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PRESS RELEASE

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CDFA Announces 2023 Class of Caren S. Franzini Fellowship

—CDFA Continues Legacy of Caren S. Franzini through Four Outstanding Development Finance Professionals —

Columbus, OH — The Council of Development Finance Agencies is honored to announce the 2023 class of the Caren S. Franzini Fellowship. Join CDFA in congratulating these four outstanding women:

- **Neyli Castillo Suarez**, Interim Lead Program Administrator, Recovery Programs, New Mexico Finance Authority
- **Olivia Barone**, Senior Project Officer, Clean Energy Program / Economic Transformation, New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)
- **Tonita McKnight**, Business Development Officer, Albany Community Together
- **Zaba Rshan**, Program Manager, CDFI, National Community Reinvestment Coalition

“CDFA is excited to recognize Neyli, Olivia, Tonita, and Zaba as this year’s class of Caren S. Franzini fellows. This group of inspirational women represents the best and brightest in the development finance industry, and we are thrilled to welcome them into the CDFA family,” states Toby Rittner, DFCP and President & CEO of CDFA. “We are proud to honor the memory of Caren Franzini, my good friend and mentor, through this fellowship. Over the next six months, we will challenge our four fellows to explore development finance with the energy, passion, and dedication demonstrated by Caren.”

The Caren S. Franzini Fellowship was established in 2017 by the CDFA Board of Directors to recognize the exemplary leadership of Caren Franzini, a past President of CDFA and former CEO of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA). During her career, Caren was dedicated to the advancement of development finance best practices, education, and advocacy.

Recognized by her peers and colleagues as “simply the best,” Caren brought a high level of mastery and acumen to her work. Her commitment to the development finance industry is evident in the numerous programs created and the billions of dollars of investment that she catalyzed during her tenure at NJEDA. She was equally passionate about building leaders and experts in the field as she was about financing businesses and expanding economic growth and job creation for New Jersey communities.

The Caren S. Franzini Fellowship was created to build leadership positions for women in the field of development finance and to inspire them to embody Caren’s spirit and professionalism. Franzini Fellows are given the opportunity to work directly with CDFA through a six-month program aimed at developing engaged women leaders in the field of development finance. Each class of Franzini Fellows collaborates on a project of significance to the development finance industry and presents it to a national audience. Collectively, their work showcases expertise in development finance and the power of women-led initiatives. Visit the **Caren S. Franzini Fellowship webpage** to learn more.

The **Council of Development Finance Agencies** is a national association dedicated to the advancement of development finance concerns and interests. CDFA is comprised of the nation’s leading and most knowledgeable members of the development finance community representing public, private, and non-profit entities alike. For more information about CDFA, visit www.cdfa.net.