



National Commission on Hunger Public Hearing

May 19, 2015 ♦ 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Statehouse Convention Center
101 E Markham Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

Invited Speaker Biographies (alphabetical order)



Patrick Casey

*Harvey & Bernice Jones Professor of Developmental Pediatrics,
Vice Chairman for Faculty Affairs, University of Arkansas for Medical
Sciences*

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Dr. Patrick Casey founded the Center for Applied Research and Evaluation (CARE) in 1990 in the Department of Pediatrics and served as CARE's Director until 2006. He is an active clinician and directs the Growth and Development Program, a multidisciplinary referral clinic for children with failure to thrive and developmental problems in infancy/toddler years.

In 2006, he initiated a new program called the Medical Home Clinic for Special Needs Children as Co-Medical Director. He is also involved in program development in several key areas, including medical directorship of the KIDS FIRST program, a statewide system of center-based early intervention programs for medically vulnerable children throughout Arkansas.

Some of Dr. Casey's research interests include the normal growth and development of infants, failure to thrive, food insecurity, and malnutrition in infancy. He is also an investigator in the U.S. Department of Agriculture-supported study of the psychological and psychophysiological consequences of failure to thrive and early malnutrition.

[Dr. Patrick Casey – University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences](#)



Charlotte V. Douglas

Representative, Arkansas House of Representatives

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(479) 276-7777

Representative Charlotte Douglas is serving her second term in the Arkansas House of Representatives. She represents District 75, which includes portions of Sebastian and Crawford Counties.

During the 90th General Assembly, Rep. Douglas serves on the Education Committee and the State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee. During the 89th General Assembly, Rep. Douglas served on the Education Committee and the Agriculture, Forestry and Economic Development Committee.

Rep. Douglas is a retired anatomy and physiology teacher. She graduated from Arkadelphia High School and earned her BSE at Ouachita Baptist University. She has been a Sunday school teacher for 15 years and works with medical missions providing dental care to third-world countries.

[Charlotte Douglas – Arkansas House of Representatives](#)



Jennifer Laurent

Executive Director, Randy Sams' Outreach Shelter

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(903) 792-7024

Jennifer Laurent has worked in homeless services for 7 years and currently serves as the executive director of the Randy Sams' Outreach Shelter, a position she has held for the past 5 years. Ms. Laurent is also the chairperson of the Texarkana Homeless Coalition, a member of the Texarkana Area Community Organizations Active in Disaster, a member of The National Association of Professional Women, and a board member of the Balance of State Continuum of Care for the State of Texas.

Ms. Laurent is currently working with area service providers and the Texas Homeless Network to develop a documented coordinated access system for homeless services in the Texarkana region. Mrs. Laurent has dedicated her career to improving the lives of those

who struggle with poverty, hunger, and homelessness. She is a graduate of Centenary College of Louisiana with a BA in communication professional writing.

[Jennifer Laurent – Randy Sams’ Outreach Shelter](#)



Ed Nicholson

Senior Director, Community Relations and Customer Service Representative, Corporate Affairs, Tyson Foods Inc.

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(800) 233-6332

Ed Nicholson is a senior director in the Tyson Foods External Relations department. He and his team work to engage and assist Tyson Foods managers in developing positive role relationships and reputations across the 94 communities in which the company has a physical presence.

Mr. Nicholson is also responsible for Tyson’s customer service and philanthropy, including the company’s principal philanthropic focus—hunger relief and community relations. He was Tyson Foods’ primary media spokesperson for 10 years. He began the company’s corporate social media practice in 2007 and managed that function until late 2014.

He is accredited in Public Relations by the Public Relations Society of America and is a semiprofessional musician.

[Ed Nicholson – Tyson Foods Inc.](#)



Rhonda Sanders

CEO, Arkansas Food Bank

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(501) 565-8121

Rhonda Sanders is a former executive director of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, a statewide coalition of hunger relief groups with more than 100 member organizations, including Arkansas’ six Feeding America food banks.

At the Alliance, she implemented the Arkansas State Food Purchasing Program; the Arkansas Gleaning Network; and, with Gov. Mike Beebe and the national childhood hunger organization Share Our Strength, Arkansas' No Kid Hungry Campaign, which has become a model program achieving national attention.

Ms. Sanders worked for 14 years at Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families, where she served as Director of Health Policy and Legislative Affairs. Before joining Arkansas Advocates, she worked at the Arkansas Department of Health for 5 years, where she served as director of the Child Health Planning Project, acting assistant director of the WIC program, and lead trainer for the data processing department.

She earned a master's in public health from the University of Arkansas Medical School's College of Public Health.

[Rhonda Sanders – Arkansas Food Bank](#)



Eric Saunders

*Assistant Commissioner for Fiscal and Administrative Services,
Arkansas Department of Education*

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(501) 682-1269

Dr. Eric Saunders began as Assistant Commissioner for Fiscal and Administrative Services on July 1, 2014. As Assistant Commissioner, Dr. Saunders oversees the distribution of funds to public schools. He also is responsible for the Child Nutrition Unit, school finance, student management software, and fiscal distress and accountability.

Prior to working at the Arkansas Department of Education, Dr. Saunders served as superintendent to East End School District in Bigelow, was the principal at Lavaca High School, and was a math teacher and coach at Gentry High School. He received a BS in secondary education from Oklahoma State University. In addition, he also received a Master of Education and a Doctor of Education from Harding University in Searcy.

[Eric Saunders – Arkansas Department of Education](#)



John M. Selig

Director, Arkansas Department of Human Services
(501) 682-8650

John M. Selig is the director of the Arkansas Department of Human Services, where he serves as a member of the governor's cabinet and is responsible for providing leadership and oversight of the agency's efforts to promote the health and well-being of all Arkansans, especially those most in need. The mission of the Department of Human Services is to improve the quality of life for all Arkansans by protecting the vulnerable, fostering independence, and promoting better health.

Prior to serving as the department director, he was the department's deputy director. In addition, Mr. Selig served as the director of the department's Division of Behavioral Health Services as well as the director of the Arkansas Department of Health's home health and personal care program.

Mr. Selig received his undergraduate degree from Stanford University and his MPA degree from Princeton University. Prior to joining state government, Mr. Selig was on the staff of U.S. Senator David Pryor.

[John Selig - Arkansas Department of Human Services](#)



Charolette Tidwell

Director, Antioch Consolidated Association for Youth and Family
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(479) 459-0669

Charolette Tidwell is a retired nurse and widow who is director of the Antioch Consolidated Association for Youth and Family, which serves as a food bank and feeds the hungry. Ms. Tidwell serves up to half a million free meals a year or 8,000 people a month in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

The goal of the Association is to serve people in a compassionate and respectful way. Ms. Tidwell was raised in poverty and has a unique perspective on the population she serves. She was recently featured on NBC Nightly News and in *National Geographic* magazine.

[Charolette Tidwell – NBC Nightly News Feature](#)



Kathy Webb

Executive Director, Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

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(501) 399-9999

Kathy Webb is responsible for the overall management and policy implementation of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. She has also worked closely with the Office of Governor Mike Beebe to ensure programs like summer meals and school breakfast are a policy priority.

Ms. Webb’s work on this front has helped ensure that \$500K will be available for high-need schools in Arkansas so that they can expand their breakfast service universally. In support of Cooking Matters programming in Arkansas, Ms. Webb has built relationships across her state to further these programs, including building relationships with key providers such as the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, and Food Bank of North Central Arkansas.

In addition, her guidance helped streamline the process to create a pilot program to provide additional funding for schools to serve alternative breakfast models across the state. One of the Alliance’s most important achievements in the last few years was facilitating the removal of the grocery tax.

[Kathy Webb - Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance](#)