



The  
Commonwealth  
Fund

## **Health Care Transformation to Advance Black Maternal Health Equity**

**Virtual Meeting: Thursday June 30, 2022, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm ET**

### **Speaker and Moderator Bios**

#### **Host and moderator for the day**

**Dr. Laurie Zephyrin** (MD, MPH, MBA) is senior vice president for Advancing Health Equity at the Commonwealth Fund. She has extensive experience in leading design and delivery of innovative health care. From 2009–2018, she was the first national director of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Reproductive Health Program where she led implementation of policies and programs to improve the health of women veterans nationwide. Dr. Zephyrin is a board-certified clinician and a clinical assistant professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at NYU Langone School of Medicine. She earned her M.D. from New York University School of Medicine, and M.B.A. and M.P.H. from Johns Hopkins University. She completed her residency training at Harvard’s Integrated Residency Program at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital.

#### **Opening remarks**

**Congresswoman Robin Kelly** has dedicated her career to public service as an advocate for Illinois families. Since being elected to serve the 2nd Congressional District in 2013, she has worked to expand economic opportunity, community wellness, and public safety across the state, championing numerous initiatives to generate job growth, reduce health disparities, and end gun violence.

She serves as: Vice Chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee, Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust, Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls, and Co-Chair of the Congressional Gun Violence Prevention Taskforce. Her Energy and Commerce work is focused on expanding access to

healthcare, consumer protection, and economic development. She has worked tirelessly to address women's health issues and end the maternal health crisis, including leading the effort to extend Medicaid postpartum coverage from 60 days to one full year.

Prior to her election to Congress, Kelly was a member of the Illinois House of Representatives, served as Chief Administrative Officer of Cook County (the second largest county in the United States, including Chicago) and was Chief of Staff to Illinois State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias—becoming the first African American woman to serve as Chief of Staff to an elected constitutional statewide officeholder.

The daughter of a small business owner and postal worker, Congresswoman Kelly moved to Illinois to attend college. She lives in Matteson, IL with her husband, Dr. Nathaniel Horn, and has two adult children.

### **PANEL ONE : Financing Health Care Transformation Innovation**

**Moderator: Shefali Luthra** is the health reporter for *The 19th*, covering the intersection of gender and health care. Prior to joining *The 19th* she was a correspondent at Kaiser Health News, where she spent six years covering national health care and policy. She interned with the Texas Tribune and was a Kaiser Family Foundation media intern. In Texas, she covered state politics, women's health and local implementation of the federal health reform, with work appearing in the Texas Tribune, the New York Times and the Washington Post. She is a recent graduate of Brown University.

**Dr. Jamila K. Taylor** (PhD) is director of health care reform and senior fellow at The Century Foundation, where she leads work to build on the Affordable Care Act and develop the next generation of health reform to achieve high-quality, affordable, and universal coverage in America. A renowned health policy expert, Taylor also works on issues related to reproductive rights and justice, focusing on the structural barriers to access to health care, racial and gender disparities in health outcomes, and the intersections between health care and economic justice. Throughout her career, Taylor has championed the health and rights of women of color and other marginalized communities both in the U.S. and around the world, promoting policies that ensure access

to reproductive and maternal health care, including building support for insurance coverage of abortion.

**Dr. Pooja Mehta** (MD) serves as the Women’s Health Lead for Cityblock Health. Dr. Mehta describes her work as: “*Radically changing maternity and reproductive care for and with Medicaid members.*” She also is an Assistant Professor in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center-New Orleans. Previously, she served as Chief Clinical Innovation Officer of Louisiana Medicaid, and Medical Director of the Louisiana Perinatal Quality Collaborative and Maternal Mortality Review. Dr. Mehta grew up in the United Kingdom, India, and New York. She received her medical degree from Mount Sinai School of Medicine and completed her residency training at Boston University Medical Center.

**Brenda Gleason** (MPH) is the president and founder of M2 Health Care Consulting, which provides strategic consulting services connecting state health care policy to business needs. Prior to founding M2, she co-led a hedge fund focused on merger arbitrage in New York and was the vice president of Healthcare Markets for Informed Decisions, which set up the first point-of-care, e-prescribing platform used by a state Medicaid agency. From 2012 to 2014, Ms. Gleason served as special adviser to the Rhode Island Health Benefits Exchange. She is adjunct faculty at the American University School of Public Affairs and Professorial Lecturer at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at the George Washington University. She earned an M.A. from Boston College and an M.P.H. from Boston University.

## **PANEL TWO: Supporting High Quality, Equitable and Respectful Care**

**Moderator: Dr. Dawn Godbolt** (PhD) is the Director of Health Equity at Maven Clinic, where she works alongside the clinical team to expand health care access to historically marginalized communities. Prior to this role, she was policy director for the National Birth Equity Collaborative. Dr. Godbolt also previously worked as a health policy analyst at the National Partnership for Women & Families, where her work focused on policies to eliminate disparities and provide greater access to care for marginalized

groups. In her studies and earlier work, she examined racial differences in mothers' fear of allowing children outside, disparities in neighborhood factors, and other topics. She considers herself to be a "race scholar" using intersectional approaches and holds a Ph.D. in sociology from Florida State University with a concentration on race, class, and gender inequalities.

**Dr. Twylla Dillion** (MBA, PhD) is the Executive Director of HealthConnect One. She brings more than 10 years of experience in the nonprofit sector spanning philanthropy, Medicaid reform, maternal-child health, data analytics, and academia. In her prior work at United Way of Greater Rochester, Dr. Dillion focused on using data and analytics across the fundraising, grant making, and evaluation cycle. In addition, she has conducted research, including as lead on a Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) project focused on collaborating with Black moms to better understand contributors to Black maternal mortality/morbidity and develop strategies for better outcomes. She received her Ph.D. in Health Services Research, Policy and Outcomes from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, and an MBS from St. John Fisher College.

**Dr. Mimi (Paulomi) Niles** (PhD, MPH, CNM) is Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow at NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing. She is a theorist, educator, researcher and certified nurse-midwife. Her work explores the role of integrated models of midwifery care in creating health equity in historically disenfranchised communities and uses critical feminist theory, intersectionality and anti-racist frameworks. Prof. Niles is an active member of the midwifery community locally, nationally and globally. Currently, she provides full scope midwifery care in a collaborative practice in Brooklyn. She holds a PhD in Nursing and MPH in Global Health. She grew up in Queens, NY – the proud daughter of immigrants, has two children, and honors her mother's legacy as a nurse-midwife in India.

**Dr. Aletha Akers** (MD, MPH) is the Vice President for Research at the Guttmacher Institute. Dr. Akers leads the Institute's widely respected team of scientists as they carry out research to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights in the United States and globally. Dr. Akers brings 20 years of experience conducting policy-relevant research on

a range of sexual and reproductive health issues. Previously, she worked at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) as the inaugural director of gynecologic services, and founded and directed a complex family planning clinic that provides young women with comprehensive contraceptive services. She received her MD from The Johns Hopkins University, and her MPH from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; she completed her residency at the University of Michigan.

### **PANEL THREE: Using Data to Drive Toward Equity**

**Moderator: So O'Neil** (MS) has dedicated her more than two-decade career to reducing health disparities and promoting health equity for mothers, children, and their families regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, and other visible and invisible characteristics. She currently directs Mathematica's domestic health philanthropy portfolio, developing and implementing projects that generate evidence and translate it into action for social good. She has worked extensively with domestic and international community-based organizations and local government agencies to bring a participatory approach to strategy development and complex mixed-methods research. Her experience as a first-generation immigrant and service as a Peace Corps health volunteer in Africa helped her recognize the importance of centering equity in her work and understand that systems and policy change are foundational to improving well-being.

**Dr. Rachel Hardeman** (PhD, MPH) is a Tenured Associate Professor in the Division of Health Policy & Management at the University of Minnesota, School of Public Health. She is a reproductive health equity researcher whose work seeks to elucidate a critical and complex determinant of health inequity—racism. Dr. Hardeman leverages the frameworks of critical race theory and reproductive justice to inform her equity-centered work, which is building empirical evidence of racism's impact on health for Black birthing people and their babies. She is PI of the **M**asuring and **O**perationalizing **R**acism to **A**chieve **H**ealth **E**quity Lab ([MORHELab.com](http://MORHELab.com)). She is active locally and nationally with organizations that seek to achieve health equity. Dr. Hardeman earned her MPH and PhD from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

**Dr. Eona Harrison** (PhD) is a senior research associate at the Urban Institute. She is the project manager for the Promoting Adolescent Sexual Health and Safety project, a randomized controlled trial of a community-based curriculum for teens living in DC public housing developments. Harrison is a trained family demographer whose work examines women's strategies to achieving their reproductive goals. She focuses on pathways that lead to racial disparities in unintended pregnancy rates, infant and child outcomes, and health. Before joining Urban, Harrison worked with the Maryland Population Research Center, where she assisted with quantitative and qualitative research. Harrison earned her PhD in sociology from the University of Maryland.

**Dr. Zsakeba Henderson** (MD) is Senior Vice President and Deputy Chief Medical and Health Officer at the March of Dimes. Dr. Henderson leads the Office of Maternal and Child Health Impact, providing strategic direction and clinical expertise across the organization to help end the maternal and infant health crisis. Dr. Henderson is a board-certified OBGYN with more than 15 years of experience managing numerous maternal and infant health initiatives, including the establishment of the National Network of Perinatal Quality Collaboratives. Previously, she served as a Medical Officer at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention where she developed epidemiologic, programmatic and surveillance projects. She holds a medical degree from Harvard Medical.

**Dr. Aditi Mallick** (MD) is the chief medical officer for Medicaid and the Child Health Insurance Program at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Before joining CMS, she was director of the COVID-19 Response Command Center at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. Mallick is also a clinical assistant professor of medicine at George Washington University Medical School. Previously, she served as a hospitalist and member of the clinical faculty of Johns Hopkins Hospital. She is board-certified in Internal Medicine. Dr. Mallick earned her BA with honors from Harvard College, including a Certificate in Healthcare Policy; her Medical Degree from Stanford University with a concentration in Health Services Research and Policy; and Internal Medicine Residency training at Massachusetts General Hospital.