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Sherri Chisholm

**Education and Nonprofit Leader Sherri Chisholm
Selected as new Director of Leading on Opportunity**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (September 15, 2020) – Leading on Opportunity announced the selection of education and nonprofit strategist Sherri Chisholm as its next director, spearheading the organization’s work to break down barriers to economic opportunity in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. Chisholm succeeds Leading on Opportunity inaugural executive director Stephanie Cooper-Lewter and will build upon ongoing progress in addressing upward mobility across the region through effective, systemic change, and a detailed roadmap for the next phase of the organization’s work.

Chisholm brings nearly a decade of strategic leadership experience to Leading on Opportunity through roles at national nonprofits and major school districts where she drove transformation through strategic planning, organizational effectiveness, and leadership development. Most recently, Chisholm served as the founding Detroit executive director of Urban Alliance, a national youth workforce development nonprofit that aims to expand access to economic opportunity for youth from under-resourced neighborhoods through paid internships, job skills training, and mentoring.

The Leading on Opportunity Council, which governs the organization’s work, is happy that Chisholm accepted the position. “Sherri is the perfect choice for this role,” said Andrea Smith, co-chair of the Leading on Opportunity council. “It’s as if her career journey followed a path with all roads leading to Charlotte and more specifically to the organization.” Council co-chair Erin Barbee added: “Sherri’s lived experience and commitment to lifting up and addressing issues related to race, access to opportunities and inequities make her the right person for our community.”

Chisholm has spent her career advocating for better outcomes for underserved communities through education and youth development, a mission that has taken her around the country. Before Urban Alliance, she founded FreeSpace Consulting Group in Detroit, where she advised school districts and nonprofits across the country seeking to effect positive change in public education.

Previously, she also served as head of strategy, talent and operations for Teach for America’s Metro Atlanta Region; as chief of staff for the School District of Palm Beach County, Fla. – the nation’s 10th-largest school district; and as the director of strategic planning for Fulton County School System in Metro Atlanta.

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“Not unlike many native Charlotteans, I come from a long line of community leaders, high achievers, entrepreneurs, innovators – and above all else hard-working Black folks – who fought for their success against the oppressive barriers of low wages, limited access to networks and opportunity, and an education system that continues to fail them,” said Chisholm. “For my growing family and for residents of Charlotte-Mecklenburg who continue to struggle, I am committed to charting a new way forward where we can help each other rise together. I am excited to work alongside community members and business leaders to create an ecosystem that works for all, especially those whose labor helps this region thrive yet have not had an equal share of that prosperity.”

A graduate of the University of Michigan, Chisholm also holds master’s degrees in education and educational leadership from Harvard University and the Broad Center for the Management of School Systems. Her lifelong interest in advocacy and education stems from her mother, a Detroit public school teacher.

“I look forward to working with Sherri as we strive to make Charlotte-Mecklenburg a more equitable community for all of our children,” said Brian Collier, executive vice president, Foundation For The Carolinas, and co-author of the Opportunity Task Force report. “It has been humbling to see the response to the report and its recommendations from corporations, nonprofits, community leaders, the public sector and houses of faith. The findings of the Task Force are as relevant today as they were in 2017 – if not more so – and I truly believe we are poised for great things in the months and years ahead under Sherri’s leadership. Although Sherri and her team will be coordinating the effort, they will need the support of everyone in our community to create meaningful change.”

Following the [Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force Report](#) release in 2017, Leading on Opportunity was formed with a mission to convene and connect sectors across the community to implement the recommendations of the Task Force to improve economic mobility in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. As charged in the report, the organization takes a systemic approach to addressing the key determinants of early childhood education, college and career readiness, and family stability, while simultaneously focusing on the cross-cutting factors of segregation and social capital. The Leading on Opportunity Council is comprised of an unprecedented collection of community, business, and public sector representatives with a focus on transforming the recommendations from the report to actionable steps, while developing a data and research to track progress. Stay up to date on Leading on Opportunity news at leadingonopportunity.org, on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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