



Inaugural Address
GOVERNOR JACQUELINE COLEMAN
December 10, 2019

Two years ago, I stood on these steps in front of our Capitol in a sea of teachers and other public workers - in what would become the beginning of a movement that bonded us, forged new friendships, and ultimately led to this moment. It's so good to see so many of you again!

Today, our Capitol is open—to everyone—to celebrate.

I can't think of a more fitting theme for a campaign, this inauguration, and our administration than Team Kentucky.

Here in Kentucky, we know we are stronger when we work together and that more unites us than divides us. We are a commonwealth committed to do right by our neighbors and to lift each other up.

I was born and raised in a rural part of Kentucky, Mercer County. It's where I learned the value of public service and a commitment to the community. This is why Chris and I chose to raise our family there, too, hoping to instill those same values in Emma, Will, and Nate - and in February, the newest member of Team Kentucky, Evelynne Coleman-O'Bryan.

What drives me is the understanding that all of us here today—regardless of party, ideology or which part of Kentucky we come from—want what is best for our commonwealth.

This Beshear-Coleman administration will be one that is focused on doing everything we can to make a positive difference for Kentucky's children and our families because we are committed to building a brighter tomorrow for the next generation.

I became a teacher because I believe, at my core, that education is one of the greatest gifts that we can give. That every child, regardless of their zip code, deserves access to a world-class education.

The entire education community—from the bus drivers that get our kids to school to the foodservice workers who feed them, to the secretaries that make the schools run—get up every day with two primary goals: to love our kids and to help them become better today than they were yesterday.

Every challenge we face in this commonwealth, we see in our classrooms every day. Our classrooms are microcosms of our communities. The challenges of our lifetime often come through our classroom doors on the shoulders of our students.

In Kentucky, we know the incredible impact a good public school has on our communities. And our teachers are at the heart of our better tomorrow. We celebrate the best and brightest our

commonwealth has to offer and we share the burden that poverty, neglect, and homelessness have on our kids.

As educators, we're on the front lines of fighting the opioid epidemic. We see the damage of domestic violence. What it means for a family to see a factory close or for parents to have to work 2-3 jobs just to make ends meet.

As difficult as those realities are, we also find hope in knowing that public education is the solution to every challenge we face.

Education has the power to break the cycle of poverty. To catapult a student to places they never knew they could go. To find stability, safety, hope, and opportunity. To change the trajectory of a child's life—and their family's lives for every tomorrow.

Andy Beshear understands this. It's why he picked me—an active educator—to serve as his lieutenant governor. And why he named me Kentucky's secretary of education and workforce development.

I want to take a minute to underscore what this means. It means that starting today, public education is a top priority. That the voices of our classroom educators—the people on the front lines—will take a prominent role in shaping public policy.

As lieutenant governor and secretary of education, I will build a better Kentucky for our families and our children. To right inequities and remedy social injustices. To bring people together, because the next generation should not have to be the adults in the room. We owe them so much, and that work begins today.

I believe so strongly in Team Kentucky because I have seen firsthand what a commitment to our kids can do.

In our home, we have a junior in high school who is ranked #1 in his class. A senior in high school who will be the first student in the history of Frankfort High School to graduate with an associate degree...

And we have a senior in college who grew up in a home where addiction, absent parents, and poverty threatened the first 14 years of her life until she moved into our home and became a part of our family. All three will achieve success in different ways, but the common thread in every child's success is the teacher who helps to change their lives. And here's what my colleagues and I know to be true: whether we have kids who over achieve or kids who must simply overcome, the journey is always worth the sacrifice.

That's the kind of community that we are here to build today. A public education system that belongs to our kids. A government that belongs to you. Thank you for trusting us to fight for you. Together, will achieve great things for Kentucky.

Thank you.