pleasant Hill City Council from December 2012 to December 2022 and as Mayor in 2015 and 2019. During his tenure on the City Council, Pleasant Hill recovered from the Great Recession and built a solid budget based on fiscal stability. As the first LGBTQIA+ Councilmember and Mayor, Ken established June as LGBTQIA+ Pride Month in Pleasant Hill. He also authored the Inclusive City Resolution, which states that Pleasant Hill is a welcoming community for all residents and promotes the protection of human rights, social justice, equality, diversity, and social well-being. Ken calls Pleasant Hill home along with his husband, Jeremy, of 16 years, and their two dogs.

**John Gioia** is Chair of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors. First elected in 1998, John has been overwhelmingly re-elected six times and represents 220,000 residents in the western most urban and diverse area of the county. He previously served for 10 years on the East Bay Municipal Utility District Board, serving as President in 1995 and 1996. John is a recognized leader in Bay Area regional government and air quality and climate change issues. He served as Governor Brown’s appointee on the California Air Resources Board from 2013 to 2020 and has been on the Bay Area Air Quality Management District Board since 2006, serving as Chair in 2012. John has served as President of the California State Association of Counties. John grew up in Richmond, graduated from El Cerrito High School and the University of California, Berkeley with a B.A. in Political Science and earned his law



degree at U.C. Berkeley. He completed the Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. John practiced law until his election to the Board of Supervisors. John's public service was inspired by his father, who was a popular civics and history teacher for 20 years at Kennedy High School in Richmond. He is the proud parent of Emilia and Christopher who attended local public schools.

## Contra Costa Health

### Erika Jenssen

Erika Jenssen, MPH is currently the Chief Deputy Director of Contra Costa Health. She grew up in Contra Costa County and the Bay Area and started with Contra Costa Health over 30 years ago during the AIDS epidemic. Since then, she has collaborated with community residents and patients, front-line staff and leaders across the county to improve our system and collective response to issues such as COVID, behavioral health crises and equity.

**Sefanit (Sofe') Mekuria** is board certified in Pediatrics and Preventive Medicine and came to Contra Costa Health Services in 2016 during her Preventive Medicine Residency taking part in several projects, including projects pertaining to pediatric obesity, youth engaged in the juvenile justice system, foster youth, and childhood/adolescent immunizations. After her preventive medicine residency, Dr. Mekuria continued with Contra Costa Health and supported several programs and projects; and served as the COVID-19 operations section Chief during the COVID-19 response. Currently, Dr. Mekuria is working in juvenile hall as a provider and supports improvement work within detention, is the Medical Director in Public Health supporting public health clinics and other programs throughout the department, and serves as one of the Deputy Health Officers for Contra Costa County.

**Anna Roth** For over three decades, Anna Roth has dedicated herself to addressing the spectrum of issues that shape the health of Contra Costa County's one million residents, with special attention on its most vulnerable populations. As the County's Director of Health Services, Anna oversees more than 4,400 employees, from doctors, therapists and nurses to hazardous material experts, public health professionals and data analysts. Responsible for all strategy, planning and operation oversight of the county's state-of-the-art medical center and 11 clinics, Anna also oversees mental health, substance abuse, public health, environmental health protection, hazardous materials response and inspection and emergency medical services, as well as a county operated health maintenance organization, the Contra Costa Health Plan.



## Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department

**Marla Stuart**, MSW, PhD, is the director of the Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD). Dr. Stuart oversees the department that delivers the County's benefit programs and services to more than 300,000 county residents each month. These services include public assistance (CalFresh, Medi-Cal, CalWORKs General Assistance, and home energy), protective and supportive services for children and their families, and for dependent and older adults; Head Start and childcare; and workforce development. Dr. Stuart has dedicated 35 years in public service to promoting social justice and ensuring individual and community wellbeing. She previously was the Deputy Director of Employment & Eligibility Services Division at the Solano County Health & Social Services Department, and also served at the Sonoma County Human Services Department leading planning, research, and evaluation activities.

**Kathy Marsh** currently serves as Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department-Children and Family Services Bureau Director. She has served in this role since 2016. Kathy has been employed in Contra Costa Children and Family Services since 1994, starting as a social worker and holding various positions throughout the Bureau over the years.

### First 5 Contra Costa

**Dr. Ruth Fernández**, Executive Director of First 5 Contra Costa, brings a combination of knowledge and experience working in early childhood, as well as over 20 years of experience working with diverse communities in project management, and strategic planning and system services coordination in the education and social services sectors. Prior to her role at First 5 Contra Costa, Ruth worked at the Contra Costa County Office of Education for over 12 years and helped develop and implement educational services for educators working in early childhood education throughout the county. In 2019, she earned her Doctorate degree from Mills College of Oakland in Educational Leadership, with a concentration in Early Childhood Education. She also has a B.A. in Political Economies of Industrialized Societies from the University of California at Berkeley, and a Master's Degree in Leadership from St. Mary's College of California. As a Contra Costa resident and parent, her work in education and early childhood systems is both important and personal. Her passion for and commitment to public service, education, and social justice to address inequities for marginalized communities stems from her own lived experience immigrating to the United States.

**Wanda Davis**, MSW, Early Intervention Program Officer at First 5 Contra Costa. As a certified trauma trainer, Wanda has been instrumental in developing a trauma-informed early childhood fellowship training program at First 5 Contra Costa. She has continued to work diligently with state and county coalitions to advance a trauma-informed system of care that can support wellness and resiliency within Contra Costa County.



