

Kristin Bernhard

Kristin Bernhard is a nationally recognized leader in early childhood policy, system change, and cross-sector collaboration. As Chief Executive Officer of GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, Kristin brings nearly two decades of experience centering family and practitioner voices, building public-private partnerships, and advancing public policy solutions that strengthen early childhood systems and expand opportunity for children and families.

Kristin previously served in senior leadership roles across state government, national nonprofit advocacy, and the private sector, giving her a uniquely comprehensive view of the early childhood landscape.



She spent a decade in Georgia state government, most recently as Deputy Commissioner for System Reform at the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, where she led statewide initiatives to improve quality, access, and coordination across the early learning system. Earlier in her public service career, Kristin served as Education Policy Advisor to Governor Nathan Deal and held roles in the policy office of Governor Sonny Perdue, where she worked on P-20 education policy and helped bridge early education priorities with broader state education and workforce strategies.

Following her service in state government, Kristin joined Start Early, a national nonprofit advancing quality early learning and care. She served as Chief Policy and Research Officer, leading the organization's federal, state, and community-level advocacy, policy, and research agenda to strengthen prenatal-to-age-five systems nationwide.

Most recently, Kristin served as Executive Director of Corporate Social Responsibility and Public Advocacy at Primrose Schools, where she oversaw the Primrose Schools Partnership for Children (formerly the Primrose Schools Children's Foundation), and led the company's federal and state-level advocacy efforts to advance access to high-quality early education.

Kristin is a 2018 Aspen Institute Ascend Fellow and has been recognized by the University of Georgia Alumni Association as part of their 40 under 40 Class of 2018 and the Association of Junior Leagues International as part of their 40 under 40 Class of 2026. Kristin is deeply engaged in civic and nonprofit volunteer service and currently serves on the board of directors of the Vote Mama Foundation, the Executive Committee of the Nonprofit Law Section of the State Bar of Georgia, and has held multiple leadership roles within the Junior League of Atlanta.

A graduate of the University of Georgia and Georgia State University College of Law, Kristin lives in Marietta with her husband and their two young sons.