

2025 ANNUAL FALL AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONFERENCE & AWARDS PROGRAM



**Closing the Divide:
Housing Equity in a Shifting Georgia**



October 1st, 2025



8:00 AM – 4:00 PM



**Atlanta Metropolitan State College Charles Easley Conference
Pavilion, Building 800 1630 Metropolitan Parkway, SW Atlanta,
Georgia 30310**

Greetings!

Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc. (Georgia ACT) is a statewide membership organization of nonprofit housing and community development organizations. Our mission is to build, support, and inform a statewide network advancing equitable housing and community development. Our vision is for all Georgia families to have safe and decent housing in vibrant neighborhoods.

This year's theme, Closing the Divide: Housing Equity in a Shifting Georgia, speaks to the urgent moment we are in. Communities across the state are experiencing rapid change—rising rents, shrinking affordability, and widening disparities in who can access safe, stable housing. Our conference is both a call to action and a space of collaboration, where advocates, practitioners, and leaders come together to chart solutions that bridge divides and move us toward housing justice.

Throughout the day, you will engage with sessions that spotlight resources, strategies, and best practices for addressing today's housing challenges. Georgia ACT continues to advocate for policies and programs that protect tenants, expand affordable housing development, preserve existing units, and strengthen community resilience. With so many families on the edge, it is crucial that we collectively work to ensure housing equity for those with the greatest needs.

As part of this commitment, we are proud to recognize individuals and organizations whose leadership is helping close the gap and drive meaningful change in Georgia communities. If you are not yet a member or need to renew, we encourage you to join Georgia ACT. Membership fuels our collective work: connecting community development corporations and nonprofits, amplifying advocacy efforts, providing training and technical assistance, and fostering civic engagement across the state. Your involvement strengthens a powerful network committed to equitable housing and thriving neighborhoods. Join us today and be part of the movement to close the divide. Join Georgia ACT today!

For more information, visit Georgia ACT:

Web: www.georgiaact.org

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Yours in People, Place, and Policy,



Bambie Hayes-Brown, ThD, PhD
President & Chief Executive
Officer



Georgia ACT Staff Members



Dr. Bambie Hayes Brown
President and CEO



Desiree Jones
Operations Manager



Xinyuan Zheng
Policy & Program Analyst



Yosha P. Dotson, MSW
Legislative Consultant

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Letter from the Board of Directors Chair

Welcome Conference Attendees,

On behalf of the Georgia ACT Board of Directors, I am honored to welcome you to the 2025 Fall Affordable Housing Conference and Awards Program.

This year's theme, "Closing the Divide: Housing Equity in a Shifting Georgia," speaks to the urgent challenges and opportunities we face together. Across our state, rising costs, demographic changes, and widening gaps in access to affordable housing have made it clear: our work is not just about creating units, but about dismantling inequities and ensuring that all Georgians can live with dignity, stability, and opportunity.

We are especially honored to welcome Renee Willis, President & CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, as this year's keynote speaker. Her national leadership and unwavering advocacy for low-income renters will ground our conversations in both the urgency and the possible pathways of advancing housing justice.

Throughout the day, you'll have the chance to participate in sessions focused on legislative policy, innovative housing solutions, grassroots organizing, and cross-sector collaboration. Our speakers and panelists bring deep expertise and lived experience, and their insights are intended to inspire practical action and transformative change.

As we gather, we also take time to celebrate the incredible achievements of our members and partners whose commitment to affordable housing and community development is shaping Georgia's future. Their work reminds us that progress is possible when we stand together.

Thank you for being part of this conference and for your continued support of Georgia ACT. Together, let us move forward in closing divides, fostering equity, and building resilient communities across our state.

Sincerely,

G. Mitchell Brown

G. Mitchell Brown, Chair Board of Directors



Georgia ACT Board of Directors



G. Mitchell Brown

Board Chair



Sean Dacey

Vice Chair



Eula Parker

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**Elizabeth "Betsy"
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Ingrid Thompson

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Sherrell Byrd

Board Member



Dr. Christie Cade

Board Member



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Hayden Raffield

Board Member

Georgia ACT Board of Directors



Lethia Kittrell
Board Member



Archie Emerson
Board Member



Melanie A. Faison
Board Member



Bodua Gordon
Secretary



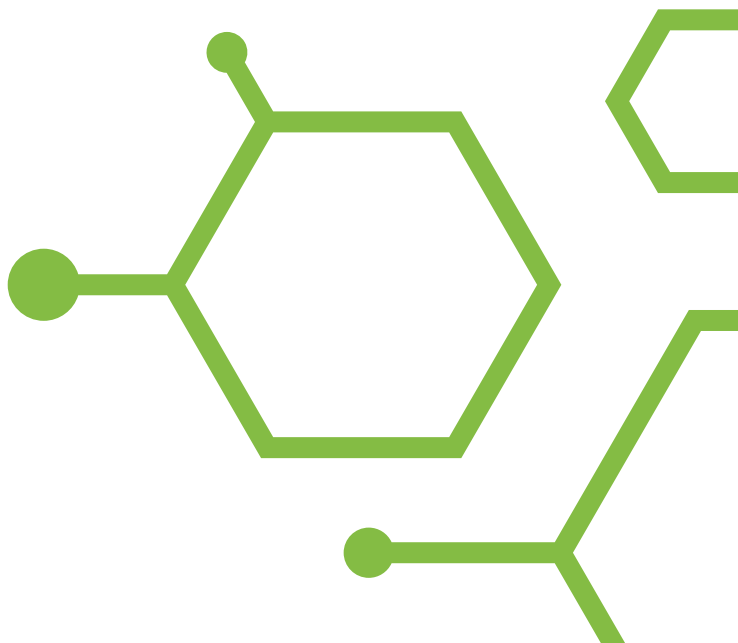
Dana Ingram
Board Member



Jarrod McCarthy
Board Member



Sabrina Newby
Board Member



2025 Annual Fall Affordable Housing Conference & Awards Program

8:15 AM

Continental Breakfast & Networking

Registration, Breakfast, and Networking

Opening Session

Welcome, Greetings, and Opening Remarks

9:00 AM

- Sean Dacey – Board Vice Chair – **(Opening Remarks)**
 - Ingrid Thompson – Board Member - **(Invocation)**
 - The Honorable Senator Jon Ossoff - **(Prepared Remarks – Read by Sabrina Newby Board Member)**
 - The Honorable Antonio Lewis Council Member - **City of Atlanta Representative District 12**
 - The Honorable Representative Terry Cummings (D) – **Georgia's 39th House District**
 - Kristina L. Christy – Vice President of Community Relations – **Wells Fargo – Rooftop Sponsor**
-

2025 Legislative Recap and Looking Ahead to 2026

State Legislation

9:30 AM

- Yosha P.Dotson, MSW- **Legislative Consultant**

Next Gen Young Leaders Program

- Xinyuan Zheng - **Policy and Program Analyst**
-

Networking Session

ACTIVE Connections

10:10 AM

- Speed Netwroking
-

Economic and Community Development Local

Elected Officials and Local Practitioners Panel

10:30 AM

- The Honorable Tony Paulk, Mayor – **The City of Douglas, GA**
- The Honorable Melvin D. Harper II, Mayor- **The City of Ocilla, GA**
- Mandala Jones, Executive Director - **Clayton County Housing Authority**

Moderated by Minister Lethia Kittrell, Board Member

10:50 AM

- Denise Farrior, Esq. Deputy Division Director for Housing Finance Development - **Georgia Department of Community Affairs**

Introduced by Xinyuan Zheng, Policy and Program Analyst

11:05 AM

Award Ceremony

Housing and Community Development Champion Award

- Sherrell Byrd, Executive Director, **SOWEGA Rising**
- Mandy Eidson, Director, Business Development and Community Engagement, **Self Help Credit Union**
- Minister Lethia Kittrell, Executive Director, **Civic Pioneers Alliance**

Legislator of the Year Award

- The Honorable Representative Gabriel Sanchez (D)- **Georgia's 42nd House District**
- The Honorable Senator Matt Brass (R) – **Georgia's 6th Senate District**

Developer of the Year Award

- Columbus Ward, Executive Director - **Peopletown Community Development Corporation**

President's Award

- The Honorable Representative Tremaine "Teddy" Reese (D) - **Georgia's 140th House District**
-

Networking Lunch

12:00 PM

- Minister Lethia Kittrell – Grace
-

Introduction of Speaker

12:30 PM

Introduction of Speaker from Cornerstone Sponsor

- Shekeria L. Brown, Vice President, Southeast Corporate Responsibility Community Engagement - **JPMorgan Chase**

Keynote Address

Housing Justice at the Crossroads

12:35 PM

- Renee M. Willis, President and CEO- **National Low Income Housing Coalition**
-

1:15 PM

Networking Break

Teambuilding Challenge

The Affordable Housing Gauntlet

The Affordable Housing Gauntlet is an interactive game that challenges participants to work in teams and think like housing advocates and community developers. Teams will navigate real-world obstacles such as limited funding, policy barriers, urgent community needs, and tough tradeoffs while working together to craft solutions that advance housing justice. This activity sparks dialogue, creativity, and collaboration while highlighting the urgency of building a more equitable housing landscape.

1:30 PM

Real Estate and Housing Counseling Discussion

Building Confidence: Tools and Guidance for Today's Housing Market

- Archie Emerson, President - **National Association of Real Estate Brokers**
- Ashley Thomas III, President - **National Association of Real Estate Brokers**

2: 30 PM

Moderated by Sean Dacey – Team Leader, Senior Vice President, **Southern First Bank**

Closing Plenary

Voter Engagement in a Shifting Georgia

3:05 PM

- Helen Butler, Executive Director - **Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda**
- John Moye, Senior Director Policy, Legislative Affairs & Civic Engagement - **Urban League of Greater Atlanta**

Moderated by Dr. Bambie Hayes-Brown – President and CEO, **Georgia ACT**

3:40 PM

Break

Closing

*Closing Remarks & Next Steps – Dr. Bambie Hayes-Brown, President and CEO, **Georgia Advancing Communities Together Inc.***

3:45-
4:00 PM



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Award Winners

Housing and Community Development Champion Awards

Sherell Byrd, Executive Director, SOWEGA Rising



Sherrell Byrd is the founder and executive director of SOWEGA Rising, a nonprofit in southwest Georgia that builds grassroots power through organizing, advocacy, education, and voter engagement. Motivated by her own experience with medical debt, she launched the organization to uplift underrepresented communities and advance social justice in rural areas. She is recognized as a passionate advocate and coalition builder who works to connect local voices with statewide and national movements. Under her leadership, SOWEGA Rising has become a catalyst for civic engagement and community-driven solutions that aim to create lasting change across southwest Georgia.

Minister Lethia Kittrell, Executive Director, Civic Pioneers Alliance



Lethia Kittrell is a community leader, ordained minister, and nonprofit executive with decades of experience in ministry, civic engagement, and social justice advocacy. Born and raised in Fitzgerald, Georgia, she is a graduate of Clark Atlanta University and has built her career at the intersection of faith, service, and community development. Over the years she has led and co-founded organizations focused on outreach, education, and equity, including Fitzgerald for Change Community Outreach and 1st Community Faith in Action, Inc. In 2024, she was named the first President and CEO of Civic Pioneers Alliance, where she continues to champion innovative approaches to civic leadership and grassroots empowerment. Minister Kittrell's work has earned her recognition across Georgia for her dedication to uplifting underserved communities and advancing equitable opportunities for families.

Mandy Eidson – Director, Business Development and Community Engagement, Self Help Credit Union



Mandy Eidson serves as a leader with Self-Help Credit Union, where she works to expand access to financial tools and resources that help individuals and families build stability and long-term security. With a deep commitment to economic justice, she has focused her career on ensuring that low-wealth communities, people of color, and rural residents have opportunities to grow assets, achieve homeownership, and strengthen their financial resilience. Mandy brings a background in nonprofit and community development finance, and she is known for her ability to connect mission-driven lending with grassroots needs. Through her role at Self-Help Credit Union, she continues to champion programs and partnerships that close opportunity gaps and advance equity across the South.

Developer of the Year Award

Columbus Ward, Executive Director - Peoplestown Community Development Corporation



Columbus Ward, Jr. leads the Peoplestown Revitalization Corporation (PRC), advancing community-driven revitalization in one of Atlanta's historic neighborhoods. A lifelong Peoplestown resident, he has focused on preserving affordable housing and strengthening infrastructure.

Beyond PRC, Ward is active in environmental justice and public health efforts and serves as President of Neighborhood Planning Unit-V. His decades of grassroots organizing and leadership have made him a key advocate for equity and community integrity in Peoplestown and across Atlanta.

Legislator of the Year Award

The Honorable Representative Gabriel Sanchez (D) ***Georgia's 42nd House District***



Representative Gabriel A. Sanchez serves Georgia's 42nd House District, bringing a background in community organizing and public service to the legislature. He is focused on advancing policies that promote affordable housing, equitable health care, and greater civic inclusion.

Rooted in grassroots advocacy, Sanchez describes his work as amplifying the voices of working families and ensuring that their needs guide decision-making at the state level.

The Honorable Senator Matt Brass (R) ***Georgia's 6th Senate District***



Senator Matt Brass serves in the Georgia State Senate for District 6 with a track record rooted in public service and a commitment to advancing policies that strengthen communities and support working Georgians.

He champions efforts to expand affordable housing, improve access to equitable health care, and promote inclusive civic engagement.

Grounded in his belief in participatory governance, Brass frames his role as elevating the concerns of everyday families, ensuring their voices shape legislative priorities and that state action responds to real community needs.

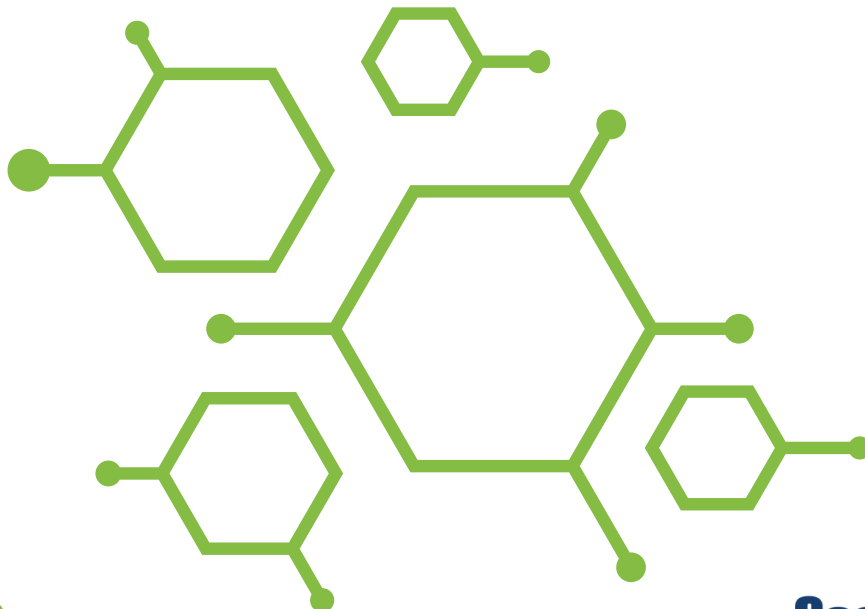
President's Award

The Honorable Representative Tremaine “Teddy” Reese (D) Georgia’s 140th House District



Representative Tremaine “Teddy” Reese serves Georgia’s House District 140 with a solid foundation in law, public service, and community leadership.

He works to foster economic development, strengthen public health, support consumer protection, and promote meaningful constituent involvement. Grounded in his belief in inclusive representation, Reese sees his work as lifting the concerns of everyday people and ensuring their perspectives influence legislation and state action responds to real community priorities.





Speaker Directory

Renee M. Willis

President/CEO of The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)



Renee M. Willis is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), a nonprofit dedicated to achieving socially just public policy that ensures people with the lowest incomes in the United States have affordable and decent homes.

Her historic appointment as the first Black woman to lead NLIHC in its 51-year history reflects both her lifelong commitment to housing justice and her decades of leadership experience in the affordable housing sector.

A native of Virginia with deep family roots in rural communities shaped by the resilience of sharecroppers, Renee grounds her leadership in the values of dignity, community, and justice. These principles have guided her throughout a career spanning over 30 years in affordable housing, including leadership positions at the Public Justice Center, Montgomery County's Office of Landlord-Tenant Affairs, and Arlington County, Virginia, where she served as housing services chief.

Renee first joined NLIHC in 2015 as Vice President for Field and Communications, later advancing to Senior Vice President for Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. In January 2025, she was named Interim President and CEO before assuming the role permanently. Throughout her tenure, she has built strong coalitions, led with strategic vision, and championed the centering of people with lived experience in policy design and advocacy.

Her leadership style reflects both operational expertise and deep compassion. With a background in strategic planning, organizational development, financial management, and program operations, she has established and led successful community and region-wide initiatives. Renee's academic foundation includes dual BA degrees in English and Spanish from the University of Maryland and a Certificate in Public Management from George Washington University.

Renee's vision for NLIHC emphasizes both defense of critical housing programs and bold innovation. She is committed to using narrative and culture as tools for systemic change while ensuring that NLIHC continues to lead with excellence, grounded in data, people, and policy.

• Yosha P. Dotson, MSW



Yosha P Dotson, MSW is the Founder, Policy Strategist and Consultant for LegisLogic, A Governmental Affairs Firm headquartered in GA.

An accomplished independent lobbyist who operates at the national, state, and local levels, Mrs. Dotson specializes in critical areas such as human services, health/healthcare, public safety, and workforce and equity amongst others.

Yosha has served as “in-house” lobbyist for the two largest mental health organizations in the state. As a dedicated advocate, she played a pivotal role in creating coalitions and enacting legislation that has brought about significant change across the state, effectively giving collective voice to numerous pressing issues at the legislature.

She is currently works as Georgia ACT's legislative consultant.

Ms. Dotson has a special interest in advocacy, policy, community outreach, criminal justice reform, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), housing, childcare, Black maternal health, and mental health policy. Her practice experience includes lobbying, strategic advocacy planning, the development of community-specific projects, project management of collaborative teams, critical analysis and assessments and capacity-building. Yosha has a rich history of working in collaboration with organizations and coalitions. In her career, Yosha has successfully fostered effective partnerships and collaborative initiatives statewide. She is passionate about raising awareness on matters that disproportionately affect communities of color, presenting research findings and data to state, county, and local representatives to advocate for meaningful change across the country.

Yosha is committed to ensuring that her clients are recognized as key resources for lawmakers. She emphasizes the education and empowerment of individuals, fueling engagement that leads to the implementation of equitable policies.

Yosha is a graduate of UNC Chapel Hill, (BA-Interpersonal/Corporate Communications); she obtained her masters in social work from the University of Georgia and is a trained in General/Civil Mediation.

The Honorable Tony Paulk, Mayor The City of Douglas, GA



Mayor Tony L. Paulk is currently serving his fourth term as Mayor of Douglas, Georgia, with terms spanning 2004–2007, 2016–2019, 2020–2023, and 2024–2027. A lifelong resident of Coffee County, Mayor Paulk has dedicated his career to public service, leadership development, and building a stronger community rooted in opportunity and civic engagement.

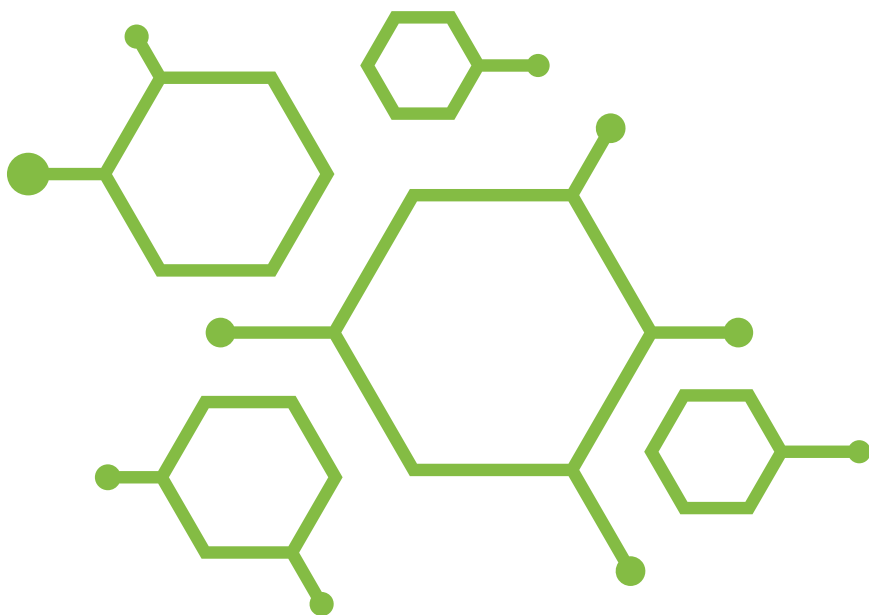
A graduate of Coffee High School (1981), Mayor Paulk went on to earn his Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Brenau University. He also served his country honorably as a member of the United States Army before returning to Georgia to continue his commitment to leadership and service at the local level.

Throughout his mayoral tenure, Mayor Paulk has spearheaded initiatives designed to empower young people and foster civic responsibility. Notably, he established the first Douglas Mayor's Youth Council and launched the Douglas-Coffee County Teen Court Program in 2017, providing students with leadership opportunities and hands-on experiences in governance and justice.

Mayor Paulk has consistently pursued professional development and municipal leadership training, completing the Robert E. Knox, Jr. Leadership Institute in 2018 and earning multiple honors from the Harold F. Holtz Leadership Institute, including Certificates of Achievement, Excellence, Distinction, and Dedication between 2018 and 2025. These recognitions reflect his ongoing commitment to excellence in public service and effective governance.

In addition to his civic leadership, Mayor Paulk is an active member of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church and the Phi Beta Sigma Scholastic Honor Society. His service reflects not only a dedication to the residents of Douglas but also to the broader principles of faith, scholarship, and community uplift.

The Honorable Melvin D. Harper II, Mayor The City of Ocilla, GA



Melvin D. Harper II is the Mayor of Ocilla, Georgia, and the first Black mayor in the city's history. Elected in 2023, his leadership reflects both a commitment to honoring Ocilla's heritage and a determination to guide the city into a more inclusive and prosperous future. Harper brings a deep understanding of the needs of small towns and a focus on building bridges between residents, businesses, and local government.

Since taking office, Harper has prioritized public safety, economic development, infrastructure improvements, and youth engagement. He has been especially vocal about the importance of road paving and maintenance, as well as creating opportunities for new businesses to thrive in Ocilla. Under his leadership, the city is pursuing a vision of growth that is both progressive and community-centered, ensuring that residents' voices remain at the heart of decision-making.

Beyond his official role, Harper is known for his active involvement in civic life and his passion for empowering the next generation of leaders. He often frames his work as a way of continuing Ocilla's legacy while expanding opportunity and equity for all who call the city home.



Mandala Jones, **Executive Director - Clayton County** **Housing Authority**

Mandala Jones is the CEO of the Housing Authority of Clayton County, where he leads efforts to develop and provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing for low- to moderate-income residents. Since assuming leadership in 2023, he has guided the organization with a vision of expanding access to both single-family and multi-family housing options that strengthen communities across the county.

With over two decades of experience in housing, community development, and financial services, Jones has built a distinguished career at the intersection of affordable housing and inclusive lending.

Prior to joining the Housing Authority of Clayton County, he served as Vice President and Divisional Diverse Segments Manager at Wells Fargo Home Mortgage. In this role, he developed and executed strategies to increase and sustain homeownership among low- and moderate-income families and minority communities, forging partnerships with real estate professionals, builders, housing finance agencies, and community organization

Jones's career has been consistently dedicated to housing access and equity. As a Community Development Consultant at United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, he launched Opportunity Zone initiatives to strengthen neighborhood leadership and resources. At Chase Home Lending, he served as Vice President of Business Development for Multicultural and Affordable Lending, working to expand mortgage access through business development and strategic partnerships. Earlier in his career, he supported nonprofit and community organizations as a Single Family Management Consultant with the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation and as Housing Director for the Atlanta Urban League, where he managed a professional housing team serving local residents.

A graduate of Morehouse College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics, Jones has combined his academic training with practical expertise in organizational leadership, program development, and financial management. His career reflects a steadfast commitment to ensuring that families and communities, particularly those historically excluded from opportunities, have access to housing and the resources needed to thrive.

As CEO of the Housing Authority of Clayton County, Jones continues to champion innovative solutions, strategic partnerships, and equity-driven policies that advance housing as a pathway to stability and opportunity

Denise Farrior, Esq.

Deputy Division Director for Housing Finance
Development

Georgia Department of Community Affairs



Denise Farrior is the Deputy Division Director at the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), where she provides strategic oversight for affordable housing programs that shape the lives of thousands of Georgia residents.

With more than a decade of experience spanning law, public policy, and housing finance, she has built a career dedicated to advancing equity, ensuring compliance, and strengthening affordable housing systems across the state.

Since joining DCA in 2017, Denise has held progressive leadership roles, including Policy and Development Manager, Internal Operations Manager, and now Deputy Division Director. In her current role, she leads division teams overseeing program funding allocation, construction and development of affordable housing projects, federal and state Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), HOME loans, federal grant administration, asset management, and Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) implementation. She also drives risk management and operational strategies that safeguard resources and improve efficiency across Georgia's housing portfolio.

Before her work at DCA, Denise practiced law and provided pro bono representation for low-income tenants and families. She served as Of Counsel with the Cansino Blanchette Law Firm, handled family law and landlord-tenant matters as a contract attorney with The Justice Café and The Partners Group, and volunteered as lead counsel with the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation. Through this work, she advocated for tenants, families, and vulnerable clients in complex legal proceedings, demonstrating her lifelong commitment to access and justice.

She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Georgia State University. She went on to earn her Juris Doctor and a Graduate Diploma in Comparative Law from Louisiana State University's Paul M. Hebert Law Center.



Archie Emerson,

President

Women's Council National Association of Real Estate Brokers

Ms. Archie Emerson has been a leader in the real estate industry since 1993 and is presently the Broker/Owner, Dedicated Realty, Inc. and Branch Manager, NID-HCA Emerson, which is a HUD approved affiliate.

As a mission focused leader, she has made her life's goal to serve the unserved and underserved communities by providing the essential educational components to building financial wealth through proper money management which leads to the coveted status of homeownership and the pride of becoming a homeowner.

Currently, Ms. Emerson serves as President of the Women's Council of NAREB and is a past President of the Empire Board of Realtists.

Suited in the armor of preparation with academics and experience, Ms. Archie earned a Bachelor of Science, Information Systems from Grambling State University and was previously employed as a Teacher/Instructor in the public school system. In addition to having an active federal license as a Certified Housing Counselor, Ms. Emerson is also a Freddie Mae Certified Credit Smart Specialist, a VA Relocation Housing Specialist and a Financial Advisor and Financial Coaching Certification. Ms. Archie Emerson is living, working and standing in her motto "Always Dedicated to Serve."



Ashley Thomas III

President National Association of Real Estate Brokers

Ashley Thomas III is a respected leader in the real estate and mortgage industry and currently serves as President of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB). He is CEO and owner of LA Top Broker, a mortgage brokerage firm in California, and Managing Broker of First Security Investment Co., Inc., which specializes in real estate sales and property management.

Thomas began his real estate career at the age of 20, launching a department dedicated to helping homeowners in financial distress before shifting into mortgage origination to guide clients earlier in the homebuying process. His leadership within NAREB has been extensive, including service as President of the Consolidated Board of Realtists and President of the Young Realtists Division.

He is widely recognized for his advocacy on behalf of Black homeownership, advancing policies that promote fair housing and sustainable access to homeownership. His contributions have earned him recognition from both community institutions and professional organizations. In addition to his professional work, Thomas is active in civic and faith-based organizations and serves on several community advisory boards. He is married and the father of three children.



Helen Butler

Executive Director

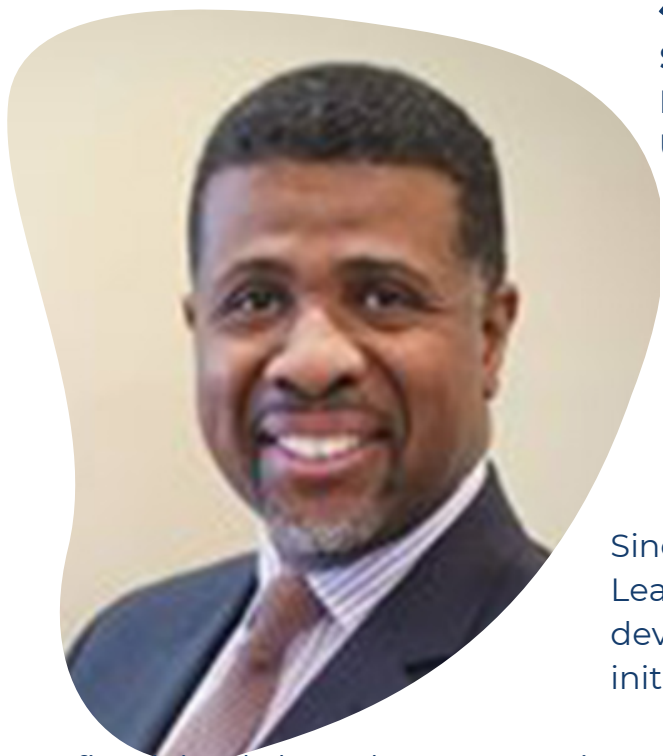
Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda

Helen Butler is the Executive Director of the Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda, a nonpartisan organization founded by the late Dr. Joseph E. Lowery that brings together more than 60 statewide and local groups to advance voting rights, civic engagement, and social justice across Georgia and the southeastern United States. Since being recruited to the Coalition in 2003 by civil rights leader Rev. James Orange, Butler has expanded the organization's reach and strengthened its collaborative issue-based campaigns, building broad alliances to improve education, criminal and juvenile justice reform, economic equity, and voter protection.

In addition to her leadership at the People's Agenda, Butler serves as the Convener of the Black Women's Roundtable of Georgia, an affiliate of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, where she promotes health and wellness, education, economic security, and empowerment for Black women and their families. She previously served on the Morgan County Board of Elections, the State of Georgia Help America Vote Act Advisory Committee, and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' Georgia Advisory Committee. She was also a founding board member of ProGeorgia, the state's civic engagement table.

Butler's impact on democracy and civic participation has earned her numerous honors, including being named one of Glamour Magazine's Women of the Year in 2021 for her role in mobilizing Georgia voters, as well as receiving the City of Atlanta's Phoenix Award, the Joseph E. Lowery Civil Rights Award, and the AFL-CIO's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "Defender of the Dream" Award.

A native of Morgan County, Georgia, Butler was among the first 50 African American students to attend the University of Georgia after its integration, where she earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting. She has also built a distinguished career in human resources and nonprofit management, applying her skills in organizational development, coalition building, and issue advocacy to advance equity and civic empowerment.



John Moye

Senior Director Policy Legislative Affairs & Civic Engagement

Urban League of Greater Atlanta

John H. Moye is the Director of the Office for Policy and Legislative Affairs (OPLA) at the Urban League of Greater Atlanta, where he leads efforts to advance the League's legislative and policy priorities through collaboration with city agencies, the Atlanta City Council, the Georgia General Assembly, and other key stakeholders.

Since his appointment in 2019, Moye has directed the League's policy strategy to strengthen workforce development, education, and economic empowerment initiatives across the Atlanta region.

He first joined the Urban League in 2016 as part of the Office of Workforce Development, Education, and Training, ensuring that the organization's programs aligned with community and labor market needs.

Before relocating to Atlanta in 2014, Moye spent more than 20 years in public service in New York. He served as the Commissioner's principal representative for the New York State Department of Labor in New York City, where he worked with the congressional delegation, state and local officials, and stakeholder organizations to advance labor policies and workforce initiatives. Earlier, he was Executive Director of the Nassau County Office of Minority Affairs, where he oversaw civil rights protections, the county's Affirmative Action Program, and reforms that expanded minority- and women-owned business enterprise (M/WBE) participation in county contracting from \$700,000 in 2002 to over \$50 million by 2009.

Moye's career began in the administration of Governor Mario M. Cuomo, serving as an Assistant Appointments Officer in the New York State Executive Chamber, later advancing to Regional Compliance Officer with the New York State Department of Transportation's Civil Rights Division.

Moye earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, with a concentration in English, from Queens College – City University of New York. He has combined this academic foundation with decades of practical policy leadership to champion equity and public service. Today, he continues to shape policy and advocacy in Georgia with the same commitment to opportunity, justice, and empowerment that has defined his career.

Dr. Bambie Hayes-Brown

President and CEO, Georgia Advancing Communities Together Inc.

Raised by her maternal grandparents, Dr. Bambie Hayes-Brown is a native of rural, Cordele, Georgia and holds a Bachelor's in Business Management, a second Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Leadership, an MBA, a Doctor of Theology, a PhD in Biblical Studies, and a Certificate in Nonprofit Management. She is the President and CEO of Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc., a statewide membership organization of housing and community development agencies. Formally homeless and a former public housing resident, Dr. Bambie advocates through the lens of her and other's lived-experiences of housing insecurity.

Dr. Bambie is a registered lobbyist and Real Estate Broker. Dr. Bambie serves as the Board Chair of the National Low Income Housing Coalition and on the Boards of Alliance 85, Community Opportunity Alliance, Up for Growth Action, HouseATL, SOWEGA Rising, Policing Alternative & Diversion Initiative, and the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. She serves on numerous advisory committees including the Enterprise Community Partners Southeast Advisory Committee, Housing Justice League, Self-Help Credit Union and Cadence Bank.

Dr. Bambie's civic involvement includes: the Morris Brown College DeKalb County Alumni Association, Women for Morris Brown College, the NAACP DeKalb County Branch, National Action Network, Rainbow Push Coalition, Order of the Eastern Star-Prince Hall Affiliated, Daughters of the Imperial Court, Kiwanis Club, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., National Council of Negro Women, American Legion Auxiliary and Riders, National Action Network, and the Empire Board of Realtists.

Dr. Bambie is a sought-after speaker who testifies before the United States Congress, the Biden-Harris Administration, the Federal Reserve Bank, and the Georgia General Assembly on lived-experience homelessness and affordable housing. Dr. Bambie is a licensed and ordained Minister and enjoys her grandchildren and splitting her time between Metro Atlanta and South Georgia.