**Gallo & Robinson Lobbyist Biographies**

**Kate Robinson,** Principal, is an active lobbyist who believes that her clients are the experts in their field. She works to forge ongoing communication and strong relationships between clients and policy makers so that they can make well informed decisions, and better serve our state and its residents.

After serving as the Clerk of the Planning and Development Committee and running two state-house campaigns, Kate went to work for Betty Gallo & Company in 2000. Since then, she has worked on dozens of pro-active proposals relating to strengthening the safety net, public health, education, energy security and affordable housing including, but not limited to, increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit, re-establishing student loan reimbursement for health care providers in public health, removed non-medical exemptions from state vaccination requirements to enroll in school, CPR in schools, increasing access to Narcan, monitoring access to mental health treatment for people with private insurance, establishing funding for year-round energy assistance, increasing and preserving funds for affordable housing options and housing stability for people facing homelessness, restoration of voting rights for people who have served their sentences in the criminal justice system, and assuring that tenants in public housing can elect the Tenant Commissioner on the Housing Authority if they choose to.

She has also worked as part of the lobbying team that passed paid family medical leave, increased the sales age of tobacco and vaping products to 21, significant gun safety legislation, marriage for same-sex couples, and abolished the death penalty in Connecticut. She actively organized the Connecticut Lobbying Conference for 13 years, and started a Post-Election Discussion Series for Gallo & Robinson Clients. Kate has been a guest lecturer for courses at the Yale School of Public Health, The UConn School of Social Work, The UConn Encore Program and The Central Connecticut State University Political Science Department.

Kate is a graduate of New Haven Public Schools, holds a B.F.A. from University of Connecticut and earned a master’s degree in Public Policy from Trinity College in Hartford. Kate is proud to have been honored for an Outstanding Contribution in Arts Advocacy in 2010 by the Connecticut Arts Administrators Association, received the Outstanding Partner Award from the Connecticut Public Housing Network in 2012 and Lifetime Membership in 2013. In 2017, she received a Legislative Champion Award from the Keep the Promise Coalition, and in 2019, she received the Scott Shuler Distinguished Art Advocate Award from the Connecticut Arts Education Association.

Kate became a named partner of Gallo & Robinson in 2014, and Principal of the firm in 2018. She lives in West Hartford with her husband, Rob, and two sons, Alex and Theo, and pandemic puppy, Sasha.

**Joe Grabarz** served as Chief of Staff for the City of Bridgeport from 1985 to 1988 and then as a State Representative from Bridgeport from 1988-1992 where he was one of the first openly gay State elected officials in the country and the first in Connecticut. As a legislator on the Public Health Committee, member of Act Up and other organizations Joe was instrumental in the fight against HIV pioneering legislation on needle exchange and HIV insurance coverage. He has participated in several world conferences advocating for HIV treatment and a cure. He was appointed to the first Housing Committee of the legislature and was a strong advocate for better state housing policies.

He lobbied numerous city and state legislatures across the country and the US Congress and the Federal Executive branch as Legislative and Policy Director for the Human Rights Campaign Fund and was the first person officially invited to the White House as an openly gay person in the history of the country. He was the Field Director of the national Health Care Reform Project and other reform entities in Washington DC, working very closely with US Senate leaders and the White House during the push for health reform during the Clinton Administration.

Joe led numerous civil rights efforts and lobbied the CT General Assembly as the Executive Director of Connecticut Civil Liberties Union. As the Executive Director of Empire State Pride Agenda Joe led the effort to pass a gay civil rights bill in New York State and establish the country’s first ever LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network. He operated a successful small business evaluating the finances of housing cooperatives and condominiums in New York City.

He joined Gallo & Robinson, LLC (formerly Betty Gallo & Co.) as a lobbyist for the 2007 Legislative Session. In addition to advocating before numerous state legislatures for a variety of civil rights and health issues.

Joe has worked on several film and art projects including “Everything Relative” a film referred to as “The Lesbian Big Chill.” He was a key to the success of Dancers Responding to AIDS Fire Island Dance Festival during its formative years, raising millions of dollars for Broadway Cares and receiving the Bess Shenton Memorial Award for his services. He has also received numerous awards and recognition from other organizations including; The CT Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights, NOW, The New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-violence Project, The CT Psychological Association, CT Coalition for Choice, CT Athletic Trainers Association, CT Optometric Society, The Congress of CT Community Colleges, CT AIDS Consortium. AIDS Ministries of CT, United Way of CT, The Human Rights Campaign Fund, The Community Justice Coalition, Win-PAC, Northeast Citizen Action Center, The Hartford Courant Tapestry Award, The Bridgeport Community Justice Coalition, CT NARAL, CT Coalition for Children, CT Civil Liberties Union.

Joe is a beekeeper who is very concerned about pollinator health and is an advocate for urban beekeeping. He is a glassblower certified by one of the oldest glassblowing furnaces of Murano, Venice Italy.

**Brian Dawson** (formerly Coughlin) joined Gallo & Robinson in January of 2015. He has worked on a variety of significant pieces of legislation including the safe storage of firearms, a prohibition of bump stocks and ghost guns, new trials for the wrongfully convicted, prosecutorial transparency, and funding for health and human services programs. Brian helped lead the lobbying effort behind the successful passage of Connecticut’s paid family and medical leave program, the strongest in the country at the time of its passage.

Prior, he worked on many municipal, state, and federal electoral campaigns. Most recently, he served as the Campaign Manager for US Congressman Joe Courtney. In 2018, he was named Connecticut Young Democrat of the Year. Previously, Brian was the communications manager for the Connecticut Technology Council, where he, as always, hyped his home state to anyone who will listen.

A UConn graduate, Brian earned a BA in History and Literature. He currently lives in Hartford with his wife Madeline and their Siamese cats.

**Bill Welz** joined Gallo & Robinson in 2018, after six years serving the Office of Governor Dannel P. Malloy. During that time, he served in a variety of positions, starting as the Executive Aide to the General Counsel, moving up to Senior Associate for Policy and Government Affairs and finally to Director of Policy. With his significant experience navigating the legislative process, he became a problem solver for the administration. He guided gubernatorial appointees through the confirmation process, moved the governor's priorities through the legislature and advised state agencies on policy positions and relations with the legislature.

Bill has been involved with legislation including (but not limited to) pay equity, ban the box, automatic criminal record erasure, expedited processing of rape kits in the state lab, title protection for social workers, nursing home staffing ratios, police accountability, updating CT’s zoning laws to promote affordable housing, access to vital records for homeless youth, timely payment of home care workers, affordable housing training for Planning and Zoning Commissioners, updates to CT’s extreme risk protection orders, the safe storage of firearms both at home and in the car, and a first in the nation prosecutorial transparency bill. He also has been a successful advocate for increased funding for homelessness prevention, magnet schools, nursing home workers, and the American School for the Deaf, along with bonding for affordable housing and gun violence prevention.

His dedication to the political process is deeply rooted in the Quiet Corner where he proudly served on both of Governor Malloy's campaigns and as Field Director for Congressman Joe Courtney's re-election in 2012. He also assisted SEIU1199 on a campaign to unionize home care workers. He currently serves as a member of the Judicial Selection Commission as 2nd Congressional District appointee of the Governor.

Bill is a graduate of Eastern Connecticut State University and currently resides in Mansfield with his wife, Allison, his daughter, Eliza, his son, Grant, and his four-legged friend, Jax.