



Children's Advocates for Change

*Championing the Well-Being of Illinois' Children*

[www.childrensadvocates.org](http://www.childrensadvocates.org)

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Press Release  
For immediate release  
November 23, 2021

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### **Children's Advocates for Change Launches**

With the current COVID-19 pandemic further exposing the racial and ethnic disparities that exist for Illinois children, as well as creating inequitable hardships for Illinois families, a new Illinois-based, non-profit children's advocates organization has begun operations.

Children's Advocates for Change (Children's Advocates) is an independent advocacy organization committed to the well-being of every Illinois child. Its purpose is to conceive and champion the policies, programs, legislation, and cultural understanding necessary to provide all children with educational success, economic well-being, and safe and loving primary environments.

Christa Markgraff, Vice-President of Gas Operations at Southern Company Gas, chairs the Children's Advocates for Change Board of Directors.

"Whether it is Children's Advocates showing policymakers the facts or having our children tell their own stories, our kids need to be heard," said Markgraff. "In our work, our first question is always 'How are our children doing?' "

Dr. Patricia Jones Blessman serves as Vice-Chair of the Board. She is a licensed clinical psychologist with over thirty years of experience as a clinician, consultant, and administrator of mental health programs.

"The pandemic has brought about so many needs for our children – not the least of which is mental health services," said Dr. Jones Blessman. "Yet, we also need to remember that COVID-19 hit communities of color hardest. Whether it is mental health services, housing, or food security, we need to constantly work to address and eliminate the inequities facing our children not just from COVID-19 but from prior lack of resources or barriers."

Joining Markgraff and Dr. Jones Blessman on the eight-member board is Dr. Tasha Green Cruzat. Dr. Green Cruzat previously served as the President of Voices for Illinois Children and will serve as the President of Children's Advocates. She brings a history of more than 30 years

Children's Advocates for Change is a 501(c)(3) organization, Tax ID 36-3480909.

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of experience in government, non-profits, and the private sector. Securing state passage of the Racial Impact Note Act is among her legislative and policy achievements.

“Our ultimate goal is to see that every child is afforded every opportunity to succeed in life regardless of that child’s race, ethnicity, or zip code”, said Dr. Green Cruzat. “That means making sure every child has the necessary shelter, medical care, and education and is in a safe and loving environment.”

Through analysis of state and federal data, as well as examination of state appropriations for services, reducing racial and ethnic disparities facing Illinois children and their families will be a major focal point of the group’s activities. The organization will also advocate for those federal measures than can benefit not just Illinois children but young people across the country.

“Our pledge with Children’s Advocates for Change is that if there is a child in need then we will be there to advocate for that child,” said Dr. Green Cruzat. “Every child deserves every opportunity in life, and it is our hope to make that happen.”

For more information, go to Children’s Advocates for Change website at <https://www.childrensadvocates.org>.

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