

2024 Stone Social Impact Forum:
Mississippi's Journey from Last in the Nation to a Leader in Educational Improvement
Monday, February 5, 2024 | 5:30 p.m. ET | Columbia Point, Boston

Speaker Bios



Dr. Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., was appointed Interim State Superintendent of Education by the Maryland State Board of Education in October 2023. A native Marylander, she previously served for nine years as State Superintendent of Education for Mississippi, where she is credited with its elevation as a national leader in literacy instruction and outcomes.

As the longest-serving Mississippi state superintendent, Dr. Wright led the implementation of successful education reforms that resulted in significant annual gains in English Language Arts and Mathematics proficiency. These initiatives increased literacy skills in pre-K through grade 3, pushed student achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to improve at a faster rate than nearly all other states, and achieved a higher graduation rate than the national average. During her tenure, Mississippi's ranking for NAEP fourth-grade reading rose from 50th to 21st in the nation. Additionally, economically disadvantaged fourth-graders achieved higher NAEP reading and math scores than their peers, across racial and ethnic lines, both regionally and nationally. This achievement resulted in Mississippi receiving the nation's second-highest ranking for improvement from Education Week's Quality Counts annual report card in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

A passionate advocate for early childhood education, Dr. Wright implemented Mississippi's first publicly funded Early Learning Collaborative program, which earned recognition from the National Institute for Early Education Research as one of only five states meeting all 10 quality standards for early childhood education. In addition, Dr. Wright led initiatives that nearly doubled the Advancement Placement participation and success rate. She retired as Mississippi state superintendent in 2022.

Prior to her leadership in Mississippi, Dr. Wright was chief academic officer for District of Columbia Public Schools as well as deputy chief for the Office of Teaching and Learning. Dr. Wright also served as associate superintendent for the Office of Special Education and Student Services for Montgomery County Public Schools. She was a teacher, principal, and director of special education and student services in Howard County Public School System. A product of Prince George's County Public Schools, she returned to begin her teaching career in the county schools.

Dr. Wright is a former member of the Chiefs for Change Board of Directors. Notably, the U.S. Secretary of Education appointed her in 2019 to the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP, the Nation's Report Card. Her honors include the 2022 Mississippi Top 50 Most Influential Leaders Award. She is a University of Maryland graduate, earning undergraduate, advanced and doctoral degrees in education.



Rehema Ellis is NBC News' Chief Education correspondent and reports for all platforms of NBC News, including NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt, Today, NBCNews.com, and MSNBC. Ellis joined NBC News in 1994 as a general assignment correspondent. She began her broadcast career at KDKA Radio and TV in Pittsburgh. Later, she worked in Boston at WHDH-TV as a reporter and weekend anchor. Ellis has been part of major headliner stories, including the attacks on the World Trade Center. She was the first person to identify the attack on the air as "Nine-Eleven". She has reported on Hurricane Katrina, the death of Michael of Jackson and the Haiti earthquake. She has distinguished herself as a lead correspondent and received numerous awards including local and national Emmys, Edward R. Murrow Awards, Associated Press awards and awards from the National Association of Black Journalists. She is also a recipient of an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Journalism. Ellis was part of the NBC Emmy award-winning coverage of the plane crash in the Hudson River called "Miracle

on the Hudson" in 2008. She also won an Emmy for her reporting on the 2008 Presidential Election of Barack Obama and his historic inauguration. Born in North Carolina, and raised in Boston, she graduated from Simmons College in Boston and Columbia Graduate School of Journalism in New York. Ellis currently lives in New York City with her son. She is on Twitter @RehemaEllis.



Adam Hinds is the Chief Executive Officer of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate. Adam has twenty-five years of experience working in US politics, government, and foreign affairs. He is currently the CEO of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute. Before joining the Institute, he spent six years as a Massachusetts State Senator where he Chaired the Committee on Revenue and led the Senate's effort to rebuild the Commonwealth post-COVID. In 2021-2022 he was a candidate for Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts. From 2005 to 2014 Adam worked for the United Nations in the Middle East. He was based in Baghdad, Iraq where he was a team leader of a UN-led negotiation between the Kurdistan Region and the Government of Iraq over disputed territory. He was a regional advisor to the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process in Jerusalem. He worked for former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to establish a ceasefire in Syria in 2012 and then was part of a team to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons program. Early in his career, Adam worked for former

Congressman John Olver and was part of John Kerry's campaign for President where he worked for Susan Rice, the head of his foreign policy team who later became the US National Security Advisor. Adam attended Wesleyan University and received a Master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Adam is married to Dr. Alicia Mireles Christoff, Associate Professor of English at Amherst College, and they have two young children.

*The Stone Social Impact Forum is an annual series that features bold civic change agents who demonstrate various pathways to tackle inequality, advance social change, and inspire all people to be civically active. The Forum is a joint initiative of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate and the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation made possible through the generous support of the **James M. and Cathleen D. Stone Foundation**. Learn more about the Foundation [here](#).*

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