



## **Graham Windham Names Kimberly Hardy Watson as next President and CEO**

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*Watson Will Be the First Person of Color to Run the Historic Organization, Founded by Eliza Hamilton in 1806*

*With over Three Decades of Experience and a Former Foster Youth Herself, Watson's Combined Professional and Personal Experience is Unparalleled*



**NEW YORK, NY** -- [Graham Windham](#), one of the oldest and most innovative child caring and family service organizations in the United States, has named Kimberly “Kym” Hardy Watson as its next President & CEO, the organization announced today.

Ms. Watson has over three decades of experience working directly with New York families, most recently serving as the Chief Operating Officer at Graham Windham. Today’s announcement marks a historic moment in the institution’s 215-year history as an African American woman takes the helm for the first time. Ms. Watson will start as President in March, and as CEO later this year with a bold vision for expanding Graham’s presence in local communities and working with other leaders in NYC to create an inclusive, unbiased approach to helping families keep their children safe, dismantling racism in the child welfare system.

Having briefly spent time herself in New York City’s foster care system, Ms. Watson has truly seen systems and institutions from every angle. Her career began in the 1980s, when she started out as a caseworker during the crack cocaine epidemic. She went on to become an ordained minister, and later also led efforts related to the criminal justice system, creating and implementing Project Reconciliation, for mothers and daughters incarcerated together at Rikers Island.

“Being entrusted with the lives of New York’s children and families is a precious responsibility that I hold dear and take very seriously,” said **Kym Hardy Watson, incoming President & CEO** of



**Graham Windham.** “Growing up in Brownsville-East New York and raising my own family in Bedford Stuyvesant, I have both been on the stage and had a front-row seat for the everyday drama of life of these underserved communities that I love. As I step into this new role, it is an honor and a privilege to work alongside families from my own neighborhood here in Brooklyn and across the city. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to lead Graham towards a more racially inclusive and socially responsible future for our children and families.”

Anchored by her work serving families whose voice she centers in all of her work, Ms. Watson is gearing up to expand the ways the agency is integrated into the communities it serves, while also working with partners to dismantle racist policies and practices. In particular, she will join the call to restructure mandated reporter systems and increase investments in local communities to subvert the cycle of poverty. She is also prepared to expand Graham’s innovative coaching programs and community centers for children, youth and parents proven to provide the opportunity and support families have said they want the most to help them thrive.

“As Graham Windham embarks on its 215<sup>th</sup> year of dedicated service on behalf of our City’s children and families, the Board of Directors is proud to announce that it has unanimously and enthusiastically elected Kimberly Hardy Watson as the organization’s next President and CEO,” **said Georgia Wall, Graham Board Chairman.** “We recognize Kym’s deep-seated commitment to Graham’s mission and to our children, our families and the entire team. She understands our people, communities and systems from a deeply personal perspective and that understanding combined with decades of leadership in the field makes her without question the best person to lead Graham into its next chapter.”

“Leading Graham Windham for nearly a decade with Kym and our extraordinary team, volunteers and supporters has been the highest privilege said **Jess Dannhauser, Graham’s current President & CEO.** Transitioning leadership over the course of the year to Kym is my great honor. She and I share a deep commitment to our kids, families and team; they inspire us everyday. In Kym, they have a most extraordinary leader. She has the vision, integrity, empathy and commitment to justice and opportunity that will help them thrive in life.”

In her most recent role as COO, Ms. Watson oversaw all Graham’s Human Resources, Information Technology, Administrative Services, Facilities Management and Purchasing Departments. Her work focused on ensuring a healthy organizational culture, involving workforce priorities, diversity, equity and inclusion, relieving trauma & toxic stress, and equipping Graham’s emerging leadership. Ms. Watson’s career also includes director-level positions at SCO Family of Services and then, Sheltering Arms (formerly ESS) running community-based adolescent residences and youth development programs.

Kym holds a Master’s in Public Administration from Baruch College, CUNY, and an undergraduate degree from Fordham University. She participated in the inaugural class of the



Strell Executive Leadership Fellows program at the Silberman School of Social Work (Hunter College). In 2018, Kym received citations from Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, NY State Assemblymembers Erik Martin-Dilan and Latrice Walker, and New York City Councilmember Robert Cornegy for the work she has led in the community. In 2017, Kym was interviewed and appeared in the Netflix production of the Kalief Browder Story, describing the injustices facing families affected by the crack epidemic and the child welfare system during the 1980s. In 2019, Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York, recognized Kym in their “Women in Human Services Hall of Fame.” Kym is a member of the Black Agency Executives, Council of Family & Child Caring Agencies' Steering Committee and United for Brownsville. She and her husband Gary have proudly parented six children and are the doting grandparents of six grandchildren.

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#### **About Graham Windham:**

Graham Windham has pioneered programs for New York City’s children, families and communities since its founding by a group of dedicated, forward-looking women including Eliza Hamilton in 1806. The organization provides youth and family programs at 11 community-based sites in Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. Services include in-home family support services, school & community-based service centers, mental health and wellness services, family foster care, and youth coaching.

Graham is distinguished by its innovations and organizational vision, which was co-created by its kids, families and team. Graham Windham employs approximately 450 staff and manages over 1,500 volunteers and supporters who come together to help over 4,000 young New Yorkers and their families thrive each year.