

Joint Informational Hearing of the Assembly Education Committee, Assembly Health Committee, Assembly Budget Sub-Committee #2 on Education Finance, and Assembly Budget Sub-Committee #1 on Health & Human Services

Improving Access to School-Based Health & Mental Health Services

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

9:00 – 11:00 am

Room 4202

BIOGRAPHIES

Jason Willis, *Director, Strategic Resource Planning & Implementation, WestEd*

Jason Willis is the Director of Strategic Resource Planning and Implementation at WestEd. In this role he oversees and guides the agency's work on school finance, resource allocation, system change, and interagency collaboration efforts. This team supports state, regional and local education agencies to align their education policies, strategies, and accountability practices in order to achieve more equitable outcomes for students. Previously, Willis was the Assistant Superintendent of Community Engagement and Accountability for the San Jose Unified School District, where he managed the implementation of a five-year strategic plan. Prior to that role, Willis was the Chief Financial Officer for Stockton USD and Budget Director for Oakland USD. Willis has advised and worked with over two dozen states and other national education organizations such as the National Governors Association, National Council of State Legislatures, and the National Equity and Excellence Commission on the review, formation, and implementation of funding and accountability systems. Willis received a master's degree in education policy and finance from Teachers College, Columbia University and a bachelor's degree from The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

Tye Ripma, *Program Associate, WestEd*

Tye Ripma is a Program Associate with Healthy and Resilient Schools and Communities at WestEd and a doctoral student in the Education Policy and Planning program at the University of Texas at Austin. He has participated in the design and realization of numerous state-level research and policy studies and has co-authored several legislative reports for the state of California on topics ranging from special education finance and governance to school-based health care services. He has an M.A. in Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership Studies from Stanford University and a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of California Santa Cruz. He is also a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Tye has worked in special education as a Paraprofessional, Special Education Teacher, Inclusion Specialist, and Behavior Specialist.

Dr. Amber Valdez, *Senior Associate, WestEd*

Amber Valdez, EdD is a Senior Associate with the Strategic Resource Planning and Implementation content area at WestEd. Valdez supports local and state communities and leaders to transform complex systems for equity. Her areas of expertise include systems design and planning, change management, interagency and cross-sector collaboration, and stakeholder engagement. Valdez brings experience working with public and private sector systems, including

education and health agencies, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and foundations. Before coming to WestEd, Valdez led a consulting business and served as a nonprofit leader. She earned a M.A. and Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Mills College.

Jacob Lam, *Assistant Deputy Director Health Care Financing, Department of Health Care Services*

Jacob Lam has been the Assistant Deputy Director of Health Care Finance at the Department of Health Care Services since October 2020. In this role, Mr. Lam assists in the planning, implementation, coordination, evaluation, and management of the department's health care financing programs and policies. Prior to joining DHCS, Mr. Lam worked at the Department of Finance from 2014 to 2020, providing fiscal and policy guidance to a number of state departments within the California Health and Human Service Agency portfolio and was a Legislative Aide in the Office of Assembly Member Mariko Yamada from 2013 to 2014. Mr. Lam is a graduate of UC Davis, where he received a bachelor's degree in political science and anthropology.

Dr. Daniel Lee, *Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education*

Dr. Daniel Lee is the Deputy Superintendent for CDE's Equity Branch. Dr. Lee will be working to bring cohesion in all of the CDE's equity work, and will also facilitate our newly created counseling coalition to help support CDE's organizational development around building counseling, social emotional learning, and other whole child programs. Dr. Daniel Lee, President for the New Jersey Psychological Association and Principal Consultant of N-PSY-T Psychological Services, is developing a model for schools to address the impacts of implicit bias on student achievement.

Dr. Lee holds a doctorate in clinical psychology from the Adler School of Professional Psychology. He has over twenty years of experience providing individual, group, and family psychotherapy. He has an extensive background of working with children, adolescents, and adults in a variety of treatment settings.

Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, *Superintendent, Santa Clara County Office of Education*

Dr. Dewan has served in education over 34 years in a variety of leadership roles. Dr. Dewan believes that all students deserve high quality, equitable, and inclusive education. She serves on many committees and boards and promotes equity focused system's change at local, county, and state levels. Dr. Dewan was honored to receive local and state recognitions this year, including the California Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (CASCD) Outstanding Instructional Leader Award, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors President's Medal for Exemplary Service During the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020, 2021 Region 8 ACSA Superintendent of the Year Award, and the CCSESA 2021 Professional Publication Award.

Over the course of her career, Dr. Dewan has served in the positions of Deputy Superintendent, Chief Schools Officer, Assistant Superintendent, Executive Director, Director of Special Education, principal, and teacher. Dr. Dewan earned a doctorate in educational leadership from Indiana State University. Dr. Dewan is recognized for her work in education reform and change leadership, and for her commitment to serve the community and our most vulnerable youth. She is passionate about diversity, inclusion, equity, and social justice.

Dr. Reynaldo Vargas-Carbajal, Downey Unified School District

Dr. Rey Vargas is a current Program Administrator with the Downey Unified School District in Los Angeles County. He is also the SMAA & LEA-BOP Coordinator for Downey Unified and supports various programs and service providers in accessing resources for the students and families they support. Rey is also the Legislative Committee Chair for the California Association of School Psychologists. He has earned his master's in education and doctorate of psychology in educational psychology from Alliant International University. He is also a bilingual school psychologist as well as a Licensed Educational Psychologist (LEP). Rey continues to advocate for the needs of all school-based mental health providers in providing quality services to students and their families.

Dr. Loretta Whitson, *Executive Director*, California Association of School Counselors

Dr. Loretta Whitson is the Executive Director for the California Association of School Counselors (CASC), the largest nonprofit state association representing school counselors in the nation. CASC guides schools towards linking school counseling to their overall mission and vision, as well as leading school counselors in engaging in high caliber, research-based practices. In 2000, Whitson led the effort to establish CASC as the nationally chartered school counseling association for California. Dr. Whitson, well regarded within the profession of school counseling, provides policy recommendations and advises state and local decision-makers on educational issues that include school-based mental health services and college and career preparation. She earned her Ed.D. in 2014 in Organizational Leadership from the University of La Verne. Prior to receiving her doctorate, Whitson spent 25 years as a school district administrator and school counselor in the Monrovia Unified School District. Dr. Whitson's work in Monrovia was instrumental in the interconnections between school- and community-based mental health services. She designed and administered a number of mental health and physical health programs, creating child serving systems that included after-school programs, community-based health clinics, and child nutrition programs. She also served as a Commissioner on the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and was an Assistant Professor and Chair of the Educational Counseling Program at the University of La Verne.

Susan Holt, *Deputy Director, Clinical Operations*, Department of Behavioral Health, County of Fresno

Susan Holt is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist currently serving as the Deputy Director of Clinical Operations for Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health. As a mental health professional for 25 years, her clinical experience includes providing mental health care in a variety of settings including an inpatient psychiatric hospital, adolescent residential treatment program, foster family agency, elementary and high schools, community-based mobile crisis response, and outpatient treatment programs for adults and children. In Susan's current role, her passion for behavioral health leadership is to cultivate strengths within teams and across sectors to create and support environments that promote well-being, resilience, and recovery.

Christine Stoner-Mertz, *Chief Executive Officer, California Alliance of Child & Family Services*

Christine Stoner-Mertz, LCSW, is the Chief Executive Officer of the California Alliance of Child and Family Services, a 157 member association that serves as the collective voice for organizations that serve children, youth and families throughout California. Ms. Stoner-Mertz served as President and CEO of Lincoln, an agency delivering a range of community-based behavioral health services including school-based mental health, in the San Francisco Bay area, from 2005 – 2019. She has served on state and national boards of behavioral health associations, and has worked as a consultant to numerous nonprofits, county departments of behavioral health and the State of California. Ms. Stoner-Mertz was a co-founder of Seneca Family of Agencies, leading program design and implementation. As a sought-after expert on MediCal EPSDT program design and implementation, Ms. Stoner-Mertz developed one of the first Medi-Cal Specialty Mental Health Services manuals.

Linnea Koopmans, *Chief Executive Officer, Local Health Plans of California*

Linnea Koopmans is the Chief Executive Officer for the Local Health Plans of California (LHPC), the statewide trade association representing all 16 of California's not-for-profit and community-based health plans that collectively cover 70% of the state's Medi-Cal managed care population. As CEO, Linnea leads the Association's legislative and policy advocacy on behalf of the local plans. She previously served as the Association's Director of Government Affairs. Before coming to LHPC in 2018, Linnea worked for the County Behavioral Health Directors Association and prior to that for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. She started her career working in housing and homelessness. Linnea received a Master of Social Welfare from UCLA and a BA in Sociology from Westmont College.