



Speaker Biographies

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

MODERATORS:

Senator Melony G. Griffith, District 25, Prince George's County



Melony Griffith currently represents District 25 in the Maryland State Senate. In 2020, Senator Griffith became the first African American woman elected as President Pro Tempore for the Maryland Senate. In this role, Senator Griffith serves as the leader of the Senate chamber in the absence of Senate President Bill Ferguson. In addition to serving as President Pro Tempore, Senator Griffith also serves as the Chair of the Budget and Taxation Committee's Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. She is a valued member of the Maryland Senate senior leadership team, providing input and guidance on major policy initiatives.

Senator Griffith is a former licensed clinical social worker and has spent most of the career working to positively impact public health. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Services and Psychology from Montana State University, Billings (formally Eastern Montana College) and a Master of Social Work degree from Howard University in Washington, D.C. with a focus on Child and Family Services.

Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk, District 21, Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties



Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk has represented Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties as State Delegate for fifteen years. She is the Vice-chair of the Health and Government Operations Committee and the Chair of the Public Health and Minority Disparities Subcommittee. Known as a valued member across many organization, she is a leader in health equity and public health.

Delegate Peña-Melnyk has always prioritized those on society's margins – the ones who are often overlooked. One summer during law school she worked in Alabama to represent prisoners on death row. Another summer she was in Ohio farm country visiting migrant farm workers and fighting for basic living conditions, a safe work environment, and fair wages. After receiving her law degree, Delegate Peña-Melnyk took court appointments to represent abused and neglected children, and to provide criminal defense for the poor. Later she joined Eric Holder's U.S. Attorney's Office and prosecuted criminals, building cases by working closely with police officers, witnesses, and victims in the community.



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PANELISTS:

Dr. Denis Antoine, Director of the Cornerstone Clinic at Helping up Mission, the Addiction Treatment Services and Center for Addiction and Pregnancy programs at the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center



Dr. Denis Antoine graduated from Duke University with B.S. in Psychology concentrating in personality and social influence. He attended Howard University School of Medicine and went on to Johns Hopkins for an internship in Internal Medicine and residency in Psychiatry. He completed an NIH-sponsored postdoctoral fellowship in addiction research at the Behavioral Pharmacology Research Unit at the Johns Hopkins and is dually board certified in Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine. He is the director of the Cornerstone Clinic at Helping up Mission, the Addiction Treatment Services and Center for Addiction and Pregnancy programs at the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center. These programs serve patients with substance use disorders and co-occurring psychiatric conditions and serve as sites for systematic research of issues pertaining to mental well-being.

Dr. Tich Changamire, M.D., Ph.D., MBA, Vice President, Chief Medical Officer, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield



Dr. Tich Changamire is the Vice President, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield (CareFirst). He is responsible for leading CareFirst's efforts to achieve excellence in healthcare affordability, quality, and accessibility through innovative initiatives to improve the health of members and communities in Maryland, the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia.

As CMO for CareFirst, Dr. Changamire has a strong interest in value-based healthcare, population health, clinical quality improvement and the business of healthcare. Dr. Changamire's passion is to enhance access and improve the quality of care for individuals and families through collaboration with healthcare systems and providers. Dr. Changamire joined CareFirst in April 2021. He is a board-certified family physician with more than 20 years of medical and health plan experience and provider-based healthcare leadership.

Dr. Changamire earned his Doctor of Medicine at the University of Zimbabwe, his Ph.D. in Public Health from Harvard University and his Master of Business Administration from Stanford University. He completed his Medical Residency in Family Medicine at the University of Washington.



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PANELISTS:

Dr. Sandrine Niyongere, Assistant Professor of Medicine, University of Maryland Medical System,



Dr. Niyongere joined the School of Medicine and Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Comprehensive Cancer Center as an Assistant Professor in 2018. Her clinical focus is in acute leukemias, myelodysplastic syndromes, myeloproliferative neoplasms and bone marrow failure syndromes.

Dr. Niyongere's primary research interests are in finding new therapeutic targets by understanding oncogenic signaling pathways involved in AML and MDS as well as studying the role of the tumor microenvironment in the development of chemoresistance in leukemia. Dr. Niyongere also serves as an attending physician on the inpatient leukemia service training fellows, internal medicine residents and medical students.

Derek Robertson, MBA, JD, CHC, President, The Maryland Sickle Cell Disease Association



Derek Robertson is president and co-founder (along with his wife) of the Maryland Sickle Cell Disease Association. Derek and his wife, Shantá, have three sons, two of whom have sickle cell disease (SCD). He is a member of The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine Forum on Regenerative Medicine and has been a member of the NIH's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's SCD Advisory Committee.

Derek is an attorney specializing in the federal 340B Drug Pricing Discount Program (the "340B Program") and he has worked extensively with hospitals and universities on federal grants management and program income. Derek helped establish and was Executive Director and General Counsel to the Hemophilia Alliance, Inc., representing Hemophilia Treatment Centers (HTCs) in the 340B Program. He also served as General Counsel for the Hemophilia Alliance Group Purchasing Organization.

Derek holds an MBA from City University of New York - Baruch College and his JD from the University of Houston. He is licensed to practice law in both Texas (currently inactive) and Washington, DC.



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PANELISTS:

Vikki Walton, Director, State Public Policy and External Affairs, Novartis



Vikki Walton is the Director of State Public Policy and External Affairs for Novartis. She has worked for Novartis for over 20 years and is responsible for leading, developing and aligning State Public Health policies across a broad group of stakeholders to ensure access to healthcare.

Vikki is instrumental in external outreach, intervention, and the shaping of the healthcare policy environment across multiple disease areas including Sickle Cell Disease. She has worked in the Sickle Cell Disease space for over 10 years and has remained a strong advocate for improved policies to ensure health equity for Sickle Cell Disease patients.