



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STARTING POINT NAMES NEW PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

CLEVELAND, OH, April 8, 2021 ... The Board of Directors of STARTING POINT, the child care, early education and out-of-school time resource and referral agency for Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake and Ashtabula counties, today announced Nancy Mendez has been appointed the organization's new President and Chief Executive Officer, effective May 3.

Ms. Mendez has an impressive background as a leader in the human services field and brings a wealth of experience to her new role. She comes to Starting Point from United Way of Greater Cleveland, where she was the Vice President of Community Investment and Chief Community Investment Officer. There she played a significant role in launching the Community Hub for Basic Needs and the Impact Institute and was responsible for overseeing the organization's community impact programs, special projects, allocations, grants management and 2-1-1 Helplink service.

According to Adam Munson, Chairman of the Starting Point Board of Directors, "We are fortunate to have found exactly the right person in Nancy Mendez to build on the legacy of Starting Point's founding Executive Director Billie Osborne-Fears and position Starting Point for a successful future. Nancy is a thoughtful, enormously capable executive whose work in addressing community needs and core issues like poverty has already made a meaningful impact on the Northeast Ohio community. We look forward to Nancy leading and empowering our incredibly talented and dedicated Starting Point staff to continue their work to create opportunities and achieve positive outcomes for our community's families and children. Based on her exceptional track record of service and strategic vision for Starting Point, we are fully confident that our agency will benefit greatly from Nancy's leadership, advocacy, stature in the community and fervent passion for early childhood education and youth development."

"We thank our Interim Executive Director Debbie Fodge for her extraordinary stewardship of Starting Point during the period following the unexpected passing of Billie Osborne-Fears, who had led the agency since its founding 30 years ago, and the unprecedented hardships caused by the pandemic. Her accomplishments in moving the agency forward during this very difficult time have been truly remarkable."

As the new leader of Starting Point, Ms. Mendez will lead the \$12 million nonprofit organization's nationally-recognized, comprehensive child and youth development programs that have transformed the child care, pre-school and out-of-school time landscape here and influenced programs throughout Ohio. Starting Point provides Northeast Ohio's children and families access to high quality, convenient and affordable child care options; offers early childhood professionals new opportunities for training and education; and has launched numerous innovative programs to address community needs, such as Universal Pre-Kindergarten, the Boys Project, the Special Needs Project and other initiatives.

In response to the appointment, Ms. Mendez said, "I am excited to take on this important responsibility. At United Way, I worked with Billie on many issues critical to our community, including the pervasiveness of poverty among children, and have long recognized the remarkable breadth of the work Starting Point has done to offer the support and high quality services children and their families need to thrive. Coming to Starting Point offers me the rare opportunity to carry forward Billie's incredible work, in partnership with her accomplished Starting Point staff."

United Way of Greater Cleveland's President and Chief Executive Officer, August Napoli, added, "This is great news for Cleveland, and I can't speak highly enough about Nancy's leadership. At United Way of Greater Cleveland, we're so proud of her accomplishments and all that she has achieved on behalf of those who live in poverty across our city, our County and the Northeast Ohio Region. I'm most grateful for Nancy's partnership with me in developing the two signature programs for the new United Way, the Community Hub for Basic Needs and the Impact Institute. We look forward to continuing our important work and partnering on future Starting Point programs which aid those in need of essential resources and support."

Nancy Mendez serves on the boards of The George Gund Foundation, JumpStart and Cuyahoga Arts and Culture. She was selected as a member of the Leadership Cleveland class of 2020 and has been named as a 2013 Distinguished Hispanic Ohioan by the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission. In 2013, Ms. Mendez was a United Way Global Fellow, part of an elite group of national and international United Way staff selected to participate in the 2013-2014 United Way Fellowship Program. She resides in the West Park neighborhood of Cleveland.

Starting Point, a non-profit agency, is Northeast Ohio's child care, early education and out-of- school-time resource and referral agency, serving children, youth, families, early childhood and youth professionals and communities in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga and Lake counties. For more information, please visit www.starting-point.org.



Photo: Nancy Mendez

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