

Lanessa L. Owens-Chaplin, Esq. Assistant Director of the Education Policy Center of The New York Civil Liberties Union, leads the state-wide initiative to end environmental injustice and its impact to school-aged children. Immediately prior to her current position Lanessa was an Attorney for the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, where she zealously fought to overcome employment discrimination for returning incarcerated individuals. Lanessa began her legal career in 2012 as a law associate at Hiscock Legal Aide's Appellate division where she drafted appeals challenging sentences that were harsh and excessive. In the same spirit of advocacy, her focus became transforming New York State policies. Lanessa was legal counsel and chief of staff to the New York Assembly member Samuel D. Roberts of the 128<sup>th</sup> district, where she focused primarily on abolishing and amending laws to improve the lives of Central New Yorker's. Her passion for policy landed her a cabinet position as Deputy Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs to the Speaker of the New York State Assembly. In that role Lanessa worked closely on the anti-poverty initiative, criminal justice reform, and Central New York's budgetary needs. Lanessa's passion for giving back is demonstrated through her community outreach. As past Lead debate coach for the Syracuse City School District Step Program she helped prepare unsung students for college and organized regional debates. Lanessa was also a part of a small sub-committee that founded the Diversity & Inclusion internship program for Central New York law students. Most notably she is the Founder and Executive Director of the William Herbert Johnson Bar Association of Central New York, the only Black bar association in CNY, which focuses on retaining, developing and promoting a Black and Brown legal presence in CNY.