



# 2026 Opportunity & Impact in Nursing Summit

February 12-14, 2026  
JW Marriott, Washington, DC



The 2026 Opportunity & Impact in Nursing Summit, hosted by the American Nurses Enterprise (ANE), convenes nurse leaders, innovators, and industry partners to move from conversation to action.

Over two and a half days, we will engage in meaningful dialogue, examine real-world examples, and identify measurable strategies that strengthen and sustain the nursing workforce. This Summit is not a theoretical discussion. It is a working forum designed to accelerate progress, deepen collaboration, and drive lasting impact across education, practice, and leadership.

## Agenda

### **Day 1 | 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

- Welcome, networking, plenary session, awards ceremony, and musical performance

### **Day 2 | 7:00 a.m. – 6:45 p.m.**

- Fireside chats, plenary sessions, dramatic readings with facilitated discussion, and book signing

### **Day 3 | 7:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

- Concurrent and plenary sessions, award presentation, and book signing

*\*Attendees may earn up to 10.5 ANCC contact hours through eligible sessions.*

**VIEW THE MOST  
UP-TO-DATE AGENDA**



Scan the QR code to access  
the live digital agenda,  
including real-time updates  
and session details.

# Schedule

## Thursday, February 12 • Day 1

Time	Session	Location	Presenters
4:00 p.m.	Registration	Grand Foyer, Registration Desk	
4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.	Networking	Grand Foyer	
4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.	Exhibitors, American Nurses Enterprise (ANE) Booth and Bookstore	Grand Foyer	
4:45 p.m. – 4:55 p.m.	Welcome & Host	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Marion Phillips, III, Senior VP for Community Development, U.S. News & World Report
4:55 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.	Remarks	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Dr. Katie Boston-Leary, Senior Vice President of Equity & Engagement, ANE  Dr. Jennifer Mensik Kennedy, President, American Nurses Association
5:15 p.m. – 5:55 p.m.	<b>Plenary</b> When the Road became the Delivery Room: A Maternal Health Impact Story	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Mercedes Wells, Black Maternal Health Advocate  Dr. Lucinda Canty, Certified Nurse-Midwife; Executive Director of Lucinda's House; Associate Professor, UMass Amherst  Dr. Ann Kurth, President, New York Academy of Medicine
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	<b>Awards Ceremony</b>	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Hosted by Marion Phillips, III  <b>American Nurses Foundation (ANF) Health Equity Awards</b> Kathy Driscoll, President, ANF  <b>Health Equity Practice Award</b>  Dr. Lydia Albuquerque <i>School of Nursing, William Paterson University</i>  <i>Honorable Mentions</i>  Akos Antwi <i>Revive Therapeutic Services</i>  Ibelise Smith <i>ChristianaCare Health System</i>  <b>Health Equity Research Award</b>  Dr. Bridgette M. Rice <i>Villanova University Fitzpatrick College of Nursing</i>  <i>Honorable Mentions</i>  Dr. Maxim Topaz <i>Columbia University School of Nursing</i>  Dr. Sarah H. Ailey <i>Rush University College of Nursing</i>

Time	Session	Location	Presenters
			<b>Health Equity Educator Award</b> Dr. Suha Ballout <i>University of Washington School of Nursing</i>  <i>Honorable Mentions</i> Dr. Anna Valdez <i>Sonoma State University</i> Dr. Cheryl Woods Giscombe <i>UNC-Chapel Hill School of Nursing</i>  <b>Health Equity Leader Award</b> Dr. Camille Burnett <i>Institute for Healthcare Improvement</i>  <i>Honorable Mentions</i> Dr. Paula Alexander-Delpech <i>Frontier Nursing University</i> Dr. Marlon Garzo Saria <i>Providence Saint John's Health Center</i>  <b>Health Equity Rising Star Award</b> Dr. Ana Diallo <i>Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing</i>  <i>Honorable Mentions</i> Dr. Faith Elise Metlock <i>Johns Hopkins School of Nursing</i> Dr. Sabrina Jamal-Eddine <i>University of Illinois Chicago</i>
7:00 p.m. – 7:50 p.m.	<b>Musical Performance &amp; Storytelling</b>	Grand Ballroom, Salon II-IV	Tad Worku, Family Nurse Practitioner, Educator, Musician
7:50 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Closing Remarks	Grand Ballroom, Salon II-IV	Angela Beddoe, CEO, ANE

## Friday, February 13 • Day 2 | Total of ANCC Contact Hours: 5.75

Time	Session	Location	Presenters
7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Registration	Grand Foyer Registration Desk	
7:00 a.m. – 7:30 a.m.	Breakfast and Exhibitors	Capital Ballroom, Salon E-G	
7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.	ANE Booths and Bookstore	Capital Foyer	
7:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.	Welcome, Recap, and Land Acknowledgement	Grand Ballroom, Salon II-IV	Dr. Katie Boston-Leary, Senior Vice President of Equity & Engagement, ANE
8:00 a.m. – 8:10 a.m.	Welcome	Grand Ballroom, Salon II-IV	Dr. Jennifer Mensik Kennedy, President, ANA

Time	Session	Location	Presenters
8:10 a.m. – 9:10 a.m.	<b>Opening Remarks &amp; Fireside Chat</b> From Absence to Access: Corenza Townsend and the Power of Community Investment	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Angela Beddoe, CEO, ANE  Corenza Townsend, Chief Academic Officer, Norton West Louisville Hospital, Louisville, Kentucky
9:10 a.m. – 9:20 a.m.	<b>Spotlight</b>	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	<b>Health Equity Global Impact Award</b>  Agnes Nambozo, Nurse, Sironko Town, Uganda  Presented by Dr. Jennifer Mensik Kennedy, President, ANA
9:25 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	<b>Plenary</b> The Data on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Voter Reactions  <i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 0.75</i>	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Chrissie McHenry, Managing Principal, Raben Group
10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Break		
10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	<b>Plenary</b> Policy Impact on Equity in Nursing  Advocacy for Nursing as a Professional Degree  <i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 1.0</i>	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Tim Nanof, Executive VP, Policy & Government Affairs, ANE  Dr. Brad Goettl, CNO, ANE  Dr. Jennifer Mensik Kennedy, President, ANA  Dr. John Yauger, CEO, American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (AANA) Foundation
11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	<b>Plenary</b> Fireside Chat: NAACP White Paper on Health Equity in AI  <i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 0.5</i>	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Dr. Craig Watkins, Director, IC2 Institute and Ernest A. Sharpe Centennial Professor, University of Texas at Austin  Dr. Oriana Beaudet, VP Innovation, ANE  Dr. Jennifer Shepherd, Director, Nursing Practice, Work Environment, & Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation™, ANA
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch	Capital Ballroom, Salon E–G  Overflow seating in Grand Ballroom, Salon 1	
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Exhibitors	Capital Ballroom, Salon D	
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	<b>A REFUTATION: Live Dramatic Readings and Open Discussions Exploring Health Inequities Today and in 1793</b>  <i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 2.0</i>	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	<b>Presentation</b> Bryan Doerries, Artistic Director, Theater of War Productions  Arliss Howard ( <i>Full Metal Jacket, Moneyball, The Lost World: Jurassic Park</i> )  Eric Berryman ( <i>Atlanta, A Complete Unknown, Godfather of Harlem</i> )  Frankie Faison ( <i>The Wire, Coming to America, The Rookie</i> )

Time	Session	Location	Presenters
			<p><b>Panel Discussion</b></p> <p><b>Moderator</b> Dr. Margo Brooks Carthon, Director of the Barbara Bates Center for the Study of the History of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania</p> <p><b>Panelists</b></p> <p>Dr. C. Alicia Georges, President of the National Black Nurses Foundation &amp; Professor and Chairperson Emerita, Nursing, Lehman College CUNY</p> <p>Dr. Ernest Grant, Clinical Associate Professor and Vice Dean for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, Duke University School of Nursing</p> <p>Dr. Beverly Malone, President and CEO, National League for Nursing</p> <p>Dr. Debra Toney, Executive Director, National Coalition of Ethnic Minority Nurse Associations (NCEMNA)</p> <p>Dr. Kenneth White, Dean and Professor Emeritus, MGH, Institute of Health Professions School of Nursing</p>
3:00 p.m. – 3:20 p.m.	Break		
3:20 p.m. – 4:05 p.m.	<p><b>Minority Fellowship Program Spotlight</b> Panel discussion</p> <p>Turning Workforce Investment into Impact: MFP/ANA and the Future of Behavioral Health Nursing</p> <p><i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 0.75</i></p>	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	<p><b>Moderator</b> Dr. Nia Josiah, Assistant Professor, Family and Community Health Department, The University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing</p> <p><b>Panelists</b></p> <p>Dr. David C. Agor, PhD Candidate in Nursing and Implementation Science, University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing and Perelman School of Medicine</p> <p>Dr. Ashley Davis, Founder &amp; CEO, Luna Women’s Health; Nurse Practitioner, University of Maryland, Baltimore Research Initiative on Infectious Disease and Substance Use</p> <p>Fernando Mena-Carrasco, PhD Candidate and Clinical Instructor, Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing</p> <p>Monique Swaby, Healthcare Analyst RN, Guidewell Healthcare</p>
4:05 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	<p><b>Accelerating Impact in an Era of Backlash</b> A Fireside Chat with Author Lily Zheng</p> <p><i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 0.75</i></p>	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	<p>Lily Zheng, Author, <i>Fixing Fairness</i></p> <p>Dr. Katie Boston-Leary, Senior Vice President of Equity &amp; Engagement, ANE</p>
5:00 p.m. – 5:50 p.m.	<b>Heart to Heart:</b> Reflections and Resilience Moment	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Dr. Kenya Beard, President, K Beard & Associates LLC
5:50 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Closing Remarks	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Dr. G. Rumay Alexander, Senior Equity Advisor, ANE
6:00 p.m. – 6:45 p.m.	<b>Book signing</b>	Capital Foyer	Lily Zheng, Author, <i>Fixing Fairness</i>

## Saturday, February 14 • Day 3 | Total of ANCC Contact Hours: 5.25

Time	Session	Location	Presenters	
7:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Registration	Grand Foyer Registration Desk		
7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast  Sunrise Sessions (concurrent)	Capital Ballroom, Salon E–G	<p>Creating Impact Through Conversation: Constructive Dialogue for Fairness in Nursing Education and Practice <i>Dr. Colleen Marzilli</i></p> <p>Empowering Nurse Leaders Through Publication: Evidence from a Hospital-Based Intervention <i>Dr. Deborah Brabham</i></p> <p>From Awareness to Action: Using Simulation to Address Structural Bias in Nursing Education <i>Dr. Marjorie Cooke</i></p> <p>From Needing to Leading: Activating Bedside Leadership to Strengthen the Nursing Workforce <i>Naomi Blakey</i></p> <p>Growing Our Own Nurses: A Hospital-Academic Partnership <i>Dr. Kaitlyn Tallio</i></p> <p>Nurses You Should Know: Reclaiming Inclusive Nursing History to Strengthen Workforce Development <i>Dr. Joanna Selzer &amp; Ravenne Aponte</i></p>	
8:30 a.m. – 8:40 a.m.	Welcome and Remarks	Capital Ballroom, Salon E-G	Dr. Sarah Gray, Senior VP of Nursing Impact, ANA	
8:40 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	<b>Concurrent Session 1 (A-D)</b> <i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 2.0</i>		<b>Concurrent Session 2 (E-H)</b> <i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 2.0</i>	
8:40 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	<b>Room 1</b>  <b>Capital Ballroom, Salon E–G</b>	<b>Session 1A</b> Eliminating Barriers to Nursing Degrees: A Health System Approach to Grow its Nursing Workforce and Opportunities for its Employees <i>Dr. Kayla Banks</i>	<b>Room 2</b>  <b>Grand Ballroom, Salon I</b>	<b>Session 1E</b> Awareness to Action: Closing Care Gaps in Vascular Access <i>Dr. Stephanie Pitts</i>
9:00 a.m. – 9:20 a.m.		<b>Session 1B</b> The Genesis of the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing: Elevating Marginalized Voices in Health Policy and Nursing Leadership <i>Drs. Beard, Fields, Gilles</i>		<b>Session 1F</b> Expanding Neurology Access for Rural Veterans Through RN-Led TeleNeurology Headache Education Clinic <i>Dr. Jill A. Tobin</i>

Time	Session	Location	Presenters
9:20 a.m. – 9:40 a.m.	<b>Room 1</b> <b>Capital Ballroom, Salon E–G</b>	<b>Session 1C</b> The Synergy of Disability Rights, Disability Justice, and Radical Accessibility in Nursing Education and Practice <i>Dr. Sabrina Jamal-Eddine</i>	<b>Room 2</b> <b>Grand Ballroom, Salon I</b>
9:40 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.		<b>Session 1D</b> Creating Opportunity and Examining Impact: Workplace Discrimination, Retention, and Job Satisfaction Among DNPs of Color <i>Dr. McCamey, McMurray, Dr. Valdez</i>	
			<b>Session 1G</b> From Opportunity to Impact: PNAA's Evidence-Based Strategies for Expanding Leadership Representation Among Filipino American Nurses <i>Dr. Marlon Garzo Saria</i>
			<b>Session 1H</b> Strengthening Legal and Organizational Response Pathways for Healthcare Workers Experiencing Workplace Violence: A Collaborative Model Between Nurses and Commonwealth's Attorneys <i>Dr. Tiffany Covarrubias Lyttle</i>
10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	Break		
10:15 a.m. – 11:35 a.m.	<b>Concurrent Session 1 (I-L)</b> <i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 2.0</i>		<b>Concurrent Session 2: (M-P)</b> <i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 2.0</i>
10:15 a.m. – 10:35 a.m.	<b>Room 1</b> <b>Capital Ballroom, Salon E–G</b>	<b>Session 2I</b> Reimagining Early-Career Engagement: A Governance-Embedded Young Professionals Special Interest Group Model to Strengthen the Nursing Workforce <i>Agyei, Dr. Gerardi, Lodico</i>	<b>Room 2</b> <b>Grand Ballroom, Salon I</b>
10:35 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.		<b>Session 2J</b> A Harlem CRNA Renaissance: A Bridge to the Immersion Model for Diversifying Nurse Anesthesia <i>Dr. Wallena Gould</i>	
10:55 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.		<b>Session 2K</b> Building Equitable Leadership Pathways: Engaging, Educating, and Empowering Nurses of Indian Origin <i>Liffy Cherian</i>	
11:15 a.m. – 11:35 a.m.		<b>Session 2L</b> From Ideas to Impact: A Tiered Mentorship Model Expanding Equity, Scholarship, and Leadership in Nursing <i>Dr. Manu Thakral</i>	
			<b>Session 2M</b> Breaking Barriers Through Policy: Fostering Collaboration and Opportunity to Impact Patient Outcomes <i>Dr. Khaliah Fisher-Grace</i>
			<b>Session 2N</b> Advancing Equality for Internationally Educated nurses <i>Edna Cortez</i>
			<b>Session 2O</b> Taking Action: Restoring Health Databases and Resources for Underserved and Vulnerable Population <i>Dr. Justin Gill</i>
			<b>Session 2P</b> Nurses and the Power of Grassroots Momentum to Advance Advocacy, Opportunity, and Impact Through Humanity, Ethics, Social Justice, and Science <i>Dr. Roman, Hill</i>
11:35 a.m. – 12:25 p.m.	Lunch and Exhibitors	Capital Ballroom, Salon E–G	



Time	Session	Location	Presenters
12:30 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.	<b>Presentation of ANF Health Equity Legacy Award</b>		Presented by ANE CEO Angela Beddoe to <b>Governor Wes Moore, Maryland</b>
12:50 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	<b>Plenary</b> Bias Interrupted: Creating Inclusion for Real and for Good  <i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 0.75</i>	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Joan C. Williams, Distinguished Professor (Emerita), UCSF Law; Founding Director, Equality Action Center; Author, Bias Interrupters
1:30 p.m. – 2:05 p.m.	Break and Exhibitors		
1:30 p.m. – 2:05 p.m.	<b>Book signing</b>	Capital Foyer	Joan C. Williams, Author, <i>Bias Interrupters</i>
2:05 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.	<b>Plenary</b> From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Advocacy & Leadership with H.O.P.E. to Shape the Future of Nursing  <i>Eligible for ANCC contact hours, 0.5</i>	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Dr. Jennifer Moon, CNO, Assistant Surgeon General, Rear Admiral, United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps
2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Closing Remarks	Grand Ballroom, Salon II–IV	Jackie Hilton, Chief People & Culture Officer, ANE  Dr. Katie Boston-Leary, Senior Vice President of Equity & Engagement, ANA

### \*CNE Disclosures

Participants may earn **5.75 ANCC contact hours** by attending all eligible sessions on Friday, February 13, 2026, and completing the required evaluation.

Participants may earn **4.75 ANCC contact hours** by attending all eligible sessions on Saturday, February 14, 2026, and completing the required evaluation.

Evaluation must be completed by March 27, 2026. No partial credit will be awarded.

The amount of ANCC Contact Hours listed is subject to change without notice.

The American Nurses Association is accredited with distinction as a provider of nursing continuing professional development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

# Speakers



## **Bridgette M. Rice, PhD, MDiv, APRN, FAAN**

**Associate Dean for Research and Innovation, and the Richard and Marianne Kreider Endowed Chair**

*Nursing for Vulnerable Populations*

Dr. Bridgette M. Rice is the Associate Dean for Research and Innovation, and the Richard and Marianne Kreider Endowed Chair in Nursing for Vulnerable Populations, in the M. Louise Fitzpatrick College of Nursing at Villanova University. She is also the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Dr. Bridgette Executive Consulting, LLC where she supports individuals and organizations to reach their full potential. Dr. Rice began her nursing career in neonatal intensive care at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. She has since expanded her work to community-based practice, with her extensive program of research done in partnership with affected communities. Dr. Rice is highly sought after for her expertise in health equity promotion in marginalized communities, as well as insights from her multi-decade career working with cross-sectorial partners to effect change. Her cutting-edge program of research addresses multiple health inequities (e.g., HIV/STI prevention, youth mental health service utilization, cardiovascular disease risk among young Black men, gun violence). She is a staunch justice advocate who believes that research can be leveraged as an advocacy tool to ensure all individuals have an opportunity to achieve their full health potential. She has been featured through multiple media outlets, and has received numerous honors and awards, including the Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research Protégée Award in 2015, the International Society of Psychiatric Nurses Diversity and Equity Award in 2020, induction as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing in 2022, and the Alumna Waymaker in Service and Ministry award in 2024 from the Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University. Dr. Rice holds degrees from Villanova University (BSN '03), the University of Pennsylvania (MSN '05, PhD '09) and Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University (MDiv '17).



## **Chrissie McHenry**

**Managing Principal**

*Raben's Strategic Communications*

Chrissie McHenry is a managing principal in Raben's Strategic Communications practice, joining the firm after holding senior positions at corporate, nonprofit, and media organizations. For much of her career, Chrissie was a broadcast journalist covering politics for several leading news organizations, including as the senior producer of Washington Week with Gwen Ifill on PBS and in various roles with CBS News, ABC News Nightline, and PBS's NewsHour. She brings a journalist's eye to her work, coupled with robust experience supporting the communications efforts of hundreds of community development organizations.



## **Colleen Marzilli, PhD, DNP, MBA, FNP-BC, NEA-BC, CNE, PHNA-BC, CCM, MedSurg-BC, FNAP**

**Professor of Nursing and Executive Director**

*The University of Maine and ANA-Maine*

Colleen Marzilli, PhD, DNP, MBA, FNP-BC, NEA-BC, CNE, PHNA-BC, CCM, MedSurg-BC, FNAP, is a nationally recognized nurse leader, educator, and scholar with more than 25 years of experience across clinical practice, academic leadership, and health policy. She serves as a Professor of Nursing at the University of Maine School of Nursing, Lead Provider at ConvenientMD Urgent Care, and as Executive Director of the American Nurses Association-Maine.

# Speakers

Dr. Marzilli's work focuses on leadership development, professional identity, workforce sustainability, health policy advocacy, and innovation in nursing and healthcare education, including the ethical integration of artificial intelligence. She is deeply engaged in curriculum design, accreditation, and advancing inclusive, belonging-centered practice and learning environments aligned with the AACN Essentials and national workforce priorities.

A Fellow of the National Academies of Practice, Dr. Marzilli has held leadership roles at the state and national levels and is widely sought as a speaker on leadership, trust, professional governance, and the future of nursing. Her scholarship and advocacy emphasize compassionate leadership, systems thinking, and preparing nurses to lead meaningful change across healthcare and academic settings.



## **Corenza Townsend**

### **Chief Administrative Officer**

*Norton West Louisville Hospital*

Corenza Townsend serves as the chief administrative officer for Norton West Louisville Hospital, a role she assumed in November 2022. Widely regarded as a visionary and change maker, she excels at developing operational solutions that address complex community and workplace challenges. Corenza began her Norton Healthcare career in 2009 as a licensed practical nurse and clinical super-user during the Epic transition. She entered leadership in 2012 as a practice supervisor with Norton Medical Group and, in 2016, became practice manager for the world-renowned Norton Leatherman Spine Center. From 2020 to 2022, she served as director of provider operations, leading multiple practices and driving strategic growth. Deeply engaged in the Louisville community, Corenza serves on the boards of Dare to Care, the GLI Foundation, Kentucky Derby Festival, Greater Louisville Medical Society, and ElderServe. A multi-small business owner, she holds degrees in business, marketing, and nursing from Sullivan University and is the proud mother of her son, Michael.



## **Dr. Deborah D. Brabham, PhD, RN, CNE**

### **Nurse Scientist, Professor of Nursing**

Dr. Deborah D. Brabham, PhD, RN, CNE, is a Nurse Scientist, Professor of Nursing, and nationally respected leader with more than four decades of experience shaping nursing practice, scholarship, and professional excellence. Her commitment to advancing care is rooted in action, passion and purpose. Across a distinguished clinical and academic career, Dr. Brabham has consistently bridged the gap between research and practice. She serves as the first Nurse Scientist at UF Health Jacksonville, a high-volume, Magnet®-designated Level I Trauma academic teaching hospital. In her pioneering role, she provides strategic leadership for nurse-driven research, evidence-based practice, and quality improvement initiatives across the organization, ensuring that inquiry is not siloed but embedded into everyday clinical care. She has authored and co-authored multiple peer-reviewed publications and has disseminated her work nationally through podium and poster presentations at the National League for Nursing (NLN), the ANCC Magnet Conference, and the Florida Organization of Nurse Leaders (FONL). Through these contributions, Dr. Brabham has influenced how organizations operationalize evidence-based practice and how nurses engage in scholarly work that matters. At the core of her leadership and scholarship is a philosophy that has become synonymous with her name: "If it isn't happening at the bedside, it isn't happening at all. Now let's get to work!"

# Speakers



## **Dr. Marjorie “Cookie” Cooke, DNP, RN, HEIP-NE**

### **Clinical Assistant Professor**

*Mount Sinai Phillips School of Nursing*

I am Dr. Marjorie “Cookie” Cooke, DNP, RN, HEIP-NE, a Clinical Assistant Professor at the Mount Sinai Phillips School of Nursing in New York, where I teach Adult Health/Medical-Surgical Nursing and serve as Lead Health Assessment Lab Instructor. I bring over 25 years of nursing experience across medical-surgical, emergency department, hospice, and pain and palliative care settings, along with more than 17 years of experience as an adjunct clinical instructor. I am a recent graduate of the Health Equity Influencer Program (HEIP) Fellowship, and my scholarly and educational work focuses on bias-aware simulation, inclusive pedagogy, and preparing nurses to deliver equitable, high-quality care.



## **Fernando Mena-Carrasco**

### **PhD Candidate**

*Johns Hopkins School of Nursing*

Fernando Mena-Carrasco is a PhD candidate at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing. He also holds an appointment as a Doctoral Fellow of the American Nurses Association (ANA)/Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Fernando serves as a clinical instructor for pre-licensure master’s students completing population health and psychiatric-mental health clinical rotations, and as a research assistant working on evaluating the implementation and effects of food and health policy on population health outcomes. Before starting the PhD program in 2023, Fernando served as Chief of the Center for HIV, STI Integration and Capacity at the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), where he directed public programs funded by SAMHSA, CDC, and HRSA. Fernando’s goal is to anchor his research in the lived experience of Latino populations in the U.S., employing quantitative methods to capture their diversity and identify the protective and risk factors shaping their behavioral health trajectories, including the prevalence of depression and anxiety symptoms. Additionally, he seeks to harness the power of public policy as a primary preventive measure against mental illness, reducing structural risks and expanding policy initiatives that support their well-being. He is a Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) in Adult Health and is a licensed Registered Nurse (RN) in the State of Maryland.



## **Dr. Giselle Gerardi**

### **Clinical Assistant Professor**

*Stony Brook University School of Nursing*

Dr. Giselle Gerardi is a Clinical Assistant Professor at the Stony Brook University School of Nursing. A 2018–2020 Jonas Scholar, she earned her PhD from The City University of New York Graduate Center, a Master of Science in Nursing in Community and Public Health from the University of Hartford, a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish Language and Literature from Stony Brook University, and an Associate Degree in Nursing from Suffolk County Community College.

With a clinical and scholarly focus on perinatal health, Dr. Gerardi’s research centers on health promotion and disease prevention, with particular attention to perinatal health care among Latine populations. She is the recipient of the 2025 Nassau–Suffolk Excellence in Nursing Award for Education and was a finalist for the Stony Brook University Presidential Award for “Nurturing a Welcoming, Inclusive Campus Culture”.

Dr. Gerardi currently serves as Vice President of the American Nurses Association–New York (ANA-NY) and as a New York State Membership Assembly Representative for ANA-NY.

# Speakers



## **Jackie Hilton**

### **Chief People & Culture Officer**

*American Nurses Enterprise*

Jackie is a passionate advocate for the power of people in driving organizational success. As the Chief People & Culture Officer at American Nurses Enterprise, she believes that every unique individual—their skills, perspectives, and dedication—enables the organization's current and future success. With over 30 years of progressive leadership experience across Fortune 500 companies, mid-market players, and mission-driven organizations, Jackie possesses a holistic view of talent development and organizational dynamics.

Jackie provides leadership and strategic oversight for the Enterprise's Human Resources & Organizational Development, Internal Communications, Equity & Engagement, and Business Services departments. She partners with fellow C-suite executives and cross-functional leaders to co-create people-centric strategies that not only support the organization's mission and goals but also enhance employee engagement and growth to foster a high-performance culture aligned with ANE's core values.

A strong advocate for nurturing the next generation of leaders, Jackie dedicates time for mentoring young professionals and empowering future leaders through community endeavors.

Jackie holds a degree from Oberlin College and is certified as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) and a Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP). She has also completed specialized training in Strategic HR Practices and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Throughout her career, she has built a reputation for driving operational effectiveness, continuously striving to cultivate environments where individuals and organizations thrive.



## **Dr. Jennifer Shepherd**

### **Director, Nursing Practice & Work Environment**

*American Nurses Association*

Dr. Jennifer Shepherd is Director, Nursing Practice & Work Environment at the American Nurses Association, where she leads national initiatives focused on advancing nursing practice, workforce well-being, and evidence-based policy. In this role, she works closely with nurses, health system leaders, and interdisciplinary partners to develop guidance that strengthens professional practice environments and supports nurses across settings. Her work includes a strong emphasis on the ethical and practical integration of emerging technologies—particularly artificial intelligence—into nursing practice, with a focus on safeguarding professional judgment, equity, and patient safety. She is widely engaged in national and international conversations on nursing policy, practice innovation, and the future of the nursing workforce.



## **Jennifer S. Mensik Kennedy**

**PhD, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN**

*President, American Nurses Association*

A sought-after presenter and prolific author, Jennifer S. Mensik Kennedy, PhD, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, serves as the 38th president of the American Nurses Association. In this national leadership role, Dr. Mensik Kennedy boldly advocates for the nation's 5.5 million RNs. In 2025 and for the third consecutive year, she was named by Modern Healthcare as one of the 100 Most Influential People in Healthcare.



# Speakers

Dr. Mensik Kennedy's insights about and experience involving key nursing issues have informed her public appearances and writing. Her books include *Lead, Drive, and Thrive in the System*, 2nd edition, and *The Nurse Manager's Guide to Innovative Staffing*, 3rd edition. She co-authored *Lead like a Nurse, A Nurse's Step-By-Step Guide to Transitioning to the Professional Nurse Role*, and *The Power of Ten*, 2nd edition, and contributed a chapter to *The Career Handoff: A Healthcare Leader's Guide to Knowledge & Wisdom Transfer across Generations*.

Prior to her presidency, Dr. Mensik Kennedy held key leadership positions within the nursing profession, including serving the American Nurses Association as Treasurer, Second Vice President, and Director-at-Large. She also served as President of the Arizona Nurses Association from 2007 to 2010. Additionally, Dr. Mensik Kennedy held the role of governor of nursing practice for the Western Institute of Nursing in 2010-2014.

Dr. Mensik Kennedy earned a PhD from the University of Arizona College of Nursing with a focus on health systems and a minor in public administration from the Eller College of Management. She holds an MBA from the University of Phoenix and a BSN from Washington State University. Dr. Mensik Kennedy also earned an ADN from Wenatchee Valley College-North. She is an assistant clinical professor at the Oregon Health and Science University School of Nursing. Dr. Mensik Kennedy was inducted in 2014 as a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing. She has been recognized as Alumna of the Year by both University of Arizona College of Nursing and Washington State University College of Nursing.



## **Rear Admiral (RDML) Jennifer Moon**

### **Chief Professional Officer**

#### *USPHS Nurse Category*

Rear Admiral (RDML) Jennifer Moon began her nursing career in the emergency department at Washington Hospital Center, later transitioning into the health insurance industry with CareFirst and WellPoint BCBS. In 2002, she joined the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) as a nurse consultant and federal surveyor. Commissioned in the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps in 2005, RDML Moon went on to serve in the Division of Immigration Health Services (now ICE Health Service Corps), taking on roles in managed care coordination and nurse epidemiology.

Following her return to CMS in 2013, she worked on Affordable Care Act (ACA) implementation, becoming a subject matter expert in ACA non-discrimination standards. She returned to IHSC in 2015, eventually serving as Unit Chief for Medical Quality Management. Since 2018, she has held the role of Deputy Assistant Director for Healthcare Compliance at IHSC.

RDML Moon holds a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) from the University of Maryland, with additional degrees from Emory University (MPH), Marymount University (MSN), and Armstrong State University (BSN). A board-certified Family Nurse Practitioner, she has deployed for both national and international missions, including the 2015 Ebola response in Liberia. RDML Moon was also selected as a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing (FAAN) in 2025.

In October 2023, RDML Moon was appointed Chief Professional Officer for the USPHS Nurse Category. Her leadership philosophy is grounded in HOPE: Honor, Obligation, Purpose, and Empowerment. She envisions advancing nursing excellence, fostering recognition of the Corps, and championing the vital role of nurses in safeguarding the nation's health.

# Speakers



## **Jill A. Tobin, MSN, RN**

**National Tele-Neurology Program (NTNP)  
CMCVAMC**

*U.S. Department of Veterans affairs*

Jill A. Tobin, MSN, RN, has served the Department of Veterans Affairs for 20 years. She spent 16 years at VA Black Hills, beginning in medical-surgical nursing and later working 10 years in Home-Based Primary Care. After earning a Master's in Leadership and Health Care Systems, she became Telehealth Nurse Manager and Associate Chief Nurse and spent 6 years in this role. During COVID, she joined the Philadelphia-based National TeleNeurology Program, delivering specialty care to rural Veterans nationwide via secure tele-neurology.



## **Joan C. Williams**

**Professor and Founding Director**

*Sullivan and Equality Action Center at UC Law San Francisco*

Described as having “something approaching rock star status” in her field by The New York Times Magazine, Joan C. Williams is a scholar of social inequality and a prominent public intellectual. Williams is the author of 12 books and 116 academic articles in law, sociology, psychology, medical and management journals. She is the 11th most cited legal scholar both in critical theory and employment law. She is a Sullivan Professor and the Founding Director of the Equality Action Center at UC Law San Francisco, former Founding Director of the Center for WorkLife Law.

She has three TED/TEDx talks, including one with over 1.3 million views. Her 2016 essay on why Trump attracted so many non-college voters went viral, with over 3.7 million reads, becoming the most-read article in the 90-year history of Harvard Business Review. She is widely known for “bias interrupters,”—an evidence-based metrics-driven approach to eradicating implicit bias introduced in the Harvard Business Review in 2014. The website [biasinterrupters.org](http://biasinterrupters.org) with open-sourced toolkits for individuals and organizations has been accessed over 500,000 times. She was profiled in Financial Times and has published on class dynamics in American politics in The New York Times, Washington Post, The Atlantic, The New Republic, Politico, The Hill, the Wall Street Journal and elsewhere.



## **Joanna Seltzer Uribe, EdD, MSN, RN**

**Nurse Informaticist and User Experience Researcher**

Joanna Seltzer Uribe, EdD, MSN, RN is a nurse informaticist and user experience researcher. She implemented one of the first design thinking courses in a nursing school at New York University's Rory Meyers College of Nursing in 2017 and was one of twelve nurses selected nationally for the inaugural Johnson & Johnson Nurse Innovation Fellowship program in 2020. Joanna was on winning interdisciplinary teams in Microsoft's Nurse Hack 4 Health and MIT's Hacking Racism in Healthcare hackathons and in 2021 became the co-creator of the Nurses You Should Know project, a free online micro-learning platform designed to help nurses engage in a more expansive and inclusive nursing history beyond the Crimean War and the Victorian era. Nurses You Should Know received Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funding for 2026.

# Speakers



## **Dr. Young (John) Yauger, PhD, CRNA, FAANA, FAAN**

### **Chief Executive Officer**

*American Association of Nurse Anesthetists Foundation*

Dr. Young (John) Yauger is the current Chief Executive Officer of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists Foundation. He is a US Army combat veteran with 25 years of active military service. His assignments in the military included Executive Director of TriService Nursing Research Program, Assistant Professor and Deputy Research Director in the US Army Graduate Program in Anesthesia Nursing, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist, critical care nurse, and medical surgical nurse.

Academically, Dr. Yauger earned his neuroscience PhD and master's in science of nursing from the Department of Defense's, Uniformed Services University. As an assistant professor and researcher, Dr. Yauger taught biochemistry, leadership, and principles of nurse anesthesia. His research interests include combat nursing, resuscitation, anesthesia, traumatic brain injury, innovative technology, and neuro-inflammation. Dr. Yauger was the first nurse anesthesiologist to become a Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency Service Chief Fellow. Dr. Yauger served as a subject matter expert on neuroscience and combat anesthesia topics on the cutting edge of technology. His positive contributions focused project efforts toward the multi domain operational environment and led to the refinement of new projects identifying potential artificial blood products and traumatic brain injury treatments.



## **Josephine Agyei, BSN, RN**

### **Clinical Nurse, Cardiac Surgery/Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit**

*Mount Sinai Hospital*

Josephine Agyei, BSN, RN is a clinical nurse in the Cardiac Surgery/ Cardiovascular ICU at Mount Sinai Hospital. She is currently pursuing a dual MSN in Healthcare Organizational Leadership and MBA at Johns Hopkins University. At the state level, she co-founded and co-chairs the ANA-New York Young Professionals Special Interest Group, strengthening leadership pathways and engagement for early-career nurses. Nationally, she serves as a Director-at-Large, Staff Nurse on the American Nurses Association Board of Directors, contributing to professional governance and national nursing policy. Internationally, she serves as Chair of the International Council of Nurses Alliance of Students and Early Career Nurses Steering Committee, strengthening the participation and influence of student and early career nurses within ICN and supporting engagement between national nurses associations and emerging nurse leaders globally. Her work is grounded in clinical excellence and focuses on nursing leadership, policy, advocacy, and health equity.



# Speakers



## **Justin Gill, DNP, APRN, RN, FNP-C**

### **President**

*Washington State Nurses Association*

Justin Gill, DNP, APRN, RN, FNP-C serves as the President of the Washington State Nurses Association (WSNA). He is the first person of color to hold the role, and elected at 33 years of age, he is one of the youngest presidents in WSNA history. He works clinically as an urgent care nurse practitioner in Everett, Washington.

Justin has been an active member of WSNA and ANA since graduating from nursing school in 2012. He has held various positions on WSNA's Legislative & Health Policy Council and WSNA's Board of Directors. Nationally, Justin is a former trustee for the American Nurses Association (ANA) Political Action Committee. In 2014, he received the ANA Nurse Advocate Award alongside Senator Susan Collins of Maine. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Justin made numerous appearances on live segments for MSNBC, NBC News, and CBS News, discussing his experience as an Urgent Care NP and commenting on the direct clinical impact of national policy decisions. Justin is a passionate health policy advocate and believes nurses are best positioned to make positive changes in our healthcare system. He feels strongly that nurses possess the skills to address some of the most complex problems that face our society, especially in an era of social and political instability.

Justin obtained his Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Yale University, after completing his Family Nurse Practitioner training and M.S. in Nursing from Georgetown University. He obtained his BSN degree from the University of Washington, Bothell. He has held faculty roles with the University of Washington and Washington State University.



## **Kaitlyn Tallio, DNP, RN, CCRN, CNE**

### **Nursing Professional Development Specialist**

*Methodist Health System*

Kaitlyn Tallio, DNP, RN, CCRN, CNE is a nurse educator involved in the Methodist Health System–Dallas College academic partnership. Her work focuses on strengthening the nursing pipeline through a free ADN and RN-to-BSN nursing program. She utilized her background in critical care, women's health, and clinical judgment development to strengthen her student's skills and abilities to seamlessly transition to nursing practice.



## **Kayla Banks, PhD, RN, NEA-BC**

### **Chancellor**

*Methodist College*

Kayla Banks, PhD, RN, NEA-BC serves as Chancellor of Methodist College, a private, not-for-profit, hospital-affiliated, fully accredited four-year college in Peoria, IL. Prior to her current role, she has served in executive leadership roles in hospital operations, clinical quality and medical education. Her clinical nursing background is in Neuro and Trauma Critical Care. She has held adjunct faculty positions at Illinois Wesleyan University, University of Illinois at Chicago, and Carle Illinois College of Medicine. She completed her BSN at the University of Iowa, and MSN in Nursing Administration and PhD in Nursing at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is published and has presented nationally on the topic of healthcare provider engagement and patient outcomes. In her free time, she loves traveling and spending time with her two young daughters, husband, and dear friends.

# Speakers



## **Kenneth R. White, PhD, APRN-BC, LFACHE, FADLN, FAAN**

**Dean Emeritus of the School of Nursing**

*MGH Institute of Health Professions (IHP)*

Dr. Ken White has served a 52-year career in healthcare as a healthcare executive, international consultant, professor of health administration and nursing, clinician, and internationally-recognized author, speaker, and thought leader. He serves as Dean Emeritus of the School of Nursing at the MGH Institute of Health Professions (IHP) in Boston. Prior to joining the IHP, Dr. White served as the Associate Dean for Strategic Partnerships and Innovation in the School of Nursing and UVA Medical Center Endowed Professor of Nursing at the University of Virginia (UVA). Previous to his time at UVA, Dr. White served as the Sentara Professor and directed the graduate programs in health administration at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) for twenty years. Dr. White holds Emeritus Professor appointments at both VCU and UVA.

He has completed visiting professorships at the Luiss Business School in Rome and at the Swiss School of Public Health. He also has completed consultancies in the Republic of Kazakhstan, Guam, Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau.

Earlier in his career, Dr. White was an executive with the Mercy Health System, an international provider of health care, where he led the civilian hospital in Guam and served in various executive leadership roles with Mercy Health Center in Oklahoma City.

Dr. White is a Fellow in both the American Academy of Nursing and the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). From 2021 to 2023, Dr. White served as the President of the American Academy of Nursing. Dr. White has been honored with ACHE's Gold Medal Award (2019), VCU School of Nursing's Outstanding Alumnus Award (2021), VCU College of Health Professions Lifetime Service and Achievement Award (2023), The DAISY Lifetime Achievement Award (2024), Luminary Fellow (of the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing (FADLN) by the National Black Nurses Association (2024), and the American Academy of Nursing's Linda Burnes Bolton Polaris Award (2025).

In addition to his academic career, Dr. White is a dedicated nurse practitioner, holding a specialty certification in hospice and palliative care. He worked clinically at UVA Medical Center.

He is also the author of the award-winning book, *The Well-Managed Healthcare Organization*, 10th edition (2025); as well as *Take Charge of Your Healthcare Management Career: 50 Lessons that Drive Success* (2015), and *Boost Your Nursing Leadership Career* (2017).



## **Dr. Kenya V. Beard, EdD, AGACNP-BC, ANEF, FAAN, FADLN**

Dr. Kenya V. Beard, EdD, AGACNP-BC, ANEF, FAAN, FADLN is a nationally recognized architect of health equity whose work shapes nursing leadership, healthcare policy, and the ethical integration of artificial intelligence into practice and education. As Founding Dean and Chief Nursing Officer of Mercy University's School of Nursing and former Chair of the New York State Board of Nursing, Dr. Beard has influenced healthcare delivery and workforce policy at the highest levels. She co-founded the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing and served as its inaugural president, creating a national platform that advances equity-centered leadership across nursing education and healthcare systems.

A trusted national voice, Dr. Beard has shaped public discourse through media, policy, and scholarship. She co-produced radio segments on healthcare disparities for WBAI-FM and reached more than 400,000 listeners. She served as a Senior Fellow at the Center for Health Policy and Media Engagement and helped drive national conversations on eliminating health disparities and improving healthcare. She played a pivotal role in shaping the landmark report, *The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity* and co-edited its global companion article, which offers a roadmap for advancing health equity worldwide. She represented the National League for Nursing as a Commissioner for the Racism in Nursing report and her work in the widely acclaimed documentary *Everybody's Work: Healing What Hurts Us All*, highlights her action-oriented implementation of ideas and dedication to co-creating pathways that align vision with action. Her leadership extends beyond media and academia. At the Harvard Macy Institute, she teaches the art of negotiation and innovation to healthcare providers, empowering global leaders to build stronger systems.

# Speakers

Dr. Beard is a recognized policy leader in nursing and emphasizes that nurses must actively influence artificial intelligence (AI) across education and practice settings, ensuring patient safety and preventing bias that could exacerbate inequities. She has led initiatives that have embedded AI literacy and competencies into nursing curricula nationwide, and her Health Equity Influencer Program strengthens the capacity of educators to critically evaluate and implement AI responsibly, highlighting the potential dangers of AI algorithms.

A sought-after speaker and moderator, Dr. Beard advises organizations on the intersection of technology, policy, and care delivery. Emphasizing the use of AI to improve patient safety and outcomes for all populations, she has shared insights at numerous events, including the AI Nurse Nexus, American Association of Colleges of Nursing's Thought Leaders Assembly, and the AI Innovation Consortium Summit. She convened national AI experts and edited *Nursing Education in the AI Era: Practical Guidance for Educators to Advance Equitable Care*, to ensure that nurses are prepared to lead ethical AI discussions from the classroom to the boardroom.

With more than forty-five publications, extensive national presentations, media engagement and interviews, Dr. Beard continues to shape the future of nursing. Her contributions have earned her numerous community and presidential honors, including the prestigious Mary Elizabeth Carnegie Leadership Award.

Dr. Beard is a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing (AAN), the Academy of Nursing Education, the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing, and the New York Academy of Medicine. She serves on the editorial board of the *American Journal of Nursing*, co-chairs the AAN's Institute for Nursing Leadership, and remains deeply committed to building a more just, inclusive, and equitable healthcare system.



## **Khaliah Fisher-Grace, PhD, RN, CPHQ, PCCN-K**

### **Director of System Policy, Quality Improvement & Operations University Hospitals Health System**

Dr. Khaliah Fisher-Grace is Registered Nurse with balanced clinical and leadership experience, and a solid educational foundation. She is a scholar practitioner, serving over twenty years in clinical practice alongside twelve years in nursing education.

As a health systems-based Nurse Scientist with progressive leadership roles in healthcare quality has distinguished herself as an expert in improvement science, federal regulations, and organizational policy; previously holding the position of Principal Advisor for Accreditation and currently serving as the Director of System Policy, Quality Improvement & Operations University Hospitals Health System.

Dr. Fisher-Grace obtained both her BSN and MSN in Healthcare Management from Kent State University. She earned her PhD in Nursing from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA

Using her experience, education, and voice to serve others she has held elected and appointed volunteer leadership positions on the American Nurses Association Board of Directors, AARP Caregiving Advisory Task Force and in the Greater Cleveland Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Through local and national board service, she provides thought leadership on health-related issues, and as an activist and advocate, utilizes social justice principles to uphold patient rights.

# Speakers



## **Lauren Lodico**

### **Senior Staff Nurse**

*NYU Langone Health in Mineola*

Lauren Lodico is a registered nurse with experience in clinical practice, leadership, and advocacy. She earned a BSN with a minor in Writing from Molloy University in 2024. Lauren works as a senior staff nurse at NYU Langone Health in Mineola, NY, where she serves as a Skin Champion, and as a per diem nurse with Island Occupational Medical Resources, providing occupational health services across Long Island. A dedicated advocate for student and early-career nurses, Lauren focuses on strengthening engagement in professional nursing organizations. She is Co-Chair of the Young Professionals Special Interest Group for the American Nurses Association–New York (ANA-NY) and is also a Director-At-Large on ANA-NY's BOD. Previously, she served as the 72nd President of the National Student Nurses' Association (2023–2024), representing over 50,000 members nationwide, and held multiple leadership roles with the Nursing Students' Association of New York State (NSANYS).



## **Liffy Cherian, MSN, APRN, AGCNS-BC, OCN**

### **Adult Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist**

*Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center*

Liffy Cherian, MSN, APRN, AGCNS-BC, OCN, is a board-certified Adult Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist in the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center at UT Southwestern Medical Center, specialized in Bone Marrow transplant – Hematological Malignancies, currently leading the Oncology Acute Care program.

Ms. Cherian received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Christian College of Nursing in India in 1995, and her Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Cincinnati in 2016. Ms. Cherian started her nursing career as a critical care nurse, has worked in oncology since 2001, as a bedside nurse, educator, and beginning in 2018, as an Advanced Practice Provider. Her specialty is in Hematological malignancies, specifically Lymphoma. As a clinical nurse specialist, she has been actively involved in implementing various safety and quality projects and was instrumental in establishing a structured chemotherapy privileging process for APPs at UTSW. She currently serves as the APP Lead for the Simmons Acute Care, Infusion services and Clinical Trial Unit. She was awarded the prestigious DFW Great 100 Nurses and D-Magazine Nurse Excellence Award as Educator in 2018.

Ms. Cherian is a member of the Advanced Practitioner Society for Hematology and Oncology (APSHO), the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS), the National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialist (NACNS), and the American Nurses Association (ANA). She also has multiple presentations and publications to her credit in the field of oncology and practice improvements. She currently serves as the Executive Vice President of the National Association of Indian Nurses of America (NAINA). As the EVP, Ms. Cherian played an integral role in the organizations journey for ANCC reaccreditation, organizational excellence through academic partnership and development of Leadership Academy. At UT Southwestern, she serves as the chair of the Oncology APP Education Committee and Mentors new and experienced APPs through the APP mentorship Program.



# Speakers



## Lily Zheng

**Strategist, Consultant, and Author**

*FAIR Framework*

LILY ZHENG (they/them) is a no-nonsense strategist, consultant, and author who helps leaders build workplaces that work for everyone. They are the creator of the FAIR Framework, an evidence-based approach giving guidance to those driving the next evolution of workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion. Lily's work has been featured in the Harvard Business Review, New York Times, and NPR, and their bestselling books, *DEI Deconstructed*, *Reconstructing DEI*, and the newly released *Fixing Fairness*, lay out the practical skills and knowledge anyone can use to create the healthy workplaces we all deserve.



## Lydia Nichols, MSN, RN, CHL, Certified Integrity Coach®

**Founder & CEO, Founder & Executive Director, Founder & Principal Consultant**

*Integrated Wellness CMS, YouthTHRIVE (501(c)(3)), Integrity Nurse Consultants PLLC*

Lydia Nichols — known as The Integrity Nurse — is a respected nurse leader, healthcare strategist, and social entrepreneur with over 20 years of experience advancing equitable care for underserved children, families, and communities. She is a Certified Health Leader and Certified Integrity Coach®, recognized for her bold leadership, clarity of vision, and uncommon ability to move systems forward.

A boots-on-the-ground kind of woman, Lydia is widely known as the “Olivia Pope of Healthcare” — purpose-driven, determined, and unapologetic in her commitment to transforming systems that no longer serve the people they were built for. She is the founder and CEO of multiple organizations, bridging gaps in healthcare one pediatric patient at a time, where she leads innovative care coordination, behavioral health, and youth development initiatives at the intersection of care, community, and change.

Beyond the titles and the work, Lydia is the proud mother of a Morehouse graduate and a rising high school senior, and a devoted dog mom — grounded in family, fueled by purpose, and led by a vision bigger than herself. She is a sought-after speaker and thought leader on health equity, leadership, and the future of nursing, leaving institutions stronger, leaders clearer, and communities permanently changed in her wake.



## Manu Thakral PhD, NP

**Nurse Scientist**

*Boston Medical Center*

Manu Thakral, PhD, NP, is the inaugural Nurse Scientist at Boston Medical Center, a Magnet-recognized, safety-net health system, where she serves as a strategic partner to nursing and health system leadership. In this role, she builds and sustains an integrated nursing research and mentorship infrastructure across hospital and ambulatory settings, intentionally designed to expand opportunity, elevate frontline nursing voices, and align nurse-led scholarship with organizational and workforce priorities.

Dr. Thakral designs systems, workflows, and tiered mentorship models that enable nurses across roles and career stages to move ideas into action; thus, leading research, translating evidence into practice, and informing system-level decision-making. Her work reframes nurse-led research as essential infrastructure for care transformation, professional advancement, and equity-driven innovation within a safety-net environment.

# Speakers

Funded through an AHRQ/PCORI program, Dr. Thakral conducts patient-centered outcomes and comparative effectiveness research evaluating innovative, team-based care delivery models that integrate nurse practitioners into primary care transformation. Drawing on population health methods and real-world clinical data, her research advances evidence-based care while addressing disparities experienced by underserved populations.

Through accessible research resources, individualized and scalable mentorship, and interdisciplinary collaboration, Dr. Thakral fosters a culture of inquiry that strengthens nursing leadership in health system strategy, quality improvement, and policy-relevant decision-making. Central to her leadership is advancing equity and opportunity by ensuring that diverse patient populations and frontline nursing perspectives meaningfully shape research agendas, care delivery models, and the future of healthcare.



## **Marion Phillips III**

### **Senior Vice President for Community Development**

*U.S. News & World Report*

Marion Phillips is the Senior Vice President for Community Development at U.S. News & World Report, leading the company's efforts in business and community development, company-wide DEI education and community engagement, and expanding opportunities to grow the reader, consumer and customer base.

Prior to joining U.S. News he served as the Senior Vice President of Community Relations at New York State's Empire State Development, managing over \$14 billion in development projects, including serving as the Chair of Queens West Development Corporation, President of the Atlantic Yards Community Development Corporation and Chief Administrative Officer of the New York Empowerment Zone Corporation. In addition, Phillips oversaw the Harlem Community Development Corporation as well as its community and government affairs department. Shepherding the community engagement efforts on large scale projects such as, the Jacob Javits Convention Center expansion, National Urban League HQ, Penn Station expansion, and construction of the UBS arena and development of over 5,000 units of housing.

Phillips has always had a passion for encouraging and elevating young people through education, evidenced by being the founder of Parents for School Choice that assisted in the drafting and passage of the New York State Charter School legislation in 1999. The organization collected more than 88,000 petition signatures in support of charter schools. He was instrumental in establishing the first charter school in New York State, the Walter Sisulu Charter School in Harlem.

Phillips earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Mass Communications from Lamar University and a Master of Divinity from New York Theological Seminary. A devout community activist, he serves as a founding board member and treasurer of the Wendy Hilliard Foundation, the policy chair at the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies as well as serving on other boards that specialize in and oversee education and youth projects/organizations.



## **Dr. Marlon Garzo Saria**

### **Nurse Scientist and Magnet Program Director**

*Providence Saint John's Health Center*

Dr. Marlon Garzo Saria, a global leader in nursing, professional association and military service, proudly carries his Philippine heritage as a cornerstone of his identity and professional journey. He serves as the Nurse Scientist and Magnet Program Director at Providence Saint John's Health Center in Santa Monica, California. Additionally, he holds the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, assigned to the 452d Aeromedical Staging Squadron at March Air Reserve Base, California. As President of the Philippine Nurses Association of America, Dr. Saria is committed to advocating for improved healthcare across all communities and increasing representation within the nursing profession. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing.

# Speakers



## **Mercedes Wells**

### **Black Maternal Health Advocate**

Mercedes Wells is an advocate for equitable maternal healthcare whose personal experience sparked widespread national conversation about patient care and dignity. Mercedes and her husband were traveling when she sought care at an Indiana hospital while in active labor. After being discharged despite ongoing contractions, she gave birth to her daughter, Alena, roadside, a moment captured in widely shared video and media coverage.

Since that day, Mercedes has worked with her family and legal counsel to raise awareness about barriers to respectful maternity care and to urge improved policies to ensure that all birthing individuals are heard and cared for appropriately, with dignity and compassion.



## **Monique Swaby BSN, RN**

### **Second-year DNP Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Student**

*Purdue University in Lafayette*

Monique Swaby BSN, RN, Doctoral (Current) Monique Swaby, BSN, RN, is a second-year DNP Mental Health Nurse Practitioner student at Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana. Her scholarly project will focus on implementing an intimate partner violence (IPV) traumatic brain injury (TBI) screening program among women survivors. The project will also highlight racial disparities in screening, diagnosis, referral for treatment interventions, and cultural considerations among African American women when they are seeking help from healthcare providers and organizations. Ms. Swaby plans to complete and defend her dissertation regarding racial disparities among women evaluated in U.S. emergency departments for IPV TBI. Research studies have revealed that African American women experience IPV TBI at a higher rate than other races. Ms. Swaby has an extensive clinical background in Emergency Medicine, Women's Health, Gastroenterology, Primary Care, Public Health Nursing, Occupational Health, Medical Intensive Care Unit, and Utilization Management. She served as a U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman for ten years. She volunteered her time for various agencies including the National Lymphoma Society, Black Nurses Association, Hampton Roads Medical Reserve Corps, and the Healthcare Ministry at local churches. Upon graduation, she plans to travel to Belize and work with the Violence Against Women and Girls organization to implement IPV TBI screening for women survivors.



## **Naomi Blakey, MSN, RN, PCCN**

### **Second-year DNP Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Student**

Naomi Blakey, MSN, RN is a nurse leader and educator with expertise in bedside leadership development, professional governance, and workforce engagement. She is known for translating relational leadership behaviors into practical, repeatable strategies that strengthen team confidence, psychological safety, and professional agency. Drawing from frontline leadership experience, Naomi focuses on activating leadership capacity at the bedside through mentorship, presence, and accountability. Her work emphasizes discernment before action—helping leaders read team dynamics, anticipate resistance, and lead with clarity in complex clinical environments.

# Speakers



## **Nicolle L. Arthun**

**CEO**

*Transcending Strategies LLC*

Nicolle L. Arthun is a nationally and internationally recognized Indigenous midwife, maternal health strategist, and policy advocate with over 22 years of experience building transformative, Native-led care systems. She is the founder of the Changing Woman Initiative and the CEO of Transcending Strategies LLC, where she partners with tribal and nonprofit leaders on organizational design, governance, leadership development, and culturally grounded maternal health models. An alumna of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Health Policy Fellows program, she served in the Office of U.S. Senator Ben Ray Luján, helping advance maternal health, Medicaid, Nursing and Indigenous health policy. Across rural and urban communities and on global stages, Nicolle bridges traditional Indigenous knowledge with clinical and policy frameworks—providing expert testimony before the United Nations, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and U.S. legislative bodies in support of reproductive sovereignty and culturally safe care.



## **Oriana Beaudet, DNP, RN, FAAN**

**Vice President of Innovation**

*American Nurses Association and Enterprise (ANE)*

Oriana Beaudet is the Vice President of Innovation for the American Nurses Association and Enterprise (ANE). The ANA Enterprise includes the American Nurses Association, Nurses Credentialing, and Nurses Foundation.

Her doctoral work focused on nurse-led innovation and how innovation and power structures can be used to shift culture, behavior, and practices to advance nurses and the nursing profession. Prior to ANA, Dr. Beaudet ran her own business as a strategic partner for organizations, healthcare executives, and startups. Oriana's last position was for a national healthcare design firm as the Vice President of Transformation. She is a member of the Strategic Board Placement Group for the Nurses on Board Coalition (NOBC) and sits on the Governing Directors Board for the Alliance for Nursing Informatics.

Per Oriana, “The nursing profession has a rich history of inventing solutions for patient needs, and redefining and reimagining the future role of nurses and nursing starts with the work we lead today.”



## **Ravenne Aponte**

**PhD Candidate**

*University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing*

Ravenne Aponte is a PhD Candidate at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing in the Barbara Bates Center for the Study of the History of Nursing. Her research focuses on the history of nursing and Black women's health promotion efforts. Her dissertation project examines the relationship between Black nurses and Black clubwomen in the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs and their collaborative efforts with Black nurses and physicians to address community members' health and social needs in the mid-twentieth century. She is also the co-creator of Nurses You Should Know, a digital micro-blog about past and present-day nurses' contributions to healthcare.

Ravenne is a registered nurse who specializes in pediatric critical care and community health. She received her Bachelor of Arts in African American Studies and Health Disparities from the University of Florida in 2016 and then completed an Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Duke University in 2017.



# Speakers



## **Dr. G. Rumay Alexander, EdD, RN, FAAN**

**Professor**

*School of Nursing*

G. Rumay Alexander, EdD, RN, FAAN, is a Professor at the School of Nursing. Dr. Alexander joined the School of Nursing in 2003 and has held a variety of leadership positions, both within and outside of the school. In addition to serving on the faculty, she was director of the School of Nursing's Office of Inclusive Excellence, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion for the entire UNC-Chapel Hill Campus, and provided leadership and resources for the Gillings School of Global Public Health and the Adams School of Dentistry. Dr. Alexander is currently the American Nurses Association's Scholar-in-Residence Addressing Racism in Nursing and serves on The Leapfrog Group Board. She also taught a multi-session training program at Faculty Council meetings and continues to lead the Faculty Governance Committee on Community and Diversity.

Her nursing career spans over 45 years in the areas of public policy, advocacy, teaching, and health careers development with an emphasis on cultural diversity issues. At a national level, she has served as President of the National League for Nursing, whose membership is over 40,000 nurse educators and 1200 schools of nursing, served on the AHA's Workforce Commission, the board of The American Organization of Nurse Executives, The National Quality Forum Nursing Care Performance Measures' Steering Committee, Chairperson of the AONE Diversity Council, and a member of the AHA's Leadership Circle of Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care. She frequently speaks to groups across the country on the issues of the healthcare workforce, diversity, and strategic planning.



## **Dr. Sabrina Ali Jamal-Eddine, PhD RN**

**Postdoctoral Researcher**

**Department of Disability and Human Development**

*University of Illinois Chicago*

Dr. Sabrina Ali Jamal-Eddine, PhD RN is a health humanities nurse scientist, disability justice scholar-activist, and postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Disability and Human Development at University of Illinois Chicago where she previously completed her PhD in Nursing and certificate in Disability Ethics. Dr. Jamal-Eddine's research seeks to dismantle ableism in nursing education and practice through decolonial pedagogic strategies and community-based interventions rooted in the lived experiences of multiply marginalized disabled people. Dr. Jamal-Eddine simultaneously theorizes how systems of oppression including climate crises, unjust labor conditions, lack of access to primary and specialized healthcare, medicalized violence, police brutality, war, apartheid, and genocide disproportionately manufacture disability, both domestically and transnationally.

Dr. Jamal-Eddine is a 2026 Johns Hopkins Nursing Science Incubator in Social Determinants of Health Solutions Fellow, an inaugural 2025-26 Hispanic Serving Research University Postdoctoral Fellow, and a 2024-25 Paul K. Longmore Institute Emerge Disability Justice Fellow. Dr. Jamal-Eddine is an emerging national disability leader shaping the disciplines of nursing and disability studies through high impact publications, invited presentations, research collaborations, and community-based scholar-artist-activism.

# Speakers



## **Dr. Sarah E. Gray**

**Senior Vice President of Nursing Impact**

*American Nurse Enterprise*

Dr. Sarah E. Gray joined the American Nurse Enterprise in November 2025 as the Senior Vice President of Nursing Impact. Before coming to ANE, Dr. Gray was the Chief Nursing Officer for Sigma Theta Tau International, where she developed strategic partnerships, continuing education programs, and led Sigma's consultative status and programming with the United Nations (UN). Dr. Gray's 24 year nursing career includes 15 years in emergency, occupational and employee health, and as clinical adjunct faculty.



## **Dr. Selena A Gilles, DNP, ANP-BC, CNEcl, ANEF, FNYAM, FNAP, FADLN, FAANP, FAAN**

**Practice Professor and Associate Dean**

*University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing*

Dr Selena A Gilles is a Practice Professor and Associate Dean at University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. She is an Affiliate Faculty member of the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing (HIGN) at NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing, an Affiliate Associate Professor at Howard University College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences, and a Volunteer Associate Professor for the State University of Haiti.

Dr Gilles has a DNP from Monmouth University (2014), a MS in Adult Health Nursing from Hunter College, City University of New York, (Cum Laude, 2010) and a BS with a major in Nursing degree from Long Island University (With Honors, 2005). Dr Gilles is a certified Clinical Nurse Educator and is also certified in Critical Care Nursing. Dr Gilles is an Adult Nurse Practitioner specializing in pain management, substance misuse, and global public health.

Dr Gilles has been a nurse educator for 15 years and is known for creating and implementing nontraditional immersive teaching/learning innovations to address nationally identified nursing education issues that will enhance student learning/program outcomes. She is regarded as a leader and prelicensure nursing education expert who has implemented curricular innovations that have been evidenced-based, creative and effective teaching strategies, having a significant impact on student academic success and role transitions. Her contributions have helped enhance the nursing curriculum, filling identified gaps and answering the new Essentials call for all entry-level professional nurses to have knowledge and proficiencies to practice across a variety of settings in the spheres of wellness/disease prevention and chronic disease management.

Dr Gilles is passionate about the management of acute and chronic pain, as well as opioid overdose prevention. She currently works as a Nurse Practitioner in an outpatient treatment program, caring for patients with substance use disorders. Dr Gilles is the Program Director of the Greater NYC Black Nurses Association Opioid Overdose Prevention Program, conducting naran trainings for healthcare professionals and community members throughout NYC.

Dr Gilles has strong community advocacy and passion for global health, currently working with organizations aimed to serve the underprivileged and underserved communities in Haiti, Ghana, and Nigeria. Dr Gilles is a Fulbright Specialist and has been on seven medical missions.

# Speakers

Dr. Gilles is currently a member of six professional organizations/associations, including serving as the current President of the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing where she is also a founding member, current Vice Chair of DNP's of Color, and the inaugural Programming and Community Service Committee Chair for the Greater NYC Black Nurses Association. Dr. Gilles is an NLN LEAD Alum (2019) and U Penn Wharton Nurse Executive Leader Alum (2020). She has received the NBNA Under 40 Award (2019), Nurse of the Year Award for Community Service (2020), and Advanced Practice Nurse of the Year Award (2022). She has also received the Leota P Brown Community Service Award from Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc (2021). Dr. Gilles is the recipient of the GNYCBNA Nurse of the Year for Community Service (2021) and the NYU Rory Meyers Humanitarian Award (2021). Dr. Gilles is a Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine (2020), a Fellow into the American Academy of Nursing (2023), a Fellow of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (2024), a Fellow Academy of Nursing Education (2023), a Fellow in the National Academies of Practice (2025), and A Fellow of the Diversity Leaders in Nursing (2024). Dr. Gilles has also been recognized as a Distinguished Geriatric Nurse Educator (2023) designated by the National Hartford Center for Gerontological Nursing.



## **Dr. Sheldon D. Fields PhD, RN, CRNP, FNP-BC, AACRN, FAANP, FNAP, FADLN, FAAN**

**Research Professor and inaugural Associate Dean**

*Ross and Carol Nese College of Nursing*

Dr. Sheldon D. Fields is currently Research Professor and inaugural Associate Dean for Equity and Inclusion in the Ross and Carol Nese College of Nursing at Penn State University. He is also founder and CEO of "The S.D.F Group, LLC", which is a health innovation consultant company. He has over 30 years of experience in the health sector as an educator, researcher, clinician, administrator, consultant, health policy specialist, and entrepreneur / business owner. He is a well-known and respected HIV/AIDS prevention research scientist, an Advanced AIDS Certified Registered Nurse and a Board-Certified Family Nurse Practitioner. He is the 14<sup>th</sup> President of the National Black Nurses Association and a former Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellow. He is a FAAN, FNAP, FADLN, and FAANP fellow. Dr. Fields received his Ph.D., in Nursing Science from the University of Pennsylvania, and his M.S., in Family Nursing and B.S., in Nursing from Binghamton University.



## **Dr. Stephanie Pitts, DNP, RN, CPN, VA-BC, NEA-BC**

**Vice President of Strategic Programs & Innovation**

*B. Braun Medical*

Dr. Stephanie Pitts has 30 years of healthcare experience that includes pediatric care, oncology, emergency/trauma, vascular access, healthcare leadership, and med/tech innovation. Dr. Pitts is the Vice President of Strategic Programs & Innovation at B. Braun Medical. In her role, she leads strategic healthcare programs, business development & innovation. She practiced as a pediatric nurse for 25 years, making significant contributions advancing pediatric care including research, publications and the development of new medical technologies. She holds a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from MGH Institute of Health Professions. She is also a Certified Pediatric Nurse, Vascular Access Board Certified, and Nurse Executive Advanced Board Certified. Dr. Pitts is focused on advancing healthcare forward, with patient and provider safety a #1 priority.

# Speakers



## **Dr. Suha Ballout, PhD, RN, FAAN, FADLN**

**Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Associate Professor in the Department of Biobehavioral Nursing & Health Informatics**

*University of Washington School of Nursing*

Suha Ballout, PhD, RN, FAAN, FADLN, is Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Associate Professor in the Department of Biobehavioral Nursing & Health Informatics at the University of Washington School of Nursing. A nationally and internationally recognized nurse educator and scholar, Dr. Ballout advances health equity by redesigning how nurses are taught to assess health, understand social and structural context, and act ethically within systems shaped by inequity.

Across undergraduate nursing education, curriculum governance, faculty development, workforce initiatives, and international engagement, Dr. Ballout has led sustained, scalable educational transformation. Her teaching repositions health equity as a core clinical competency rather than an abstract concept. In large, required undergraduate courses, she implemented applied pedagogies, including community asset mapping, structural vulnerability assessment, and policy-informed care planning. These approaches require students to analyze how racism, migration status, gender identity, and socioeconomic conditions shape health outcomes, reaching hundreds of students each semester and influencing thousands of pre-licensure nurses over time. Dr. Ballout is also recognized for advancing equity through assessment innovation. She replaced high-stakes, test-centered evaluation with reflective praxis papers, community-engaged projects, and policy briefs tied to real-world health challenges. These equity-aligned assessments reduced structural bias associated with standardized testing while improving engagement, progression, and applied clinical reasoning among first-generation students, students of color, and internationally educated learners.

Beyond the classroom, Dr. Ballout expanded the reach of health equity education through faculty development and institutional reform. She designed and led campus-wide initiatives on trauma-informed pedagogy, inclusive syllabus design, and equitable evaluation practices, engaging hundreds of faculty across disciplines and embedding equity-centered teaching into institutional standards beyond nursing. In her current role as Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Dr. Ballout advances health equity by embedding DEIB into the core systems that shape educational and work environments. She leads the development of structures, policies, and consultation pathways that integrate equity into curriculum design, faculty and staff support, evaluation practices, and organizational communication. Her approach positions DEIB as a structural driver of educational excellence, accreditation readiness, workforce sustainability, and psychological safety, rather than a stand-alone initiative. Through listening sessions, climate and equity baseline development, and low-barrier consultation focused on learning, prevention, and repair, she ensures that equity and belonging are operationalized in daily practice, shaping conditions in which faculty, staff, and students can thrive and remain.

Dr. Ballout's educational leadership also extends to workforce and policy systems. As Co-Principal Investigator of the \$20 million Clinical Leadership Collaborative for Diversity in Nursing, she applied educational design and mentorship models to support more than 400 nursing students from historically excluded backgrounds through graduation and transition to practice, strengthening workforce diversity and readiness. As Principal Investigator of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education-funded MB-Health WEAVE Framework, she led a cross-sector, education-driven effort to map statewide behavioral health workforce gaps. The resulting framework is now used by state agencies to guide training investments, funding priorities, and workforce policy planning.

Internationally, Dr. Ballout advances health equity through sustained educational initiatives focused on LGBTQ+ health, trauma, and culturally responsive care in the Middle East and Europe. Through curriculum consultation, workshops, and invited lectures in politically constrained settings, she equips healthcare learners and educators with evidence-based, culturally humble approaches to care for marginalized populations, modeling ethical global engagement rooted in partnership rather than extraction.

A Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and the Academy of Diverse Nurse Leaders, Dr. Ballout is widely published and frequently invited to speak on equity-centered nursing education, trauma-informed leadership, and decolonial approaches to health professions training. Through teaching, assessment reform, faculty development, DEIB leadership, workforce education, and policy-relevant scholarship, she demonstrates how nurse educators can drive systemic change, ensuring health equity is embedded as standard practice across education, healthcare delivery, and policy.

# Speakers



## **Tadele (Tad) Worku**

### **Executive Mission Coach**

*Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP)*

Tadele (Tad) Worku is a Family Nurse Practitioner, educator, musician, and executive mission coach at Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP)—the largest not-for-profit Medicare and Medicaid health plan in the country. Known for his ability to bridge heart, insight, and awareness, Tad works with leaders and teams to help them align with purpose, rediscover meaning, and lead with joy.

His leadership and service have earned him numerous honors, including the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses, Vanderbilt's Outstanding Family Nurse Practitioner Student of the Year, Loma Linda University Health's Emergency Nurse of the Year, and the Child Life Hero Award from Loma Linda University Children's Hospital. Tad also served as an ambassador for the AARP Center for Health Equity through Nursing (A-CHEN).

In 2012, Tad was poised to launch an international pop music career but walked away to follow a deeper calling. That journey led him into emergency nursing at a Level 1 trauma center, where he experienced profound human connection that would shape both his music and his mission. Today, Tad combines his background in healthcare, executive coaching, and the arts to inspire transformation in others. Whether through his work with mission-driven leaders, his dynamic keynote speaking, or his powerful music, Tad's life and work reflect a single aim: to ignite hope and help others rise into the fullness of who they are.



## **Tiffany Covarrubias-Lytle, MSN, RN, NEA-BC**

### **Director of Cultural Integration & Nurse Wellness**

*Centra*

Covarrubias-Lytle is a nurse leader dedicated to creating safer, more equitable environments for both nurses and the communities they serve. As Centra's Director of Cultural Integration & Nurse Wellness, she leads systemwide efforts to strengthen civility, psychological safety, and workforce well-being. She previously founded the organization's Nurse Wellness Office and developed programs, including Code Lavender, workplace violence response toolkits, The OASIS, and peer support teams.

Her work extends beyond her health system to statewide and national advocacy, from advancing rural health and climate-related disease education to shaping workforce policy and supporting nurse-led wellbeing programs nationwide. Covarrubias-Lytle currently serves as the Commission of Nursing Practice with the Virginia Nurses Association and on the Policy and Advocacy Committee as the Climate Health Chair for the National Association of Hispanic Nurses. At the heart of her career is a simple belief: when nurses are protected and supported, whole communities have an opportunity to thrive.



## **Tim Nanof, MSW**

### **Executive Vice President for Policy & Government Affairs**

*ANA*

Tim Nanof is ANA's Executive Vice president for Policy & Government Affairs. He has two decades of health care policy and advocacy experience across several national associations. Prior to joining the ANA, Tim was the Policy Director for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) where he led a team of 8 analysts and advocates. Before that Tim served as the lead federal lobbyist for the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

Tim has a bachelor's degree from the University of Maine and a graduate degree from George Mason University. He lives in Beallsville, MD on a small farm with his wife and two sons.



# Speakers



## **Wallena Gould, EdD, CRNA, FADLN, FAANA, FAAN**

### **Founder and CEO**

#### *Diversity in Nurse Anesthesia Mentorship Program*

Dr. Wallena Gould, EdD, CRNA, FADLN, FAANA, FAAN is the founder and CEO of the non-profit organization, Diversity in Nurse Anesthesia Mentorship Program and former Chief Nurse Anesthetist. For 21 years, this grassroots organization program has successfully mentored over 1,210 marginalized diverse critical care nurses into 96 out of 140 graduate nurse anesthesia programs.

In 2015, Dr. Gould was inducted as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

Dr. Gould is the first Nurse Anesthetist of color inducted as a member into the Academy on contributory national work in diversifying the nurse anesthesia profession. In 2018, Dr. Gould was the recipient of the Trailblazer Award from the National Black Nurses Association.

Most notably, Dr. Gould was the recipient of the 2019 American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology Agatha Hodgins Award for Outstanding Achievement. There are only two CRNAs of color with the highest AANA Award distinction with Goldie Brangman and Dr. Gould as recipients. In August 2021, Dr. Gould was inducted in the inaugural cohort as a Fellow of the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology.

In 2022, Dr. Gould wrote Chapter 3, Patient Centered Care & Cultural Competence in Nurse Anesthesia Practice in the Nurse Anesthesia 7th edition by Nagelhout. In addition, Dr. Gould was selected as an American Academy of Nursing Edge Runner on an innovative evidenced-based nursing model, Immersion Model for Diversifying Nurse Anesthesia Programs. This is the first time a CRNA was recognized as a premier nursing model with the prestigious American Academy of Nursing.

In 2024, Dr. Gould was the team lead as the recipient of the American Nurses Association Innovation Team Award for the Immersion Model for Diversifying Nurse Anesthesia Programs. And, she was inducted in the inaugural cohort as a Fellow of the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing. Lastly, Dr. Gould is a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated.

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