

CFCR's Mission Moments Newsletter



From Heather Johnson <advancement@cfcrights.org>
To <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
Reply-To <advancement@cfcrights.org>
Date 2023-05-05 08:15



We have exciting news to share! Council is proud to announce the launch of our newest advocacy project that will focus on improving the educational outcomes of youth in foster care. This 3-year project will be led by Council's Research & Policy (RAP) and Education Law (ELP) Teams. This important work wouldn't be possible without the generous support of the Merancas Foundation, and we look forward to sharing more about our impact as the project evolves.

Power in Purpose & Partnerships

Council is dedicated to ensuring that all children have equitable opportunities and are treated with fairness, compassion, and respect. Too often, students in foster care are not given the support and services they need to thrive. Even more damaging, the current struggles to identify and track their needs and progress, making it all too easy for these children to fall through the cracks.



Students in foster care face enormous obstacles to accessing education, including frequent home and school changes, missing credits, unreliable access to appropriate support, confusion over education decision-making authority, and inconsistent access to special education services. Being placed in the care and custody of a child welfare agency creates additional issues in coordinating with schools and school districts. The lingering effects of two years of isolation and intermittent access to education due to the pandemic only compounds these challenges.

There are around 500-650 of our community's youth in foster care annually, and over 2,000 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools that require special education. Many of these students overlap. Educational outcomes for children in foster care are problematic, as are outcomes for students with special education needs. Through no fault of their own, these children are being denied the opportunity to get the education they deserve.

Council for Children's Rights has a special legal and advocacy team that has worked decades representing youth at the intersection of the foster care and special education systems. **Youth in foster care are between 2.5-3.5x more likely to need special education, they are suspended and expelled at much higher rates, and they are 3x as likely to drop out of high school.** Both systems also disproportionately impact students of color. These children are at a critical nexus point and need someone to stand up for them and fight for their rights to proper education services.

Despite federal, state, and local policies and practices that intend to protect the rights of students in foster care, **inadequate state and local implementation has resulted in continued negative educational impacts.** While our team continues to represent individual children in the foster care system and those who require special education, **this new project aims to go upstream and confront the systemic issues that are putting these children at a disadvantage in the first place.**

Council is honored to have the support of the Merancas Foundation in confronting the policies and practices that perpetuate the negative educational impacts for these children. We are proud to announce **we have embarked on a 3-year policy and systems advocacy project focusing on improving the educational outcomes of youth experiencing foster care.** We have three big goals for the project:

- Pursue statewide legislation to improve educational outcomes for youth in foster care in North Carolina.
- Advocate for improved data gathering and sharing, allowing for greater identification of youth's needs.
- Enhance the quality and implementation of statewide policies impacting the education of youth in foster care.

We look forward to sharing updates on the project over the coming months and years. Thank you so much for your continued support of Council.

Support Council Today

Please contact our Advancement Director Amy Vavra at amyv@cfcrights.org for more information on ways to donate and to get involved.

Partnership Highlight: The Merancas Foundation



Council could not have done this without the support and partnership of The Merancas Foundation. Based in Charlotte, [The Merancas Foundation](#) is a private foundation guided by the belief that anyone who works hard should be able to make a decent living. The Foundation invests in local nonprofits that support those in crisis, provide pathways for adults to achieve self-sufficiency, and help children reach their greatest potential.

The Merancas Foundation was founded by Anke and Casey Mermans in 1989. The couple was bothered to see people work hard yet not be able to afford a basic living. They knew they could help make a difference in the lives of those in need. Guided by the principle that philanthropy should be an investment in our communities, The Merancas Foundation has sought out partners that can deliver services to deserving individuals and families. You can learn more about them on their [website here](#).

Council Changemakers

This month we want to spotlight our new Policy Advocate, Emily Mikkelsen

EMILY
MIKKELSEN



Policy Advocate

What led you to Council and how long have you been here?

I started at Council in February. I have always been passionate about child advocacy, public policy, and education. When I learned about this role, which allows me to impact change at the intersection of all three, it was a perfect fit.

Tell us about your role here

I am a policy advocate within the Education Law Program, so my role focuses entirely on systemic change in our community and state. Our current work aims to improve educational outcomes for children experiencing foster care. A large part of that goal involves making sure that every child has a caring adult to meaningfully consider their unique educational needs and preferences, and to act as a durable advocate for them in school meetings and education decisions. Children spend a large portion of their day in school, and we want that to be an intentional place where children can feel secure and empowered.

What do you enjoy most about working at Council?

I love that I get to work for children with a team that is comprised of incredibly kind and empathetic people. Council's collaborative approach makes advocacy so much more meaningful, whether it is working within our team or partnering with community organizations and agencies. I also really appreciate the value Council places on the child's voice. Our attorneys do not simply speak for children; they elevate the child's voice and expressed needs.

What do you wish people knew about Council?

I wish people knew about the individual challenges that children in our community navigate. I think it is really easy to look at statistics and forget the individual experience, but children need us to listen to the details. Every child is so much more than a case, and our team recognizes the individual humanity of each child we serve.

Where are you from or where did you grow up?

I grew up in northern Ohio. I loved spending time on or near Lake Erie, and roller coasters were a surprisingly large part of my youth. I moved to North Carolina just under 10 years ago for graduate school, and it ended up becoming home.

Outside of work, how do you like to spend your time?

Games of work, I like spending time with my family and friends, playing board games, writing, and traveling. My spouse and I have accumulated a lot of board games, with Terraforming Mars being a consistent favorite.

Get Involved with Council

Attend a Training: Want to know more? Have a child in need? Come to a free training! Our Education Law Program offers free trainings to community partners, parent groups and other interested individuals. Our trainings cover a range of topics related to education advocacy, such as special education evaluations and eligibility, Section 504 Plans, and school discipline and bullying. You can also check out the critical information provided on our website at:

<https://www.cfcrights.org/resource-center/>

Volunteer: We have [multiple opportunities to volunteer](#), most notably with our Custody Advocacy Program (CAP). Join us for an in-person volunteer training for our Custody Advocacy Program on Thursday, May 18th. The training is generously hosted by McGuire Woods in partnership with Wells Fargo. [You can learn more about the training and register here.](#)

Email volunteer@cfcrights.org for more information. We are also looking for community members and philanthropists to help accelerate our fundraising efforts. If you're interested in learning how you can get involved, email advancement@cfcrights.org.

Give: You can [donate online](#) or by sending a check to: ATTN: Council for Children's Rights, 601 East 5th Street, Suite 510, Charlotte, NC 28202. Email advancement@cfcrights.org with any questions and to learn more.

Give to the Council

Thank you, Mere's!



Thank you to those that came out to Council's Friends & Family Happy Hour at Mere's on Wednesday night! It was a packed house and it was great to see everyone and connect again. Thank you especially to Mere's for hosting and generously donating 10% of the night's proceeds to Council. If you missed us this week, don't forget to check out [Mere's Wine & Gourmet](#) off Park Road when you get a chance!



Council for Children's Rights | 601 East 5th Street, Suite 510, Charlotte, NC 28202
www.cfcrights.org

[Unsubscribe \[sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org\]\(mailto:sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org\)](mailto:sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by advancement@cfcrights.org in collaboration with

