



Early Childhood Fellowship

Groundwork
OHIO

Building an Advocacy Army: Mobilizing Early Childhood Leaders Across the State

*"I'm more confident in my ability to advocate
due to the training I received from Groundwork."*

*– Jessica Ann Boiner, Family Child Care Home-Based
Provider in Cuyahoga County
Class of 2021 Fellow*

GroundworkOhio.org



@GroundworkOhio

4041 N. High Street, Suite 204, Columbus, Ohio 43214

Dear Community Leader,

Elevating the voices of early childhood professionals is at the heart of building momentum toward making Ohio the best place to be a young child. Groundwork Ohio is mobilizing an army of advocates to fight for what Ohio's infants, toddlers, young children, and their families need.

[The Early Childhood Fellowship](#) was created in February 2020 as a program for statewide early childhood professionals to come together and grow, develop, and leverage their advocacy skills.

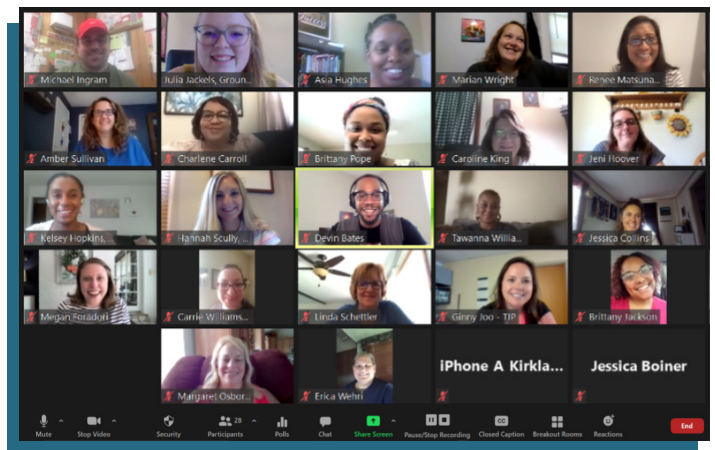
Early childhood professionals are the life force of our child-serving programs in Ohio and instrumental in the education of our youngest Ohioans. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was evident that these professionals are essential. And yet, they do not always have a seat at the table as decisions are being made that impact their profession, the families they serve, and the futures they mold.

Recognizing the dire need to have early childhood professionals bring their expertise to policymakers, Groundwork established the Fellowship to support early childhood professionals in their journey to become stronger leaders and advocates for themselves, their profession, the children and families they serve, and their communities.

Our Fellowship unites emerging leaders committed to advancing the movement and reshaping early childhood policy and advocacy. The Fellowship helps professionals develop partnerships, engage in professional

growth, and have authentic conversations on early childhood issues, while also providing unique opportunities to enhance their advocacy skills.

During the pandemic, the Fellowship not only continued to provide Fellows with leadership and advocacy training, but also served as a community of support for Fellows as they navigated the unknowns of the pandemic. Despite the challenges faced in 2020 and 2021 with the Fellowship limited to virtual interaction alone, our Fellows continued to show up for kids and find ways to access decision-makers.



Today's program combines best practices and high-quality virtual learning sessions with meaningful in-person events that bring Fellows together for direct interaction.



Troy Hunter
Groundwork Ohio
Director of Research,
Evaluation, & Performance

Meet Our Fellows

The Groundwork Ohio Early Childhood Fellowship is for passionate professionals who care deeply for children and are looking to grow their leadership and advocacy skills:

- Home-based or center-based child care providers,
- Home visitors,
- Child development specialists,
- Child welfare professionals,
- Early childhood mental health providers,
- Preschool educators,
- Maternal, infant, and early childhood health professionals,
- Higher education professionals, and more...

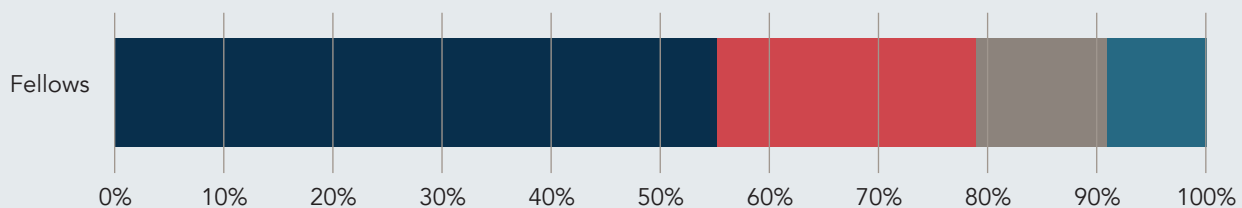
Who's Part of the Fellowship

The Fellowship has supported

109 fellows

who represent a professionally, racially, ethnically, and geographically diverse group of individuals. By establishing a diverse group, Fellows are able to hear a wide range of experiences and expertise that they may not have had the opportunity to hear otherwise.

Professionals Come From Four Main Areas of Expertise:



Early Learning

Center & home-based child care, (administrators, teachers, etc.), Head Start, & Early Head Start

Community Resources

Early literacy, librarians, child care resource & referral, professional development, and teaching & learning

Maternal & Young Child Health

Physicians, nurses, health care, and early intervention

Early Childhood Adversity & Trauma

Infant & early childhood mental health, child welfare, and home visiting

"I hope that other professionals who embark on this journey know that their WHY for providing high-quality child care and learning experiences will be a great part of the WHY generations of children will thrive throughout their years after being in their early learning program."

– Nitoryia Goff, Owner Color of Love Childcare Place, Class of 2023 Fellow



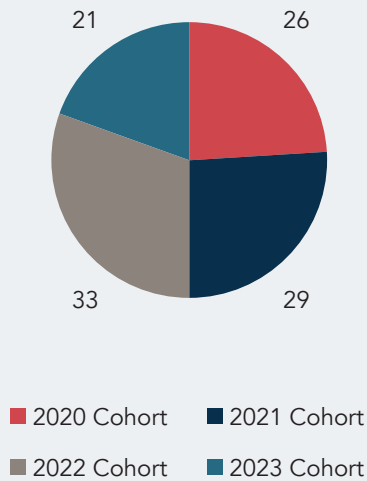


Groundwork Ohio is committed to elevating the voices of the diverse early childhood professional landscape. Our Fellowship brings together dynamic perspectives to collaboratively address the issues that impact all children in Ohio, with a specific focus on historically marginalized and oppressed groups.

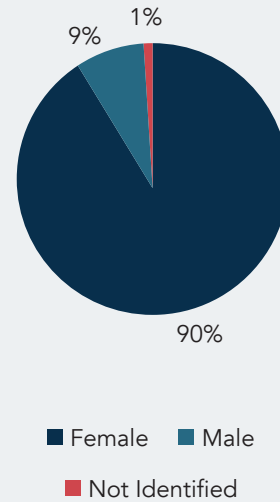
When developing the Fellowship, our goal was to establish fair representation from all regions of the state. Additionally, we have set the aspirational goal to recruit Fellows from every legislative

district in Ohio to ensure that all Ohio legislators have at least one connection to an early childhood professional. While we have yet to meet these bold goals, we continue to make progress towards this reality.

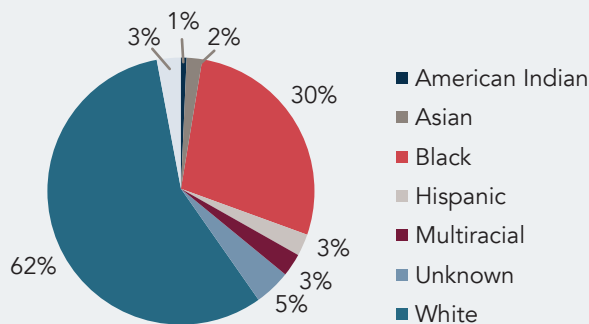
Number of Fellows



Gender



Race/Ethnicity



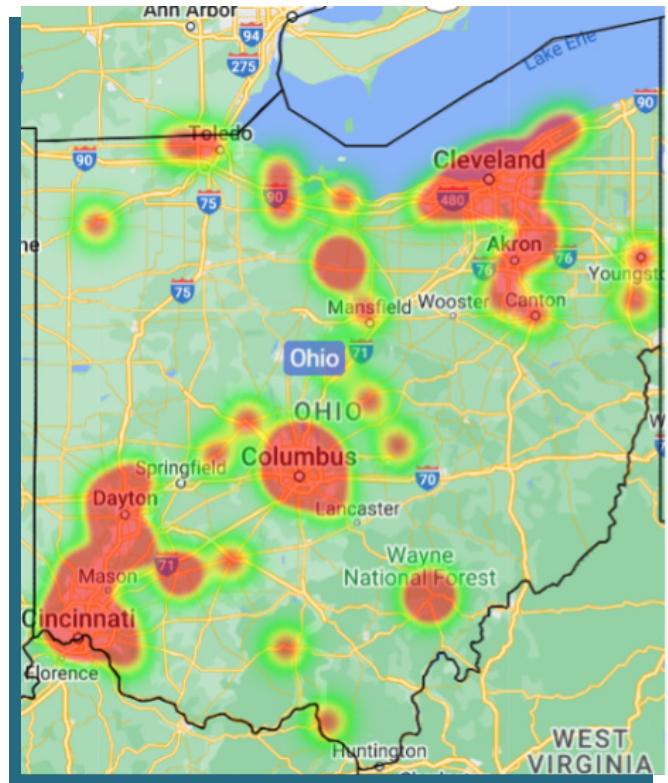
"I really appreciated how open this Fellowship was to interdisciplinary and diverse voices. Everyone had experience and expertise to bring to the table - and every bit of it was genuinely welcomed. I learned so much from the other Fellows, and these are lessons I'll definitely take with me, both personally and professionally."

- Megan Foradori, Ph.D. Student & Legacy Fellow at Case Western Reserve University, Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing

Class of 2021 Fellow

Fellows have come from 31 out of 88 counties in Ohio:

- Athens
- Butler
- Champaign
- Clark
- Clermont
- Clinton
- Cuyahoga
- Delaware
- Erie
- Fayette
- Franklin
- Hamilton
- Knox
- Lake
- Lawrence
- Licking
- Lorain
- Lucas
- Miami
- Montgomery
- Ottawa
- Portage
- Richland
- Scioto
- Seneca
- Stark
- Summit
- Union
- Vinton
- Warren
- Williams



Fellows come from all corners of the state.

Legislative Districts Represented

48 out of 99

Ohio House of Representatives Districts

26 out of 33

Ohio Senate Districts

14 out of 16

U.S. House of Representatives Districts



The Fellowship Experience

The Fellowship brings together leaders from various corners of the state, all united by a shared commitment to champion early childhood issues in policy. We deploy an engaging curriculum to support Fellows in further developing their leadership, advocacy, and communications skills. Fellows learn about the history of Ohio's early childhood system, why race and rural equity matters and its intersection with early childhood, how the legislative process works and opportunities to engage in the process (i.e., meeting with legislators and providing public testimony,) and practicing effective advocacy and communications strategies.

This program seeks to inspire change through a well-crafted curriculum that includes:

- keynote speakers,
- online learning experiences,
- discussions with policymakers,
- networking opportunities,
- technical assistance,
- and small group projects.

The goal is to equip these Fellows with the knowledge and skills necessary to advocate effectively for infants, toddlers, families, and communities.

The Fellowship runs from August to July and Fellows engage in over 35 hours of professional development and learning.

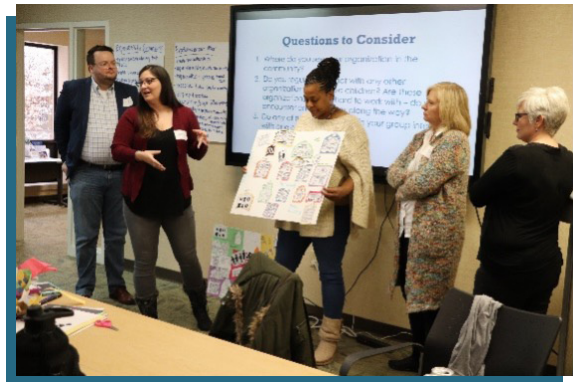
Storytelling

At Groundwork Ohio, our full-time job is advocacy. Our Fellows, however, spend their days as frontline professionals who serve children, families, and communities in Ohio through direct services, resources, and support. The stories of their day-to-day challenges and triumphs are a powerful weapon in our fight to make Ohio the best place to be a young child.

Groundwork understands the importance of storytelling in advancing early childhood advocacy. Groundwork collaborates with, [LORE](#), a storytelling organization, to provide Fellows with the best tools available to champion high-quality early learning and healthy development for Ohio's children and families.

The stories of the Fellows paint a picture the data cannot. Policymakers need to hear the realities of children and educators struggling to navigate the underfunded and underinvested systems that currently provide barriers to them being able to thrive.

Scan the QR Code or click the videos below to hear directly from our Fellows about why they're so passionate about advocating for young children!



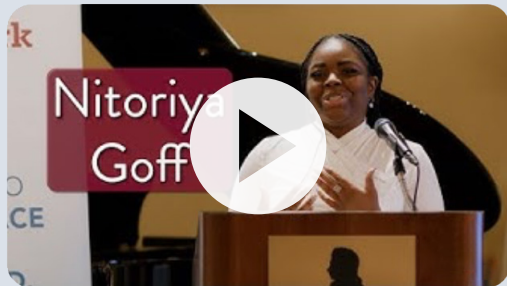
"Being given the tools for advocacy is an amazing gift. So often, an individual can be moved to make change, but for many of us, we were lacking those tools. The Fellowship has filled in those gaps!"

– Misty Cole, Early Childhood Mental Health Training Coordinator at Hopewell Health Centers

Class of 2021 Fellow



youtube.com/@groundworkohio



Early Childhood Professionals are Resilient in the Face of Challenges

The needs of children and families are being met by a broken system supported by professionals who have been undervalued and are in the throes of trying to fill the unmet needs in underinvested programs with limited resources.

- Child care professionals make, on average, **\$14.22** per hour. Out of 160,689 child care employees, **1 out of every 6** left their job in 2023. The average hourly rate of those who left their job was \$13.5/hour. Turnover in child care employment is over **4 times higher** compared to the state as a whole.
- Only **17%** of families who needed home visiting services received them.
- Fewer than **62%** of Ohio children enrolled in a Medicaid-managed care plan received the recommended number of well-child visits in the first 15 months of life in 2020.
- There are only **6.4** credentialed mental health service providers per 10,000 children in Ohio who serve kids, ages 0-5.

Our Fellows come to the program with rich experiences that put stories, background, and context to this data. They are the faces of the profession who dedicate their time every day to help address early education issues across our state. They are the child care professionals who have to leave their jobs, or work multiple jobs, due to low compensation. They are the providers working hard to ensure children and families are getting the services they so desperately need. These Fellows are the leaders of this movement for change.



Alumni Network

The Fellowship doesn't stop at graduation; our extensive Early Childhood Alumni network connects advocates throughout the state to give them a continued avenue to engage in the work happening to lay a strong foundation for Ohio's youngest.

Our extensive alumni network consistently shows up to champion issues facing children and families by attending advocacy events and taking part in conversations with policymakers. Alumni can continue to network with one another, participate in leadership opportunities, and support each other as they advocate for a brighter future for young children and professionals in Ohio.



"The Early Childhood Leadership Fellowship was a life-changing experience that connected, and continues to connect, me with so many inspiring advocates. The relationships built within the cohort continue to flourish as we use our collaborative voices to elevate the importance of quality early childhood education and experiences. Equipped with the proper tools and resources, we will continue building momentum until Ohio is the best place to be a young child. If you have ever asked yourself, 'Who am I to advocate or use my voice?' The better question is, 'Who are you not to do so?'"

– Liz Hibbs, Executive Director, Early Childhood Education Alliance Groundwork Ohio Early Childhood Fellowship Alumni Liaison

Class of 2020 Fellow

52%

of Fellows surveyed have taken new job opportunities after completing the Fellowship

61%

of Fellows surveyed expressed the Fellowship opened professional opportunities for them

What do Fellows gain from the experience?

"The Groundwork Ohio Fellowship creates a **network and community** of people passionate about early childhood education and care."

"This was enlightening and empowering!"

"The fellowship helped me **find my voice**. I will use every tool I have gained to continue to advocate for the families."

"I thought to myself, I can become jaded and just accept that this is the way things are, or **I can do something. For a while, I did not know what that looked like – until I saw the application for the Groundwork Ohio Early Childhood Fellowship.**"

"I've never been so proud of myself and ready to be a part of the bigger picture in Early Childhood Advocacy."

"I learned about so many different programs and was inspired by the work people are doing across the state ...**the Groundwork Fellowship allowed me to fully understand the importance of funding programming aimed at improving outcomes for Ohio's children.**"

"Being a part of the Groundwork Fellowship allowed me to learn and **grow in my knowledge and skills around advocacy**. I will take with me what I learned to apply in my day-to-day work."



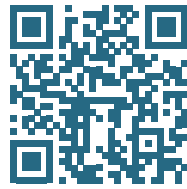
When asked “What was the most valuable aspect of the Fellowship to you?” Fellows said...

- ✓ Gaining confidence as an advocate
- ✓ Connecting with other professionals
- ✓ Meeting with shareholders and policymakers
- ✓ Learning and developing essential relationships
- ✓ Telling my story
- ✓ Learning about the budget and policies
- ✓ Sharing perspectives
- ✓ Learning from everyone
- ✓ Building relationships with other professionals from around the state
- ✓ Networking and cross-sector collaboration
- ✓ Practicing public speaking with LORE
- ✓ Learning about policies and the importance of voices from the community
- ✓ Writing opinions and testimony
- ✓ Learning about advocacy
- ✓ Meeting other professionals
- ✓ Learning statistics to help advocate



Want to Become a Fellow?

Applications open for the Fellowship in January and close in March. You can learn more about the Fellowship and how to apply here.



groundworkohio.org/fellowship

Support the Fellowship

Give Today. Help fund movement-building by supporting the growth and development of early childhood advocates throughout the state. Your gift supports the next class of Early Childhood Fellows using their voices for Ohio's youngest, unlocking the full potential of every child.



groundworkohio.org/donate



"So when a person may say, 'I'm only one person, what does my opinion matter,' I would point out the butterfly effect that comes from one meeting, one speech, or even one sentence. What a person says or does can set in motion a chain of events that may have initially only impacted one person, but then reverberates out to hundreds and potentially thousands of people."

*– Andrea Weisberger, Director of Education and Early Childhood Mental Health
at the Buckeye Ranch*

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