

**Joint Committee on the Arts
Informational Hearing**

*“California’s Future is Creative”
A Presentation of the State’s Creative Economy Strategic Plan*

PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES

**PANEL 1: A Strategic Plan for California’s Creative Economy: Depth,
Breadth, and Cross Sector Envisioning**



**Danielle Brazell
Executive Director
The California Arts Council**

Danielle Brazell has had a distinguished career spanning over thirty years, marked by her transformative impact on public sector arts management and arts advocacy. In her current role as Executive Director of the California Arts Council, Brazell continues to advance support systems for creativity and promote the arts as vital to societal well-being. Her efforts are focused on fostering artistic innovation and ensuring that the arts remain a vibrant and integral part of civic and cultural life. Through her leadership, Danielle demonstrates the essential value of artists in shaping a more inclusive and culturally enriched society.

As the former General Manager of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA 2014-2021), Brazell played a pivotal role in expanding funding programs, developing new public arts initiatives, and championing equity and access in the arts. Her leadership resulted in a remarkable increase in the DCA’s budget from \$13 million to \$22 million and the establishment of a \$150 million portfolio of capital projects and programming.

She was the founding Executive Director of Arts for LA (2006-2014), transforming the ad-hoc group of executive arts leaders into a new model for local arts and arts education advocacy. In addition, she served as the Artistic Director of Highways Performance Space and the Director of Special Projects for the Screen Actors Guild Foundation.



Rachel Hatch
Chief Impact Officer
Institute for the Future

Rachel Hatch serves as Chief Impact Officer of Institute for the Future. Founded in 1968, IFTF is dedicated to the mission of helping organizations, communities and leaders become future-ready. Their vision? A world that harnesses the power of futures thinking to create more equitable, sustainable societies.

Currently, she co-leads IFTF's community-based foresight practice area, with a focus on foresight for the philanthropic & nonprofit sectors, for movement leaders, and for place-based communities. Previously, she was a Senior Program Officer at The McConnell Foundation, a private philanthropic foundation where she led community vitality grantmaking, public engagement, and related impact investments. This included public-private partnerships to win place-based investments at state and federal levels.

Previous roles at IFTF since she first joined in 2008 include COO, Ten-Year Forecast Research Director and Director of the IFTF Cities Lab. She is the author of *Museum 2040: Citizen Artists & the New Economy* (American Alliance of Museums).

Hatch holds masters degrees from Trinity College Dublin and Yale Divinity School. Follow her at: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rachelhatch>



Allison Frenzel
Education Programs Specialist
California Department of Education

Allison Frenzel is an Education Programs Specialist with the California Department of Education's Academy, Apprenticeship, and Internships Office, where she supports Arts, Media, and Entertainment (AME) Career Technical Education programs statewide and serves as the Youth Apprenticeship lead.

Prior to joining CDE, she spent 15 years as a classroom teacher and program coordinator in Sonoma County and founded Pulse Arts, a 501(c)(3) organization focused on connecting professional creatives with public education.

She has served in multiple statewide leadership roles, including chairing the Youth Apprenticeship Committee for the California Department of Industrial Relations, participating in the interagency planning committee for the California Arts Council's Creative Economy Workgroup, and serving on the steering committee for Arts4LA's Creative Jobs Initiative. She also chairs the Southern California Apprenticeship Network's Best Practices Subcommittee, and co-founded the Entertainment Equity Alliance, a collective impact initiative supporting creative workforce development in CA.

Her work focuses on expanding access to careers in the creative economy through initiatives such as the AME Workforce Development and Youth Apprenticeship Initiative, the Hip Hop Education and Equity Initiative, and the California Film Commission's AME Career Readiness Initiative.



Michael B. Wiafe
Assistant Deputy Director
California Workforce Development Board

Michael Wiafe is the Assistant Deputy Director for Policy and External Affairs at the California Workforce Development Board. He previously served as an Assistant Deputy Cabinet Secretary in the Office of Governor Gavin Newsom working on education issues from cradle-to-career, including the efforts in creating a Master Plan for Career Education.

He worked at the Inland Empire Community Foundation, with a focus on building a vibrant Inland Empire region encompassing Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, while also serving as an adjunct Professor at the University of Redlands.

Passionate about socioeconomic mobility, his start in policy was in his years as a student leader and advocate, at one point serving as President of the Cal State Student Association representing the over 480,000 students on the 23 campuses of the California State University (CSU).

He is an African immigrant and graduated with his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from San Diego State University and a Master of Public Policy from the Goldman School at UC Berkeley where he was a Head TA for Professor and former US Labor Secretary Robert Reich.

PANEL 2: Building Towards a Resilient Creative Future



Ri-Karlo Handy
Entertainment Executive; Founder and CEO
The Handy Foundation

Ri-Karlo Handy is a trailblazing entertainment executive with over 25 years of experience in editing, producing, and showrunning. He serves as Senior Vice President of Unscripted at Blink 49 and is the Founder and CEO of the Handy Foundation, championing content innovation and advancing underrepresented talent in Hollywood.

Ri-Karlo's career spans collaborations with major networks such as MTV, OWN, BET, and STARZ. His accolades include a Daytime Emmy nomination for *Harlem Globetrotters: Play It Forward*, a PRISM Award, and an NAACP Image Award nomination. At Blink 49, he oversees creative development for unscripted hits like *The Braxtons* and *Toya & Reginae*. Previously, as VP of Original Programming at Bounce TV, he spearheaded the hit series *Saints & Sinners*, now streaming on Hulu.

As an independent producer, Ri-Karlo founded Sunwise Media, producing acclaimed projects like *Hope Village* and *OWN Presents: Rebuilding Black Wall Street*. Through the Handy Foundation, he has established groundbreaking partnerships with Netflix, Lionsgate, AMC, and others, training underrepresented talent and creating pathways for inclusion in over 115 productions.

Recent honors include the Walter Kaitz Foundation Change Maker Award and the NATPE Honors "Cause + Action Award," which he will receive at the NATPE Honors Gala on February 5, 2025, in Miami.



Joanna Reynolds
Creative Jobs Collective Strategist
Arts for LA

Joanna is an economic development specialist with expertise in program development, strategy and partnerships. Throughout her career, Joanna has supported small businesses, entrepreneurs and artists with an equity driven and community-based approach.

She is the Creative Jobs Collective Impact Strategist at Arts for LA leading strategy and implementation for the initiative. Prior to Arts for LA, Joanna was at Startup UCLA managing the entrepreneurship hub for UCLA's diverse and dynamic community. Before coming to LA, she was at the Pratt Center for Community Development managing Made in NYC, where she played a key role in the expansion of its programs, partnerships, brand and community for NYC's manufacturing and maker businesses.

Joanna has a Master of Urban Planning from NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and a Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Urban Development and Studio Arts from University of Rochester.



Alejandro Gutierrez Chavez
Executive Director
Arts Connection - The Arts Council of San Bernardino County

Alejandro Gutierrez Chavez is a first-generation Chicano, social entrepreneur, and community leader advancing the cultural and creative economy of California's Inland Empire. As Executive Director of Arts Connection – The Arts Council of San Bernardino County, he leads regional initiatives focused on cultural equity, creative workforce development, public art, and cross-sector collaboration.

Alejandro's professional journey spans education, research, nonprofit leadership, and community development. His experience includes serving as a 6th-grade educator, Research and Evaluation Analyst at First 5 San Bernardino, Program Director at El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center, and co-founder and former Executive Director of Lifting Our Stories in his hometown of San Bernardino.

Recognized as one of the 30 Most Influential Leaders Under 30 in California's 50th Assembly District, Alejandro champions the arts as a catalyst for civic engagement, economic mobility, and community transformation. He believes arts and creativity are essential components of our social infrastructure and deserve sustained public investment



ROXANNE MESSINA CAPTOR
Filmmaker/Educator/Arts Advocate
Chair, California Arts Council

ROXANNE MESSINA CAPTOR is an Emmy-nominated Director, Writer, and Producer. She is a directing protégé of Francis Ford Coppola. She was awarded the CHEVALIER DE L'ORDRE DES ARTS ET DES LETTRES by the French Government and currently serves as Chairperson of the California Arts Council, appointed by Gavin Newsom. In 2024, she received the Visionary Award from the ARPA International Film Festival.

Messina Captor has written, directed, and produced network and cable films and series. She executive produced and wrote the story for *Dream Moms* for Hallmark Channel and recently completed the Christmas feature *Dickens of a Christmas*, which screened at the Newport Beach Film Festival and the Calgary International Film Festival prior to distribution on Apple TV. Additional credits include *Home Sweet Homeless*, CBS (Emmy nomination, Humanitas and Ohio State Awards), *Fatal Vows*, *In Dreams*, (CBS) *Dead on Sight*, (HBO) and *Her Married Lover*, (Lifetime TV).

In 2023–2025, Messina Captor was commissioned by Broad Stage to direct and produce a documentary series on Grammy-winning jazz artist Stanley Clarke. The first installment premiered at the Newport Beach Film Festival in 2025. She also produced a documentary on Emmy-winning actress Barbara Bain for the Mitzi Bland Grant Program.

Messina Captor's foundation in large-scale production began early, working on films including *The Outsiders*, *Rumble Fish*, and *The Cotton Club*, experiences that inform her collaborative leadership style with cast, crew, and studio stakeholders.

Her theater directing and choreographing credits include the Pre-Broadway *Summer Stock*, *The Vow* by Stephanie Liss, *After All* (Vincent Canby) starring Hal Linden, and *Trotsky's Garden* starring Dina Merrill, Kurtwood Smith, and Ayre Gross.

Her award-winning digital series *The Salon* won Best Ensemble and Best Digital Series and starred Harry Shearer. Her documentary *Homecoming: Veterans, Wives and Mothers* screened at the United Nations and received support from Dr. Jill Biden. Now on Amazon Prime. Her short film *A Couple of White Chicks at the Hairdresser*, starring Shelley Long and Harry Shearer, premiered at the Cannes Short Film Corner and is now streaming on Tubi.

Messina Captor was a founding Original Programming Executive at TNT and later served as Executive Director of the San Francisco International Film Festival, where she increased attendance and box office revenue by 40 percent. Earlier in her career, she was a professional ballerina (age 12), child performer and Broadway performer. She served as Assistant Choreographer to Gene Kelly on *One from the Heart*. Messina Captor served on the board for Actor's Equity Association helping found the Career Transition for Dancers program. She also served on the Illinois Arts Council.

She has served on policy committees for Governor Newsom focused on higher education, runaway production, and the creative economy workforce, and currently serves on the California State Summer School for the Arts board. She recently served as keynote speaker and moderator for a panel on the Creative Economy Workforce presented by Mattel. As a professor, she heads the documentary production at the New York Film Academy and Santa Monica College. She has taught theatre, film and television classes at UCLA, Cal Arts, and Emerson College LA.

PANEL 3: Looking Ahead: What's Next



Rebecca Ratzkin
Equity Measures and Evaluation Manager
California Arts Council

Rebecca Ratzkin is the Equity Measures and Evaluation Manager at the California Arts Council (CAC). With over 20 years in research, evaluation, and strategic planning, Rebecca's work bridges information with action, ensuring that organizations and institutions can learn from community experiences and use those insights to shape more equitable strategies.

Prior to the CAC, Rebecca worked in Los Angeles with social service and advocacy organizations, focusing on projects rooted in community health, mental health, place-based strategies, and youth workforce development. Projects included evaluation framework and implementation for Best Start First5 LA, the Community Health Worker Outreach Initiative, and Building Healthy Places; capacity building and technical assistance for California Reducing Disparities Act; and curriculum development and lead on Youth Healthcare Pipeline Program with Charles Drew University.

Rebecca began her career in consulting for the arts and culture sector, working for WolfBrown and AMS Planning and Research. Projects ranged from audience engagement, community cultural participation and planning, education program evaluation and donor motivation studies. She also led the Audience Research Collaborative project for the Hewlett Foundation, a capacity building and data collection pilot with 44 Bay Area arts organizations; helped establish the Intrinsic Impact dashboard tool; and leading customer segmentation and audience engagement research.

Rebecca discovered her love of data at UCLA while getting her master's in urban planning at the Luskin School of Public Affairs.



Julie Baker
Chief Executive Officer
California for the Arts / California Arts Advocates

Julie has been the CEO of California's statewide arts advocacy organizations since late 2018. During her tenure, she has increased the legislative influence and visibility of arts and culture communities by building coalitions across for-profit and non-profit sectors of California's creative industries. She has championed a month-long arts awareness and advocacy campaign every April and fought for resources and legislation to serve and protect artists and cultural workers.

Julie has served in various leadership roles, including California State Captain to Americans for the Arts' National Arts Action Summit, co-chair of the creative economy working group at the CA Economic Summit, and co-chair of the Western Arts Advocacy network for Creative West, where she is also a member of the Board of Trustees. In 2025, she was appointed to the CalNonprofits Board of Directors. She also serves as Board President of California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project. Her past roles include serving on the Nevada County school board (2020-2024) and as an appointed member of the State of California's 2022 Entrepreneurship & Economic Mobility Task Force (EEMTF) and the Creative Economy Working Group (2024-25). In 2021, Julie received the Americans for the Arts Alene Valkanas State Arts Advocacy Award, which honors an individual at the state level whose arts advocacy efforts have dramatically affected the political landscape.

Julie Baker's extensive experience in the arts includes owning a fine arts gallery showcasing emerging artists, co-founding the Flow art fair, establishing Julie Baker Projects, a consulting firm, and curating a world music series at the Crocker Art Museum. Previously, she served as President of her family's arts marketing firm in New York City and worked at Christie's Auction house. Her non-profit leadership experience includes eight years as Executive Director for The Center for the Arts, a performing arts organization and the California WorldFest. In recognition of her contributions, she received the inaugural Peggy Levine Arts & Community Service Award from the Nevada County Arts Council.