

## Fellow Biographies

### Alyzah Virani

Alyzah Virani is a first-generation Pakistani-American woman in Dallas, Texas, and is graduating from Texas Woman's University with a bachelor's in public health with a minor in business administration in May. She is a trailblazer for social and health equity with a passion for introducing equitable health care policies for all communities because of her lived and professional experiences. As a senior pharmacy technician at CVS and a certified peer health mentor on campus, her desire to be a part of the solution, not the problem, was ignited. Some of her goals include reforming health insurance policies, advocating for lower insulin costs, and furthering the education of reproductive health among Black and brown communities. Having internship experience at the Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and Public Citizen, she aims to further develop her diverse skill set and accomplish her missions with a policy lens. When she is not striking through items on her endless amount of Post-it notes, she enjoys reading at new coffee shops on the weekends, watching sunsets at the lake, and diversifying her music palette.



### Anzhane Slaughter

Anzhane Slaughter was born and raised in Seattle, Washington. She's currently working in the public and private sectors. Publicly, she is the project manager for the Washington State Social Equity in Cannabis Task Force. She is also a real estate agent working to increase the number of Black and brown homeowners in Washington state. Before entering state policy work and real estate, Slaughter was the first in her family to attend and graduate from college, earning her bachelor's degree in 2018. In addition to being a scholar, she is a community advocate. She often testified at city, county, and state hearings for the betterment of the Black community. She has made it her mission to bring access and democracy to policy through a racial equity lens because she believes communities of color cannot have a fair chance at health or life without addressing the impacts that racism has had on policies.



## Christian Minter

Christian Minter is the manager of maternal and infant health initiatives for March of Dimes. She collaborates with community partners to lead local initiatives and advocate for public policies that affect birthing people and families in Nebraska and Western Iowa. Prior to joining March of Dimes, she worked as a medical librarian and provided research and health information services at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. She is passionate about achieving health equity and leveraging public policy to dismantle the systems contributing to health disparities in the United States. Minter currently lives in Omaha, Nebraska, but Washington, DC, will always be home. She received a bachelor of arts degree in biblical studies from Washington Bible College in 2007 and a master of science degree in library and information science from the Catholic University of America in 2013. She is pursuing a master's degree in public health with a concentration in maternal and child health at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.



## Eduardo Orduño

Eduardo Orduño joined the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing in November 2016. Originally from Chihuahua, Mexico, he has resided in Colorado since 2001 and currently serves as a lead worker for the Health First Colorado Contact Center. He has also served as a trainer and knowledge manager within the same organization. He received a bachelor's degree in business administration from Johnson & Wales University in Denver with a concentration in entrepreneurship. Growing up, Orduño's family struggled financially as they navigated life in a new country where they sought their American dream. He shares a strong sense of devotion and duty to improving the lives of underserved populations, whose daily fight for survival prohibits them from accessing the luxury that health care has become. He aims to pursue measures that increase health care access through education and improve health equity through payment reform.



## Ibrahim Konaté

Ibrahim Konaté was born in France and grew up between Blacksburg, Virginia, and the suburbs of Paris. He studied biology at Virginia Tech and obtained his master of public health in epidemiology with a comparative effectiveness outcomes research certificate from Columbia University in 2020. He resides in New York City and works at a health startup to amplify the voices of patients with rare diseases. He is active in advocacy and produces educational and awareness material for young patients of chronic illnesses. Prior to these roles, he worked in clinical research and global health advocacy. For this fellowship, Konaté is most interested in health system costs, health care quality, and the inclusion of patient perspectives in the policy decision-making process.



## Kevin Han

Kevin Han is a community health advocate whose interests include improving and expanding health coverage, as well as addressing issues such as public safety for marginalized communities. He recently joined Families USA, a health care advocacy organization where he works on enhancing strategic partnerships with state and national partner organizations. His portfolio includes projects on Medicaid and private coverage. Prior to working at Families USA, Han worked as a health navigator for Hamkae Center, where he enrolled clients in affordable health coverage and helped organize Asian Americans toward social, racial, and economic justice. Then-Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam appointed Han to Virginia's LGBTQ+ Advisory Board, on which he still serves. He interned for the Department of State and was a health equity fellow at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Han graduated from the University of Virginia in 2019 with a bachelor's of arts degree in foreign affairs. He was born and raised in Northern Virginia and currently resides in the DC area. He was born and raised in Northern Virginia and currently resides in the DC area.



## LaKaija Johnson

LaKaija Johnson, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, is a population health scientist, educator, and public servant with more than a decade of experience leading and evaluating the implementation of strategies to advance health equity in academic, government, and nonprofit settings. Johnson currently serves as a senior health equity fellow in the Oklahoma State Department of Health's Office of Minority Health and Health Equity. Inspired by the work of Rep. Lauren Underwood, Johnson is passionate about advancing community-centered solutions to advance birth justice, racial equity, and systems change through health policy. She is a graduate of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (master of public health degree) and the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service (master of public service degree) and is a doctoral candidate at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (health promotion and disease prevention research, May 2022).



## Maureen Johnson

Maureen Johnson is a program specialist at the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) in Silver Spring, Maryland. She provides technical assistance to university-based interdisciplinary training and research programs/centers. She focuses on projects that engage and promote leadership among students and early-career professionals. Before joining AUCD, Maureen was a manager at the Physician Assistant Education Association in DC. There she worked on professional development and membership engagement. Johnson aims to reduce health disparities and improve access to care in marginalized communities through community engagement and workforce development. Originally from Takoma Park, Maryland, she graduated from the University of Maryland (UMD), College Park, in 2017 with a bachelor's in public health science. At UMD, she was heavily involved in student leadership development and community service-learning activities. She also holds a certificate in education program evaluation from the Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies.



## Michaela Minnis

Michaela Minnis is a recent graduate from the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy with a focus area on women, race, and the politics of health. During her time at Michigan, she was actively involved in student organizations and took on multiple leadership roles that spoke to her passions for student access, social justice, and cross-cultural collaboration. She is an aspiring changemaker seeking to build societies where women, children, and families can thrive and live sustainably. Minnis is interested in using writing and communications, advocacy, strategy, and mixed-methodology research to examine public policy, public health, and legal challenges that constrain reproductive choice, family planning, and economic mobility for women and families. She is excited to continue learning and growing into a young career professional to be a champion for families through health policy and program administration with plans to pursue a master of public health degree and potentially a law degree in a family, gender, and sexuality law track.



## Wenrui Chen

Wenrui Chen is from the New England suburbs and is currently based in New York. She is a law school student at CUNY School of Law with a focus on health and aging/elder law. Prior to her transition to law, Chen was a fellow at the India China Institute at the New School and an adjunct instructor at Brooklyn College. Her main areas of interest within public health and health policy are health coverage and access, particularly related to long-term, complex care and health coverage access for immigrant communities of color. Chen has a bachelor's of arts degree in anthropology from the University of Chicago (2007), and master's degree and PhD in anthropology from NYU (2015), where her research focused on cross-cultural health, therapy, and family relationships. She has published articles in *Culture, Medicine & Psychiatry*, *The Family Journal*, and *The Conversation*.



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**The goal of the ELC Fellowship Program is to create an accessible pathway for emerging leaders to enter and lead the development and administration of state health policy informed by lived experience.**

## Advisor Biographies

### Ana Novais (RI)

Ana P. Novais is assistant secretary at the Executive Office of Health and Human Services in Rhode Island. Novais has worked in public health for 30 years, including five years in Africa (Cape Verde), five years in Portugal, and the past 20 years in the United States. She has worked for the Rhode Island Department of Health since 1998, first as an education and outreach coordinator and as the chief for the Office of Minority Health, ensuring the department addresses the health needs of the racial and ethnic minority communities of Rhode Island. Since March 2006, as the executive director of health for the Division of Community, Family Health, and Equity, she has led department efforts to achieve the goal of health equity by focusing in the areas of health disparities and access to care, chronic care and disease management, maternal and child health, environmental health, and health promotion and wellness and by developing and implementing the “Rhode Island Health Equity Framework,” which is a plan of action for achieving health equity at the state and at local level through the “Health Equity Zones” initiative. In August 2015, her role was expanded and she became the executive director of health for the department, charged with implementing the department’s strategic priorities across all divisions and ensuring that department resources and operations were aligned with the strategic priorities. In 2020, after helping to lead Rhode Island’s COVID-19 crisis, she was promoted to assistant secretary at the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. Novais holds a master’s degree in clinical psychology, UCLN, Belgium, and is a graduate from the Northeastern Public Health Leadership Institute, University of Albany, and Leadership Rhode Island.



### Cheryl Roberts (VA)

Cheryl J. Roberts is deputy director of programs for the Department of Medical Assistance Services in Virginia, which provides Medicaid and SCHIP services for over 1 million clients in the Commonwealth, expending \$9 billion a year. In her current position, she is responsible for the program development and executive oversight of the Medicaid managed care delivery system, which covers 700,000 members, dental and pharmacy services, quality management, and program integrity operations for the agency. Previous responsibilities included oversight of service and provider operations, long-term care services, and behavioral health. Prior to working with the department, Roberts was chief operations officer of a Virginia-based Medicaid health plan and the assistant vice president of operations for a large health insurance company in New York City. She received her law degree from Rutgers’s State University of New Jersey Law School. She serves as an executive committee vice chair for NASHP and works on various national health care projects, collaboratives, and committees.



## Heather Burris (DC)

Heather Burris is the interim immunization division chief at DC Health in Washington, DC. She is responsible for the coordination of immunization operations, data management, and surveillance of COVID-19 breakthrough and vaccine-preventable diseases. She joined DC Health in 2017 and previously served as COVID-19 vaccine planning team lead and the Vaccines for Children program manager after spending nine years at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center as a clinical site manager for the Infectious Disease Clinical Research Program. Her expertise is in vaccine management, program management, and infectious disease clinical research. She is mission-focused on health equity and ensuring vulnerable residents or those hard-to-reach community members have access to immunizations. A champion for Black women, and particularly Black girls, Burris authored “Hair Like Me,” a children’s story about beauty and confidence. She is a graduate of Howard University and Emory University and currently resides in DC with her husband and two children.



## Karrah Herring (IN)

Karrah (Miller) Herring has served as Indiana’s first-ever chief equity, inclusion, and opportunity officer since November 2020. In this role, she works with Governor Eric Holcomb and his team to improve state government operations as well as remove hurdles in the government workplace and services the state provides. Prior to this role, she worked for the University of Notre Dame for nearly a decade and served as the director of public affairs in the Office of Public Affairs and Communications. She previously served on the University of Notre Dame’s Office of Human Resources senior executive leadership team as the director of the Office of Institutional Equity and University Title IX coordinator. She is also a member of the Center for Digital Government’s Digital Equity Advisory Committee and the NASHP Population and Public Health Steering Committee, is a board member for Sunz Insurance and Sunz Holdings LLC, and is assistant pastor of her family’s church. In 2020, she authored a book on the intersection of race and gender and the complexities of how Black women navigate corporate culture, religion, higher education, and athletics. She and her husband, Ray, have three children: Bryce, Brianna, and Ja’Mari.



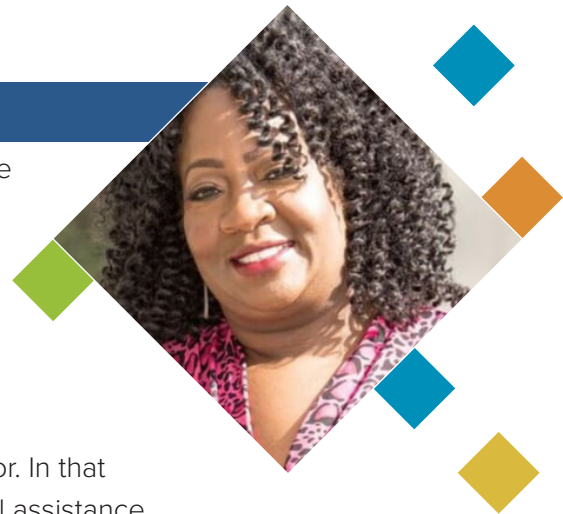
## Kevin Patterson (CO)

Kevin Patterson has served as chief executive officer of Connect for Health Colorado since April 2015. He previously served as chief administrative officer and interim chief of staff to Gov. John Hickenlooper and has an extensive history of public service. Patterson brings a strong understanding of local, state, and federal government and stakeholder engagement to this role. At Connect for Health Colorado, he has been focused on improving the customer experience to focus on health insurance with tax credit implications. He has held many senior leadership roles for the city and county of Denver. He was elected to the Denver Board of Education in 2001 and 2005. He graduated with a bachelor's of arts degree in teaching from Sam Houston State University and holds both a master's of public administration and a master's of urban regional planning from the University of Colorado at Denver. He is known as a collaborative non-partisan problem-solver for Colorado issues.



## Lynnette Rhodes (GA)

Lynnette Rhodes serves as executive director of the Medical Assistance Plans Division for the Georgia Department of Community Health. The department manages a combined federal and state budget of approximately \$17 billion annually. Rhodes joined the department in 2005 as a legal services officer, representing the department in administrative hearings. In 2010, she was promoted to director of legal services and subsequently transitioned to the Medical Assistance Plans Division. In 2018, she was asked to serve as the executive director. In that role, she oversees the four units responsible for the delivery of medical assistance to Georgia's Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries: policy, compliance and operations; eligibility and enrollment; performance and care management; and service delivery and administration. Prior to joining the department, she was a senior public defender in the City of Atlanta Public Defender's Office. She received her bachelor's degree in political science from Florida A&M University, and her law degree from North Carolina Central University School of Law.





## Michelle Robinson (WI)

Dr. Michelle Robinson is the inaugural director of the new Office of Health Equity (OHE) at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. She is the principal policy and program officer for equity and inclusion, workforce planning, and health equity serving on the executive management team and providing strategic leadership and advisory support in the identification and advancement of DHS' goals. She previously served as the Director of the Office of the Inspector General and the Equity and Systems Change Research and Policy Officer (ESCRPO) at the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) where she was a member of the Secretary's cabinet and the agency's leadership team. As ESCRPO, Dr. Robinson provides strategic leadership and direction on internal and external equity and health equity initiatives and began served as DCF-council designee, and now Vice-Chair, for the Governor's Health Equity Council (GHEC) — a council charged with creating a comprehensive plan that will achieve long-lasting and equitable health outcomes for all Wisconsinites by addressing health disparities. Prior to joining DCF, Dr. Robinson was a member of the award-winning Race to Equity Project at Kids Forward. She contributed her expertise on disparities and racial equity research, policy, practice, and community engagement. She holds a Ph.D. and M.S. in sociology from the University of Wisconsin- Madison. She has had the esteemed honor of being recognized for some of her contributions through receiving the 2018 Madison Community Leader Award by Church Women United, the 2018 Collaborator of the Year award by the Progress Center for Black Women, the 2017 Community Justice Award by the Urban League of Greater Madison and being named one of the University of Wisconsin's Outstanding Women of Color in Education in 2014.



## Rachael Banks (OR)

Rachael Banks is the director of Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division. Previously, she served as the public health director for Multnomah County Health Department, the largest local public health division in Oregon. She received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Gonzaga University and her master of public administration degree from Portland State University. During her past 20 years in public health, she has led the Multnomah County Health Department's Healthy Birth Initiative, Healthy Families, and REACH programs. She managed the tobacco policy program while it implemented Oregon's smoke-free workplace law to over 80,000 businesses. She has worked to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, hepatitis C, and drug overdoses and provided injury prevention education to families in populations unfairly impacted by health inequities. Advocating for health equity has been central to Banks' career. She helped develop Multnomah County's first disparity-focused Community Health Improvement Plan and led a unit that enacted culturally specific strategies in the African American/Black, Latinx/Hispanic, Native American/American Indian, Pacific Islander, and immigrant/refugee communities.



## René Mollow (CA)

René Mollow has been with the California Department of Health Care Services since 1995. In the Medi-Cal program, she serves as the deputy director for health care benefits and eligibility (HCBE). She provides leadership for benefit and eligibility policy planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of health care services and delivery systems under Medi-Cal and for the Children's Health Insurance Program. HCBE is comprised of four divisions — benefits, eligibility, pharmacy benefits, and dental — and two offices — the Office of Family Planning and the Office of Tribal Affairs. Mollow works to ensure that policies, procedures, and related activities in HCBE conform to applicable state and federal policies, statutes, and regulations. She assists the directorate, administration and state legislature in determining program direction consistent with legislative intent and consults with the director and state Medicaid director on issues of significant policy impact involving both Medi-Cal and CHIP. She has played a major role in policy planning, development, and implementation on matters pertaining to health care coverage maintenance and expansions for children and adult populations as well as benefit management for the Medi-Cal program.



## Shabnam Salih (NJ)

Shabnam Salih is the first director of the Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency, launched in 2020, in the New Jersey Governor's Office. The office will guide the administration's work on health care affordability and price transparency. Salih previously served as the senior policy advisor on health and human services to Gov. Philip Murphy and helped advance key priorities in the area of health, human services, health insurance, and children and families since February 2018. During her time in the governor's office, she has worked extensively on a range of issues, including the opioid epidemic, individual health insurance market, behavioral health, state health benefits, and homelessness. From 2013 to 2018, Salih was associate director of policy and engagement with the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers. She was also a legislative aide in the New Jersey Senate and is a former Teach For America Corps member. She has a master's in public administration from Baruch College and a bachelor of arts from The College of New Jersey.

