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Erikson Institute's Associate Vice President of Policy Dr. Cristina Pacione-Zayas Appointed to Illinois State Senate

Statement on Dr. Cristina Pacione-Zayas Transition to State Senator



Chicago, December 22, 2020 — After nearly five years leading Erikson Institute’s Policy and Leadership Department, Associate Vice President **Cristina Pacione-Zayas, PhD**, has been appointed to the Illinois State Senate in a seat vacated by Iris Martinez, the newly elected Clerk of the Cook County Circuit Court. Dr. Pacione-Zayas has stepped down from her current role, effective December 21, 2020, and will continue providing counsel and subject matter expertise as a consultant and Senior Policy Advisor to Erikson.

Dr. Pacione-Zayas began directing policy and leadership initiatives at Erikson in early 2016, with the goal of generating systemic solutions leading to equitable opportunities and positive outcomes for young children, families, and communities. She is credited with establishing The Early Childhood Leadership Academy (ECLA) for Illinois leaders seeking to strengthen their capacity to inform early childhood policy. Dr. Pacione-Zayas also created Erikson’s Community Data Lab, which equips local leaders with precise and accessible data on child wellbeing to inform systems coordination, resource allocation, and policy. Dr. Pacione-Zayas also worked closely with Erikson faculty and researchers to identify opportunities for translating research into policy.

“It is an honor to serve in the Illinois State Senate and to represent the 20th district on the Northwest side of Chicago. I am especially thrilled about the prospect of applying child development science to policy making in the General Assembly. You can count on me to help fellow legislators ‘find the baby’ in the work, and to advance an anti-racist framework that dismantles systemic racism and economic exploitation so we can all thrive,” Pacione-Zayas said.

Erikson Institute is deeply grateful for the many significant contributions Dr. Pacione-Zayas has made to further our vision of a more just and equitable society where all children, families and communities can thrive. Erikson is committed to continuing Dr. Pacione-Zayas’ legacy through the essential work of the Policy and Leadership team.

***Erikson Institute** educates, inspires, and promotes leadership to serve the needs of children and families. We have the premier graduate school dedicated to child development. We provide direct services to our community’s children and families. We are leaders in influencing early childhood policy. We work tirelessly every day so that all children can achieve optimal educational, social, emotional, and physical well-being. At Erikson Institute, we know that investing in the early years of children will last a lifetime.*

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