

# PRESS RELEASE

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## OUR FAMILY COALITION ANNOUNCES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOLLOWING YEAR-LONG NATIONAL SEARCH

*“An exceptional leader for an exceptional time.”*

**SAN FRANCISCO** – After a rigorous, nationwide search supported by an internal committee and the Kevin Chase Executive Search Group, the Co-Chairs of the Board of Directors for Our Family Coalition (OFC) – a 24-year-old, Bay Area-based LGBTQ family support and advocacy organization – have announced that Mimi Demissew has been selected as their new Executive Director.

During her four-year tenure as Executive Director of the Pride Center of Maryland, Demissew was busy: she worked with the state legislature to win an historic bond bill to support the Center, incorporated an anti-racist framework throughout Center service delivery, turned around a large debt, built strong cash reserves, strengthened relationships with government sectors, members of the business community, and other community-based organizations, and dramatically expanded the Center’s services for families. This last accomplishment is of particular value to OFC, and perhaps no surprise: Demissew and her wife are raising a toddler.

“OFC’s mission speaks to the heart of our movement and being,” said Demissew, who is packing up her family for the move from Baltimore. She added, “I’m excited to be joining such an important organization and talented staff.”

Outgoing Interim Executive Director Sam Ames was unequivocally optimistic about Demissew’s appointment: “After a year of growth – and six months adapting support services to life in a pandemic – I know the life-saving work of this organization is in extremely capable hands. I’m thrilled to be passing the torch lit a generation ago on to Mimi Demissew, who is a leader with years of dedication to the lives of LGBTQI people.”

This confidence is echoed by those who actively participated in the quest for the organization's next leader. Mari Villanluna, a San Francisco-based parent activist, served on the search committee, and said: "OFC's legacy is resilient, and rooted in social justice. From getting to know Mimi on the search committee, I know that she is going to take the organization to even greater levels, and will continue to expand our commitment to equity, social justice, and family diversity."

Villaluna added, using a uniquely Northern California adverb for emphasis, "As a parent leader, I am *hella* excited to work with her."

Past leadership of the organization concurs. Longtime LGBTQ community leader and JFK University law professor Ora Prochovnick represented the Emeritus Board of Directors on the search committee, and had this to say: "I am thrilled that OFC is in the hands of someone as capable as Mimi – really, she's an exceptional leader for an exceptional time."

OFC's current Board Co-Chair Lisa Fujie Parks, a public health advocate who led the committee's year-long search effort, placed this moment in perspective: "The simultaneous pandemics of COVID, structural racism, economic inequality, and climate change continue to worsen conditions for many LGBTQ+ families. Yet they also set the stage for awakening, and for new possibilities. Mimi's a rigorous strategic thinker, with enormous operational discipline. That's combined with a fierce commitment to service and social justice, making her exactly who we need right now. With all of our support, I know OFC will thrive under Mimi's leadership."

OFC's other Board Co-Chair Leroy Gaines, an Oakland-based educational leader, offers words of caution. Women of color leaders – Demissew identifies as a Black woman – are often hired in times of dramatic change, and suffer from insufficient support when the opposite is called for. Such leaders "may have made it through the 'glass ceiling,'" said Gaines, "but they start off way too close to a 'glass cliff.'"

Looking forward, Gaines noted, "The new chapter for this organization is one we need to write together. The best way we can welcome Mimi is to open our wallets as well as our hearts, and give what we can to ensure her success. Because her success will be ours."

*For more information about OFC's work, or to make a donation, please visit [ourfamily.org/give-back](https://ourfamily.org/give-back).*

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*Our Family Coalition advances equity for the full and expanding spectrum of LGBTQ families and children through support, education, and advocacy. Uniquely situated at the intersection of LGBTQ+ and family justice work, OFC is powered by community and inspired by a love of children and families and a vision of a just society where we all belong and thrive.*

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