Being School Ready Starts Early
Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2019 | 2-3:15 p.m.

Speaker Bios

John B. King Jr. is the president and CEO of The Education Trust, a national nonprofit organization that seeks to identify and close educational opportunity and achievement gaps. King served as U.S. secretary of education in the Obama administration. Prior to that role, he carried out the duties of deputy secretary, overseeing policies and programs related to P-12 education, English learners, special education, innovation and agency operations. King joined the department following his post as New York’s state education commissioner. King began his career as a high school social studies teacher and middle school principal.

Laurie Smith serves as senior policy advisor to Governor Phil Bryant (R-Miss.). She is the executive director of the State Workforce Investment Board as well as the State Early Childhood Advisory Council. Under Bryant’s leadership, Smith has led numerous legislative efforts to help improve public education in Mississippi. The passage of the 2013 Education Works agenda including the Literacy-Based Promotion Act, Early Childhood Education, Charter Schools, Special Needs Education Scholarship Account and an A-F rating system for school districts have all resulted in improved outcomes for students. In 2018, Smith testified before the Congressional House Committee on Education and Workforce on strengthening welfare to work polices resulting in additional funds for families. Over the course of her career, she has helped to align resources within agencies in developing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Plan and helped implement the MS Works technology to help link people to job opportunities. Smith has a Ph.D. in education leadership from Mississippi State University, a M.Ed. from Western New Mexico University and a B.A. from the University of Arizona.

Moderator Bio

Caroline Bauman serves as Chalkbeat Tennessee's community editor and writes about Tennessee schools. She graduated in 2017 with a master’s degree from the University of Missouri as a Thurgood Marshall Fellow. When she’s not working, you can almost certainly find her enjoying barbecue nachos at Central or live music at the Levitt Shell.