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June 6-10

2026 PUBLIC POLICY FORUM

ZERO TO THREE Building

*Hilton Garden Inn Washington
DC/Georgetown Area*



2026 NAFHSA PUBLIC POLICY FORUM SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

SUNDAY, JUNE 7 – TUESDAY, JUNE 10

SUNDAY, JUNE 7

Travel In

MONDAY, JUNE 8

Time	Event	Location
9:00am	OPENING SESSION	Zero to Three Office Building 2445 M St NW Suite 600 Washington, DC 20037
9:15am – 10:00am	Federal Policy & Program Reality: What's Changed and What Comes Next?	
10:00am – 10:15am	BREAK	
10:15am – 11:00am	Agriculture & Food Policy: What's at Stake for Agricultural Families	
11:00am – 11:15am	BREAK	
11:15am – 12:00pm	Current Policy and Education Issues Affecting Migrant and Hispanic Communities	
12:00pm – 1:30pm	Lunch and Summer Internship Introductions <i>Lunch Provided</i>	
1:30pm – 2:30pm	Hill Meeting Prep for Parents	
	<i>Tribute to Alison Feighan</i>	

TUESDAY, JUNE 9

Time	Event	Location
9:00am – 4:00pm	Congressional Visits	<u>Capitol Hill</u> Rooms and Buildings Vary

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10

Travel Day Back to Home States

Please contact your Capitol Hill Day Leader for the congressional visit schedule.



Welcome to the 2026 National AgFamilies Head Start Association Public Policy Forum

A letter from the Board of Directors President

Dear Attendees, Advocates, Families, and Colleagues,

Warm greetings and welcome to the 2026 National AgFamilies Head Start Association Policy Forum. It is an honor to gather with each of you in our nation's capital, united by a shared purpose: advocating for children, families, and communities served by Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs across the country.

The Policy Forum is more than an annual event—it is a powerful reminder that our voices matter. It is a space where parents, staff, directors, community leaders, and advocates come together to learn, connect, and strengthen our collective commitment to equity, opportunity, and justice for all families. During our time together, we will engage in important conversations about early childhood education, family well-being, and workforce realities impacting farmworker communities, federal policy, and the future of Head Start.

Head Start has always been rooted in resilience, compassion, and hope. For decades, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs have stood strong through challenges, transitions, and uncertainty. We have adapted, innovated, and persevered because our children and families deserve nothing less. Our work is not simply a program—it is a promise to families that they will be seen, heard, valued, and supported.

One of the most important aspects of this forum is our visits to Capitol Hill. These visits are not ceremonial—they are essential. Every conversation with elected officials is an opportunity to elevate the lived experiences of the families we serve and to advocate for continued investment in programs that change lives. Legislators need to hear directly from those who understand the realities, strengths, and needs of migrant and seasonal communities. Your stories, your leadership, and your advocacy are powerful tools for change. When we speak together with purpose and unity, we make an impact.

As Board President, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to our Executive Director, Cleo Rodriguez, Jr., and our Deputy Director, Janna Rios, for their steadfast leadership and dedication to the association and the families we serve. I also want to recognize the incredible AgFamilies staff whose hard work, commitment, and countless hours behind the scenes made this forum possible. Their passion and perseverance continue to drive this work forward every day, and we are deeply grateful.

I would also like to offer a special acknowledgment to our parents and families who have traveled from near and far to be here. Many of you have left your homes, jobs, children, and daily responsibilities to join us in Washington, D.C. Your presence here is powerful and meaningful. The heart of Head Start has always been families, and your voices remain at the center of this movement. Thank you for your courage, sacrifice, and commitment to advocacy.

This year, we also pause to honor the memory of our beloved colleague and advocate, Alison Feighan. Alison's passion for children, innovation, and education touched countless lives across our Head Start community. She believed deeply in the brilliance and potential of every child and inspired many through her leadership, kindness, and dedication.

As families and communities, we understand that life is full of seasons of endings and beginnings. While we grieve the loss of those who helped shape our path, we also carry forward their vision, their love, and their purpose. Alison's legacy reminds us that every ending can plant the seeds of new growth, renewed hope, and continued impact. We honor her not only in memory but in the work we continue together on behalf of children and families.

Thank you for being here, for lending your voice, and for standing united in advocacy and service. We invite you to connect, learn, and engage fully during this forum. The National AgFamilies Head Start Association values your participation, your leadership, and your unwavering commitment to our communities.

Together, we continue the work. Together, we continue the legacy. Together, we make a difference.
With gratitude and solidarity,

Karelia Harding

2026 NAFHSA Board President

2026 PUBLIC POLICY FORUM

INTRODUCTION OF 2026 SUMMER INTERNSHIP CLASS



Sayra Agustin-Zarate | MADERA CAP

Hometown: Fresno, California

School: California State University, Fresno

Major: Agriculture Business

My name is Sayra Agustin-Zarate, and I am currently a junior at California State University, Fresno. I'm currently studying Agricultural Business with the goal of opening an agri-tourism farm in California. I was born and raised in Madera, California, growing up alongside other migrant and farmworker families. This academic year, being a part of the Farmworker Advocacy Club has been incredibly fulfilling, as I am currently the Marketing and Outreach Coordinator. As a club, we have dedicated countless hours to serving the farmworker community, driven solely by our love and passion for individuals who work tirelessly to provide for their families.

My morals and values come from being the first daughter of hardworking farmworkers. They are the reason why I remain determined and passionate for what I do. Growing up, my parents raised us to constantly take action, especially when it came to advocacy. During my childhood, we would often attend farmworker union marches all over the central valley. Although I didn't quite understand what was really behind those long walks, I still felt that sense of showing up and supporting the community. As a first-generation student, this opportunity is more than an internship, it is a full-circle moment. I never imagined that one day I would have the chance to be in D.C., representing my community.



Lizet Renteria Romero | E Center

Hometown: Sacramento, California

School: University of Nevada, Reno

Major: Public Health/Pre-Nursing

My name is Lizet Renteria Romero and I am a rising sophomore at the University of Nevada, Reno, majoring in Nursing. I chose this field because I am passionate about helping others and making a meaningful difference in people's lives, especially during times when care and compassion are most needed. I hope to use my education to support and advocate for individuals in my community.

I grew up in Live Oak, California, where my experiences shaped my strong work ethic and determination to pursue higher education. My dad continues to work in agriculture, and while I was younger, I attended the E Center Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program while my parents worked in the fields. As I got older, I began helping during the summers, working in peaches and olives locally and traveling to Washington for the cherry and apple harvest. These experiences taught me resilience, responsibility, and perseverance. As an MSHS alumni, I am grateful for the support and opportunities that have guided me, and I am committed to becoming a compassionate nurse who gives back to my community.

2026 PUBLIC POLICY FORUM

INTRODUCTION OF 2026 SUMMER INTERNSHIP CLASS



Freddy Bautista-Molina | *Grow Early Learning*

Hometown: Mulberry, Florida

School: Cornell University

Majors: Applied Economics and Management
with a concentration in finance

Hello, my name is Freddy Bautista-Molina, and I am a sophomore at Cornell University studying Applied Economics and Management with a concentration in finance. I chose my major and concentration as I have always been interested in how different businesses make different decisions and create growth opportunities.

I am originally from Florida, however, my family and I connect strongly to Alabama, where I worked as a migrant farmworker. Having experienced what picking tomatoes was like growing up, I have gained an understanding of the importance of the work that migrant families do every day.

At Cornell, I have been involved in finance clubs where I learned more about investment banking as a career path. Outside of academics, I care about helping students from different backgrounds learn more about professional opportunities. I am excited to be joining NAFHSA this summer, and I look forward to sharing more about how my experiences have shaped me into who I am today.



Cesar Gabriel Galindo | *Oregon Child Development Coalition*

Hometown: Woodburn, Oregon

School: Willamette University

Majors: Willamette University Environmental Science

Hello! I'm Cesar, a rising senior Environmental Science major at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. I grew up 15 miles north, in Woodburn. My father immigrated from the sugar cane fields of Veracruz, Mexico at 19 and worked in agricultural fields and a commercial floral processing warehouse during my early childhood. I recently assisted him in hosting a father-engagement event at OCDC, a grassroots initiative supporting farmworker families.

I chose environmental science because it sits at the intersection of human communities and the planet. I'm passionate about helping build a healthier, greener world for future generations. Some highlights of my studies have included GIS, photogrammetry and LiDAR analysis, and paleoclimate proxies during a semester abroad.

On campus, I served as publicist for Alianza, Willamette's Latinx student club, creating community space and hosting lively cultural events. In my free time I work on music and film passion projects (though quite honestly my "studio" is usually just me, my laptop and half-finished edits).

I plan to keep feeding that same curiosity, that drive for growth, which was first nurtured in me as a child through the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) program I attended with the Oregon Child Development Coalition (OCDC).

2026 PUBLIC POLICY FORUM

PANEL DESCRIPTIONS

PANEL 1 (9:15AM – 10:00AM)

Federal Policy & Program Reality: What's Changed and What Comes Next?



Moderator: Cleofas Rodriguez, Jr., *NAFHSA Executive Director*

Panelists: Gregory Smith, *Partner at Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Walker, Consultant to National Indian Directors Head Start Association;*

Tommy Sheridan, *Deputy Director, National Head Start Association*

This session will examine the evolving federal policy landscape alongside the real-time impacts on programs. Speakers will explore key shifts over the past year, including funding pressures, administrative restructuring, and changes affecting Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Head Start, and how these changes are playing out on the ground. Framed around "Then, Now, What's Next," the discussion will connect policy to practice and equip participants with clear advocacy priorities and messaging for engagement on the Hill.

PANEL 2 (10:15AM – 11:00AM)

Agriculture & Food Policy: What's at Stake for Agricultural Families



Moderator: Cleofas Rodriguez, Jr., *NAFHSA Executive Director*

Panelists: Gina Plata-Nino, *SNAP Director, Food Research & Action Center;*

Agriculture and food policy play a critical role in the stability of the nation's food system, agricultural workforce, and rural communities. This session will explore current Farm Bill negotiations and other key federal policy developments shaping agricultural production, workforce sustainability, nutrition programs, and economic opportunity in agricultural communities. Panelists will discuss how these policy decisions directly impact agricultural families and the communities served by Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS).

2026 PUBLIC POLICY FORUM

PANEL DESCRIPTIONS

PANEL 3 (11:15PM – 12:00PM)

Current Policy and Education Issues Affecting Migrant and Hispanic Communities



Moderator: Karella Harding, *President of the NAFHSA Board and Oregon Child Development Coalition*

Panelists: Roger Rosenthal, Esq., *Executive Director, Migrant Legal Action Program*; Andrea Senteno, *Regional Counsel, MALDEF's DC office*

This session will provide an overview of the current educational and policy landscape impacting migrant and Hispanic communities, with a focus on issues affecting agricultural and farmworker families. Panelists will discuss migrant education programs, including HEP and CAMP, as well as key immigration and education policies shaping access and opportunity for children, youth, and families.

PANEL 4 (1:30PM – 2:30PM)

Hill Meeting Prep for Parents



Panelists: Cleofas Rodriguez, Jr., *NAFHSA Executive Director*
Hannah Toriz-Perez, *NAFHSA Policy Consultant*

Provide a focused, practical briefing to prepare parents for meetings with policymakers on the Hill. Participants will review key messaging, learn how to share their stories effectively, and align on priority advocacy messages related to agricultural families and the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) program's economic and community impact. The goal is to ensure parents feel confident, supported, and equipped to clearly communicate the real-world effects of federal policy decisions on their families and communities.

TRIBUTE TO ALISON FEIGHAN

Monday, June 8

2445 M St NW Suite 600
Washington, DC 20037



This gathering will honor the life and legacy of Alison Feighan, a dedicated advocate and trusted partner in advancing policies that support farmworker families and communities. The tribute will provide space for reflection, remembrance, and appreciation of her contributions to the field and the relationships she built across the advocacy community. It will also serve as an opportunity for collective gratitude and connection among colleagues, partners, and Alison's family.

The National AgFamily Head Start Association thanks you for your continued support and participation in the 2026 Public Policy Forum.

We look forward to seeing you again next year.

Thank you

Special thank you to ZERO TO THREE for graciously sponsoring this year's 2026 NAFHSA Public Policy Forum



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