NEWS | POSTED APRIL 10, 2026

Fellowship Spotlight: Hatice Gursoy

AUTHOR

Hatice Gursoy

State Policy Fellow, Maryland State Department of Education, Early Education Division

SRCD Policy Fellow 2025-2026 Cohort

In a few sentences, what is your role at the agency you work for?

A: I work at the Division of Early Childhood in the Maryland State Department of Education. My role in the agency is to contribute to two legislatively mandated reports focused on reviewing child care licensing regulations and analyzing mixed-delivery Prekindergarten systems in Maryland. In addition, I help the team to prepare for legislative hearings at both state and local levels. One other line of work that I assist is the program evaluation efforts regarding assessing the effectiveness of family support centers that serve low-income families in Maryland.

What has been an interesting professional development opportunity you havecompleted during the fellowship?

A: During the first couple months of the fellowship, I became a member of National Association of State Leaders in Early Education (NASLEE) and attended their annual roundtable conference with the leadership team at my

agency. Through this organization, I built connections with cross-state leaders and was accepted into their Results-Based Facilitation Training to further improve my skills in leading gatherings and communicating with interest holders.

What piqued your interest in working in policy?

A: My interest in policy was sparked during a challenging period in graduate school, when I experienced an almost existential crisis and realized how often research is disconnected from real-life practice. This motivated me to pursue work where evidence and data directly inform programs and regulations that impact children and families. With that in mind, I expanded my horizons through applied research and came to see how policy can be a powerful avenue for developmental scientists to drive change at a broader and systemic level.

What words of wisdom might you pass on to someone who is interested in SRCD's fellowship program?

A: If you are stepping outside of academia (or considering), resist the urge to define yourself too narrowly! Be a curious generalist who connects ideas across fields, people, and experiences. Just as importantly, invest in your network including your cohort. I was surprised to see how well and deeply connected scholars are in the field of early care and education policy.

What is your favorite place you have traveled to?

A: Granada in Spain is one of my favorite places I've traveled to. There's something truly special about the city. Walking through its narrow streets and taking the beauty of places like Alhambra felt almost surreal.