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# Ellis Early Learning Raises \$630K At Annual Benefit

Ellis Early Learning  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:**

Greg Turner, Ball Consulting Group, LLC

Phone: 617-243-9950; Email: [greg@ballcg.com](mailto:greg@ballcg.com)

## Ellis Early Learning Celebrates Champions of Early Childhood Education at Annual Benefit

*Event Honors State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz and Nancy Huntington Stager of Eastern Bank Foundation; Raises  
Critical Funds for Early Education Programs in South End, Jamaica Plain*

**BOSTON** (Nov. 3, 2023) – Ellis Early Learning raised over \$630,000 to support its nonprofit mission and honored two champions of early childhood education, state Rep. Aaron Michlewitz and Eastern Bank Foundation President & CEO Nancy Huntington Stager, during its annual benefit event held Nov. 2 in Boston’s South End.

More than 300 supporters, parents and teachers gathered at the Boston Center for the Arts’ Cyclorama for the event, which was co-chaired by Sean Curran, the principal of Waterville Consulting, and Jerome Smith, regional head of community affairs for Amazon. The theme of the evening was “Celebrating Ellis and the Strength of Families.”

The Ellis community honored Michlewitz, a Boston native who has represented the 3rd Suffolk District since 2009, for leveraging his leadership role as a force for good in early childhood education. As chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, Michlewitz was instrumental in supporting significant state funding increases that will raise educator salaries and make early childhood education more accessible to Massachusetts families.

“Aaron is a true champion of all we focus on at Ellis – educational equity, racial justice, economic mobility, gender equity and high-quality early childhood education,” said Lauren Cook, CEO of Ellis Early Learning. “We are inspired by his leadership and energized by his efforts on Beacon Hill on behalf of the entire early childhood education field.”

“Ellis Early Learning has been a vital component in the South End community,” said Michlewitz. “I am thankful for the dedication and commitment by the Ellis staff and leadership, and I look forward to our partnership continuing in the future.”

Stager was similarly recognized for her role leading philanthropy, volunteerism and advocacy at Eastern Bank, one of the region’s strongest corporate supporters of the early childhood development sector. Stager and the Eastern

Bank Foundation played a critical role in helping Ellis open its third center in Jamaica Plain in 2021 and further assisting with funding for classroom materials after the center began operating and providing classroom opportunities for nearly 60 children.

“Without Nancy as a champion of our cause, Ellis would not have been able to extend its mission to Jamaica Plain, a neighborhood with a significant gap in access to quality child care that had been exacerbated by the pandemic,” Cook said. “We are grateful for Nancy’s dedication to our mission and to Eastern Bank Foundation’s broad and sustained support for early childhood education.”

“Eastern and Ellis share a passionate commitment to helping underrepresented families in and around Boston achieve greater equity, and a key element of that is getting our children off to a solid start at school,” said Stager. “The more we can help make our children’s early years stronger, with greater inclusion while addressing systemic inequities, the better – the better for each child, their family, our neighborhoods, and the future of our local economy and workforce. I am truly delighted and honored to receive this award from Ellis, which has done so much over so many generations to help our communities.”

Ellis is grateful for the generous support from its many event sponsors, including Alexion, Amazon, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Brookline Bank, Eastern Bank, EY-Parthenon, The Geraghty Group at Morgan Stanley, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Natixis Investment Managers, Olivia’s Organics, PNC, Pure Insurance, PwC, Ropes & Gray, and The TJX Companies.

Since 1885, Ellis has strengthened Boston’s diverse working families by providing high-quality education and care for children. The organization’s goal is to help all children develop the social, emotional, and academic skills they need to be successful in school and in life.

The Ellis model stands out for being among the most socio-economically, racially and culturally diverse organizations serving the children of Boston. Ellis engages over 300

children per year in full-time early education programming, with an emphasis on program excellence and diverse enrollment. Of its participants, 65% receive child care subsidies from the government and 80% are people of color. Ellis currently has a waitlist of over 1,000 families.

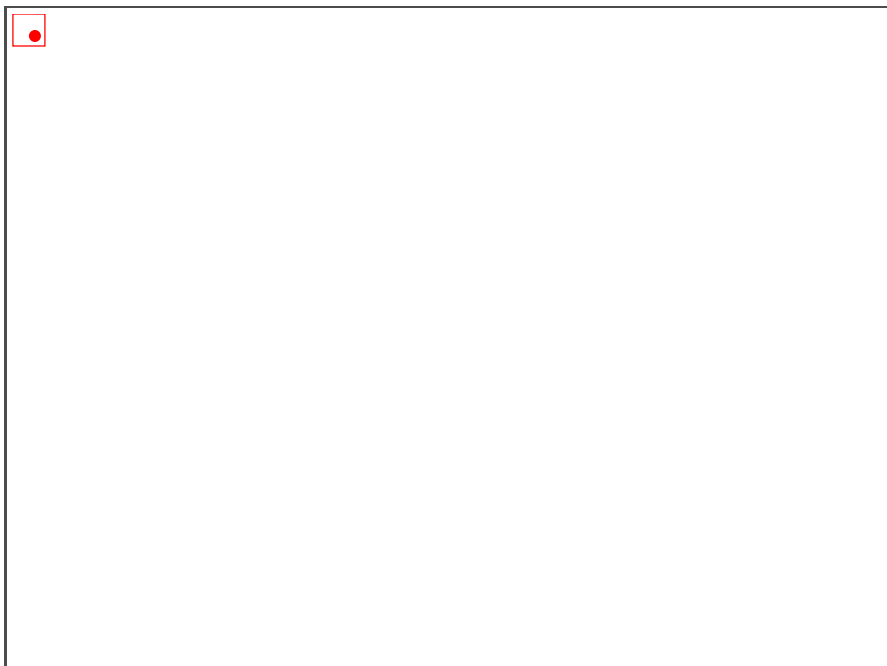
*To support Ellis's mission, visit [www.ellisearlylearning.org/donate-options](http://www.ellisearlylearning.org/donate-options)*

### **About Ellis Early Learning**

Ellis Early Learning partners with families to provide high-quality early childhood education programs in a warm, nurturing environment. A recognized leader in its field, Ellis supports children across the socio-economic spectrum, treasures diversity in all forms and celebrates the joy of childhood. For more information, visit [www.EllisEarlyLearning.org](http://www.EllisEarlyLearning.org).

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**Eastern Bank Foundation President & CEO Nancy Huntington Stager (center) was honored by Ellis Early Learning CEO Lauren Cook and event Co-Chair Sean Curran.** (photo by Craig Bailey/Perspective Photo)



**State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz (center) was honored by Ellis Early Learning CEO Lauren Cook and event Co-Chair Jerome Smith.** (photo by Craig Bailey/Perspective Photo)

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