



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

CMA 2026-262
IN CITY COUNCIL
September 14, 2026

To the Honorable, the City Council,

I am writing to recommend the following appointments of members to the Mayor and City Manager's Joint Childcare Access Task Force, for a one-year duration, effective September 1, 2026.

- Joseph Corazzini
- Katy Donovan
- Michelle Godfrey
- Nicole Johnson-Negron
- Jessie Leonard
- Dr. Cheryl Ohlson
- Shaakira Parker
- Binal Patel
- Laura Perille
- Megan Postal
- Rita Rzezuski

Cambridge has long recognized the importance of early childcare and childhood education, establishing policies and programs that support children and families during their formative years. Decades of research confirm that high-quality early childhood experiences are crucial for lifelong learning, school success, and future economic stability. Recognizing these benefits, the City implemented the Cambridge Preschool Program (CPP), offering universal, free preschool to all four-year-olds and many three-year-olds, with additional support for families with lower incomes.

Despite progress, challenges remain for families in accessing affordable, high-quality care, as reflected in community feedback. Most acutely, families have indicated the need for more affordable, high-quality childcare options for infants and toddlers, who are not yet eligible for CPP. In response, the City Council prioritized expanding childcare as a top goal in 2026, leading to the creation of this joint Task Force. The Task Force is charged with examining the current childcare landscape, exploring strategies to improve access, and developing policy proposals aligned with the City's planning priorities.

Members were selected to represent a broad spectrum of expertise and perspectives. The Task Force



includes City Council, City staff, and subject-matter experts in early childhood education, childcare finance, and workforce development. The recommended appointees were chosen for their experience and commitment to advancing equitable, accessible, and high-quality early childhood services in Cambridge. Additional members may be added to further enhance the group's diversity and expertise, and engagement methods will be built in to ensure that work is grounded in existing and new feedback from families and providers.

The Task Force is intended to advance this important work through a coordinated, structured, and community-informed process that will help Cambridge continue its leadership in building an equitable, accessible, and high-quality early childhood ecosystem.

In addition to the recommended appointees, the Task Force will include:

- Sumbul Siddiqui, Mayor
- Marc C. McGovern, City Councillor
- Patricia M. Nolan, City Councillor

Additional members may be added as needed to further strengthen the group's diversity and expertise.

Member Bios

Joseph Corazzini

Joseph Corazzini (he/his) serves as the Assistant City Manager for the Department of Human Services in Cambridge. Prior to this role he served as the Vice President of Government and Community Affairs at Clark University. There he led the university's government relations efforts serving as a vital liaison between the institution and the Main South community. Joseph brings extensive experience having held senior leadership positions in multiple sectors focused on education, community development, and advancing equity. Prior to joining Clark University, he served as the Assistant Superintendent of Equity, Diversity, and Community Development for Framingham Public Schools. There he spearheaded a range of equity-driven initiatives designed to close institutional gaps for under-resourced students. His efforts led to the creation and expansion of several impactful programs, including district-run Out of School Time programming, early college pathways, universal pre-K, diverse teacher recruitment pipelines, a holistic wraparound services model, a districtwide DEI professional development strategy, and a comprehensive family welcome center.

Joseph holds a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Master of Science in Nonprofit Management from Worcester State University. He is also a proud graduate of the AASA/Howard University Urban Superintendents Academy.

Katy Donovan

Katy Donovan has worked in early childhood in Cambridge for over 40 years in just about every role an early childhood program has to offer. Most of her work was at Peabody Terrace Children's Center. When the Harvard affiliated programs decided to merge in 2017, the other directors within that system asked her to take the helm. As an independent non-profit on Harvard's campus, Campus Child Care employs over 220 early childhood professionals and cares for about 425 children daily in 7 locations. Katy truly loves the challenges that come to early childhood leadership every day; whether it be figuring out the puzzle of staffing, counseling parents and teachers or just getting a chance to support a child through a difficult moment. Katy believes that this is very special work and children deserve our full attention. In the executive director's role the daily tasks can look different, but remain grounded in the principles that what is best for

children and their caregivers is the best choice for the organization and its families, even if it is sometimes hard.

Beyond her direct work on campus, she is proud to have served with multiple groups that support both the City and the University including the Early Education Task Force (pre-CPP) examining the delivery of city-wide access to and affordability of high quality child care for all residents and the Steering Committee of the Early Years Project bringing city-wide support to classrooms and parents around challenging behaviors. Katy served on the Board of the Boston Area Reggio Inspired Network, a group whose work brings high quality training to the early childhood community. When not at work she enjoys gardening, and especially spending time with family, including 3 grown children and a new grandchild.

Michelle Godfrey

Michelle Godfrey is the Director of the Community Engagement and Family Support Division at the City of Cambridge's Department of Human Service Programs. Michelle takes pride in working in and for the city she grew up in and has spent more than three decades advocating for families and designing programs that honor their strengths, address challenges, and amplify their voices.

As a mother and now a Mimi, Michelle understands the joys and complexities of parenting. Her personal experiences, combined with her extensive professional background, shape her commitment to evidence-based family support practices that meet the diverse needs of Cambridge families.

Michelle joined the Center for Families in 2008, working with a small and creative team that collaborated closely with the community to understand barriers and build programming rooted in trust, cultural humility, and strong relationships. This foundational work helped evolve the Center for Families into today's Community Engagement and Family Support Division.

Under her leadership, the Division has grown to 18 full-time and 12 part-time staff and now serves more than 800 families each year. Programs include parent-child playgroups, Baby University, Cambridge Dads, intensive case management, community events, and outreach through a multilingual Community Engagement Team. With more than 60% of programming offered within public housing, Michelle has also championed innovative efforts such as a fatherhood text campaign and expanded community-based engagement models.

Nicole Johnson-Negron

Nicole is a dedicated leader in early childhood education with over 23 years of experience as a teacher, school leader, and program builder. She currently manages the City's universal pre-kindergarten system, the Cambridge Preschool Program, and leads the implementation of a high-quality preschool program through a mixed-delivery model. In this role, Nicole collaborates with stakeholders from both city and school departments to develop policies that promote continuous improvement and equitable access for all children.

Nicole partners closely with the infant and toddler community, working to build strong relationships and support seamless transitions to the Cambridge Preschool Program (CPP) across early childhood providers. She is passionate about sustaining culturally relevant and affirming practices, a commitment deeply rooted in her West Indian migrant heritage and her love of the arts.

Nicole holds a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and Care from Cambridge

College and a Master's in Arts Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She is currently pursuing her doctorate in early education, focusing on policy and finance. Outside of work, Nicole enjoys spending time with her husband, Mike.

Jessie Leonard

The Director of Head Start Programs for Cambridge and Somerville, Jessie Leonard, J.D., joined the Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc. as the Assistant Director of Head Start in the fall of 2016 and became Director in early 2019. Working as a preschool teacher straight out of high school, Jessie brings an extensive background in early childhood education, both as a direct service provider and an administrator. As a licensed attorney, Jessie spent several years representing court-involved youth before returning to the early education field. In guiding the CAAS Head Start program through particularly tumultuous and unprecedented times, beginning with the COVID pandemic and continuing through the dramatic changes implemented and proposed to Head Start at the federal level under the new Administration, Jessie has worked hard to ensure that Head Start education and family wrap-around services remain accessible and available to low-income Cambridge children and their families. A native Cantabridgian, Jessie now lives and raises her own daughter in Cambridge.

Dr. Cheryl Ohlson

Dr. Cheryl Ohlson is responsible for setting and implementing the overall strategy to advance the goals of the Office of Early Childhood. The Executive Director provides leadership and oversight of all of the OEC bodies of work. The ED manages the members of the OEC leadership team, the CPP program, and the OEC budget. This position is responsible for leading the evaluation process for all elements of OEC's work and, using data and stakeholder feedback, provides strategic direction for the Office's work. The Executive Director liaises with leaders across the city to support high quality early childhood programming and a seamless birth-to-third grade continuum. Cheryl has more than three decades of experience in early childhood education. She earned a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education from Boston College, and later earned Master's and Doctoral degrees in early childhood education and special education from The George Washington University. Cheryl has served as an early childhood teacher, coach, consultant, and graduate-level university instructor. Most recently, she led the early childhood system within the Washington DC Public Schools, where she oversaw Pre-K classroom programming, professional development, family support services, developmental evaluations, and operations within a system that served more than 6,000 Pre-K students and their families.

Shaakira Parker

Shaakira Parker is an early childhood policy professional committed to strengthening systems that support young children, families, and educators. She is currently an Early Childhood Policy Pathways Fellow at Strategies for Children, where she supports the organization's research, policy, and advocacy efforts, including policy monitoring, analysis, and implementation. Shaakira began her career as a preschool teacher, an experience that continues to shape her commitment to partnering with families and communities. Prior to joining Strategies for Children, she held research and policy roles with the Learning Policy Institute, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care as a Rappaport Public Policy Fellow, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, and Children's National Hospital. She is also a doctoral candidate in social policy at Brandeis University, where her research focuses on strengthening early childhood systems, the intersection of early childhood education and mental health, and policies and practices to reduce disparities in exclusionary discipline. Shaakira holds a Master of Arts in Social Policy from Brandeis University, a Master of Public Health from George Washington University, and a Bachelor of Science in Child Development from Vanderbilt University.

Binal Patel

Binal Patel has spent nearly two decades working across every level of the early childhood field, from the classroom to statewide policy. Originally from California, she started her career in marketing, but left to pursue her true passion of education and working with children. She started as an Assistant Teacher at a Reggio-inspired preschool program in CA, and eventually made the move to MA to start her family. She began her career in MA as a Beginners Teacher at Buckingham Browne & Nichols School in Cambridge, then served as Assistant Director at Cambridge Ellis School, also in Cambridge. She was one of the founding members and later served as Director of The Family Cooperative in Watertown, where she led the program's operations and day-to-day early learning environment for children ages 0–5. She currently serves as Executive Director of Neighborhood Villages, a Boston-based nonprofit demonstrating that a high-quality early childhood system is possible. She previously spent five and a half years as Chief Program Officer where she led the growth of major statewide initiatives — including Registered Early Childhood Education Apprenticeships, workforce programs such as the Good Jobs Challenge and Professional Pathways, and the state's COVID-19 testing program for early educators — partnering closely with educators, funders and government to bring effective innovations to scale.

Binal is a longtime advocate for children's right to access high-quality early education — one centered on learning through play and grounded in strong, consistent relationships between children and the adults who care for them. Her work is driven by the belief that children thrive not when we try to mold who they should become, but when we build the systems, spaces, and relationships that nurture who they already are. She holds a Master's in Early Childhood Education from New York University and a Bachelor's degree in International Studies from the University of California, San Diego.

Laura Perille

Laura Perille is the President & CEO of Nurtury Early Education, a mission-driven nonprofit providing child care for over 1,100 families in Greater Boston. Founded in 1878, today Nurtury Early Education operates three early learning centers in Boston and Cambridge for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and it supports a network of more than 150 family child care small businesses in Boston and surrounding communities.

Laura joined Nurtury Early Education in January 2020, bringing over 30 years of education, philanthropic and nonprofit leadership experience to her role. She previously served as Interim Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools (2018-2019) and for 16 years as founding CEO of the school improvement non-profit EdVestors. Laura serves on the board of the Massachusetts Association for Early Education and Care (MADCA), and she is an appointed member of the Data Advisory Commission on Early Education and Care, and the Advisory Council for Early Education and Care for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Megan Postal, LICSW, MPH

As the Director of Family & Community Engagement, Megan leads family engagement, behavioral health, and infant-toddler initiatives for the Office of Early Childhood. She also supports Cambridge Preschool Program outreach and enrollment and school readiness efforts. Megan is the internal leader on Reflective Practice in Early Childhood and the liaison for Early Childhood home visiting and family support programs. In this role, she also co-chairs the Cambridge Early Childhood Council, supports administrative functions such as budgeting and accountability systems, and engages in equity initiatives.

Megan has been working in social work, public health, and early childhood in Cambridge for nearly 30 years. She's worked directly with children and families, as a program manager, and as a consultant. Megan has earned a BA in Sociology and Spanish from the College of Wooster in Ohio, and a dual MA in Social Work and Public Health from Boston University. Outside of work Megan loves spending time with her spouse and 3 children, and their 2 dogs.

Rita Rzezuski

Rita Rzezuski has dedicated more than 35 years to the field of early childhood education. She has taught early childhood education higher education courses for over three decades and brings extensive hands-on experience in roles including program director, lead teacher, classroom teacher, family child care provider, CDA Coach, mentor, and consultant.

She holds a Master of Science degree from Wheelock College/Boston University and a Bachelor of Science degree from Boston University. Her professional background reflects a deep commitment to supporting young children, families, educators, and high-quality early learning programs.

I appreciate the willingness of these community members to serve on the Mayor and City Manager's Joint Childcare Access Task Force, and, with your approval, look forward to their appointments.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yi-An Huang', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Yi-An Huang
City Manager