

**For More Information:**

Scott McDonald

312.626.2596, [smcdonald@stand.org](mailto:smcdonald@stand.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

April 10, 2023

## **Stand for Children Announces Jessica Handy as Next Executive Director**

*Handy brings over a decade of experience leading the organization's government affairs as a trusted and expert presence at the Capitol*

**Springfield** – Stand for Children has named Jessica Handy as its new Illinois Executive Director, looking to her deep well of policy experience and statewide relationships to lead the organization into a new era.

"I am honored to move into the Executive Director role and continue fighting to increase equitable access to high-quality education," Handy said. "Stand for Children has given me tremendous opportunities to make a difference throughout my career. I am grateful to expand that impact in this new role as we fight for a more equitable and just Illinois."

Handy has been with Stand for Children for over 12 years, leading the organization's government affairs department in Springfield to enact some of the most impactful education policies of the last decade. She was deeply involved in development of the Evidence-Based Funding formula and led the effort to remove the "TRS Federal Funds Surcharge," a little-known – but highly inequitable – charge that disproportionately impacted the state's poorest schools. Handy regularly fights for college and career readiness through legislation to make AP credits count, remove bias from advanced coursework placement, and expand equitable access to dual credit opportunities.

Under Handy's leadership, Stand will continue its advocacy this legislative session to significantly increase funding to the Evidence-Based Funding Formula, end the unjust practice of imposing court fines and fees on youth, and create a comprehensive statewide literacy plan. She will also support critical implementation work, including supporting a stable transition to Chicago's first elected school board. She serves on the Professional Review Panel and the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council and manages the Illinois Early Literacy Coalition.

Prior to her 12 years with Stand for Children, Handy was a Policy and Budget Analyst with the Illinois Senate Democratic Caucus. A native of Springfield, Illinois, she earned her B.A. from Millikin University and M.A. from University of Illinois at Springfield. She also recently obtained certification from the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council as a literacy tutor, which was inspired after delving into literacy policy and leading the Illinois Early Literacy Coalition. A former teen mom herself, Handy is now in her sixth year as a foster mom with a special interest in supporting teen moms in care to become successful parents.

###

*Stand for Children Illinois a unique catalyst for education equity and racial justice, to create a brighter future for us all. Learn more about our work at [stand.org/illinois](https://stand.org/illinois).*