

## Ninth Annual KIDS COUNT Conference focuses on women of color

Written by By Rachelle Nones Sun Correspondent  
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Entitled “A Just, Equitable & Sustainable Future for New Mexico Families: Centering Children & Women of Color in Recovery,” the Ninth Annual KIDS COUNT Conference was held virtually on Oct. 21.

Deputy Director Amber Wallin of NM Voices for Children said the theme was chosen because women of color are on the front lines of leading necessary transformative change in communities and across the country.

Key Speaker Taifa Butler, president of Demos, a progressive nonprofit working with grassroots organizations across the country, discussed the harsh reality of poverty she experienced during her childhood and the transformational changes that must be made to support black and brown families in communities nationwide.

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“When we talk about values, I believe that we must value children of color and their families,” Butler said. “Today, a majority of children in this country are children of color.”

A panel of community leaders of varied backgrounds and life experiences, including a DACA recipient, discussed challenges in the areas of healthcare, the need for fair wages, childcare, political representation for black and brown people, and access to vital resources.

“I think there was a really powerful message of hope along with reviewing those challenges that women of color are facing right now,” Wallin said.

Also speaking at the conference, via tape, was Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. She talked about the impact of the pandemic on the state’s families and about new state government initiatives. Lujan Grisham addressed food insecurity issues and talked about transforming the state’s food and agricultural system so families can benefit from access to locally-grown, healthy food.

“I look forward to the 2022 legislative session and beyond,” she said. “Our strong partnership and shared values continue to be extremely important in our ongoing efforts to make New Mexico the best place in the world to be a kid and to raise a family.”

Although the virtual conference was not interactive, attendees were able to post comments and questions to Wallin.

NM Voices for Children Communications Director Sharon Kayne said the organization hopes to host its Tenth Annual KIDS COUNT Conference in-person next year.

By Rachelle Nones  
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