



2026 HEALTHCARE SUMMIT SPEAKER BIOS

THE DUPONT CIRCLE HOTEL - JULY 15-16



Dr. S. Hassan A. Akbari, MD, MSCI, is an Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida. He earned his medical degree and a Master of Science in Clinical Investigation at Washington University School of Medicine, where he also completed his neurosurgery residency and served as chief resident. He completed a pediatric neurosurgery fellowship at Children's Hospital of Alabama before joining Johns Hopkins All Children's. Dr. Akbari specializes in pediatric neurosurgery, with clinical and research interests including Chiari malformation, hydrocephalus, brain tumors, spasticity, and spinal dysraphism. He serves as Director of Clinical Research, Medical Director for the Institute of Brain Protection Sciences Research Council, and Assistant Program Director for the pediatric neurosurgery fellowship.



Yesenia Banks is Senior Manager of U.S. Reimbursement and Healthcare Policy at Solventum, where she supports the wound care and med-surg divisions by analyzing Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial payer policies and translating regulatory changes into actionable guidance. With more than 25 years of experience in healthcare reimbursement, policy, coding, and consulting, she has held leadership roles across provider organizations, medical device companies, and healthcare technology firms. A Certified Professional Coder, Yesenia is also the founder of a billing and legal consulting practice. She is passionate about mentoring others, advancing healthcare reimbursement education, and supporting initiatives that strengthen access to quality patient care.



Courtney Chambers, MPH Courtney Chambers serves as a Senior Associate with The Pew Charitable Trusts, where she supports initiatives focused on strengthening democratic institutions and advancing effective public policy. She brings experience in public affairs, policy research, and stakeholder engagement, with a passion for fostering civic participation and improving government effectiveness. Courtney earned her master's degree from DePaul University and is committed to building collaborative solutions that help communities and policymakers address complex challenges.



Flora Coan is a Regional Manager at Solventum, where she leads strategic business development and government partnerships to advance healthcare innovation and improve public health outcomes. Since joining the company in 2022, she has played a key role in fostering collaboration across state agencies and Solventum's regulatory, clinical, and research teams to support the adoption of innovative healthcare solutions. Previously, Flora served as an administrator with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, where she oversaw the financial and business operations of Nebraska's Medicaid Managed Care programs. She holds a Master of Public Administration from Bellevue University and is passionate about building partnerships that improve healthcare access, quality, and outcomes.



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Elisha Coffey is the Vice President of States Advocacy at Mental Health America. Her work includes nurturing relationships with Mental Health America affiliates, generating leading-edge learning opportunities for the attendees of Regional Policy Council meetings, and creating policy advocacy opportunities for affiliates. Elisha holds an MSW from Temple University and is a certified peer specialist. Her systems advocate work for Valley Youth House resulted in the first youth-focused point-in-time count of youth experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia and city funding for more shelter beds dedicated to young adults. Her time as a policy advocate with MHA affiliate Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania (currently Mental Health Partnerships) solidified her determination to center the voices of individuals with lived experience



Renee Dabbs works as the Interim Executive Director the National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL), where she is responsible for the leadership and management of NFWL following the strategic direction set by the Board of Directors. She is the principal of Renee Dabbs, LLC, a management consulting firm specializing in organizational strategy, operations, and sales growth. Renee helps organizations improve performance, align goals, and drive sustainable results. She is a certified CliftonStrengths Facilitator, guiding leaders and teams to maximize their talents and collaborate effectively. Renee's background includes serving as COO of a top-tier Republican media production firm and a 16-year leadership career at Procter & Gamble.



Cheryl Fisher M.Ed., LPC, is the Vice President of Business Development for Foster Care and Child Welfare Programs at Centene. Cheryl joined the company in 2010 as the Clinical Manager for the Texas Foster Care managed care program. That role grew to include oversight of behavioral health programs in multiple states serving a foster care population. Cheryl leads a team through Centene that focuses on managing healthcare services for youth in the child welfare system. Prior to working for Centene, Cheryl was a therapist for the Victim Assistance Centre in Houston, TX, where she provided counseling focusing on child victims of physical and sexual abuse. Cheryl has over 20 years of experience serving children with behavioral health conditions and emotional disturbances.



John Gay leads the Pharmaceutical Product Stewardship Work Group's engagement with national, state, and local legislators and regulators. He brings over 30 years of experience in advocacy and association management, having served as executive director and CEO of the Natural Products Association and leading government affairs programs for the National Restaurant Association, the Consumer Healthcare Products Association, and the International Franchise Association. He also served as Chair of the National Immigration Forum, a coalition advancing federal immigration policy. John holds a B.A. in American Government from the University of Virginia.



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Adrienne Griffen, MPP is an advocate and subject-matter expert in maternal mental health. Prior to joining MMHLA, Adrienne founded Postpartum Support Virginia and served as executive director for 10 years, establishing a statewide network of peer-led support groups, creating educational programs for mental health providers and maternal-child healthcare professionals, and helping pass legislation requiring information about postpartum depression and anxiety be provided to new mothers. Adrienne graduated from the United States Naval Academy and has a master's in Public Policy from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.



April Gutmann is the Senior Manager of Government Affairs and Policy for DPAC. She has experience in policy and advocacy, consulting with health systems and diabetes technology companies on regulatory reimbursement issues and advocating for better healthcare policies for patients and providers on Capitol Hill. Diagnosed with diabetes in 2019, she is excited to utilize her experience to advocate on behalf of the diabetes community. April received her undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia and a Master of Arts in Political Science and Government from American University.



Sarah Hoffman is the Executive Director of the COPD Action Alliance, where she leads national efforts to elevate chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) as a public health priority. She works alongside patients, healthcare providers, advocacy organizations, and policymakers to advance patient-centered policies that improve awareness, expand access to care, and strengthen support for the millions of Americans living with COPD. Under her leadership, the Alliance has championed initiatives to reduce barriers to treatment, promote early diagnosis, and increase federal and state attention to chronic respiratory health. Sarah is a dedicated advocate for ensuring that every person affected by COPD has access to the resources, education, and care they need to live healthier lives.



Caren Howard is Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy at Mental Health America, where she leads policy strategy and advocacy efforts on issues spanning healthcare, education, and criminal justice. With 13 years of experience in congressional affairs, political strategy, and grassroots advocacy, she works to strengthen partnerships between MHA affiliates and policymakers at the federal and state levels. Caren joined MHA in 2017 after serving in congressional and political roles, including work with the offices of Congressman John P. Sarbanes and Congressman Steny H. Hoyer. She holds a B.A. in Political Science from Spelman College and is a passionate advocate for mental health informed by her lived experience.



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Sharon Lamberton, MS, RN, FAAN is Deputy Vice President of State Policy and External Outreach, at PhRMA. Ms. Lamberton works in health policy and state advocacy as a policy analyst/lobbyist, as well as conducting third party outreach with provider groups. Trained as a registered nurse with experience in leading clinical trials at the National Institutes of Health, her clinical knowledge adds to her credibility where she works to improve access and affordability to innovative medicine for patients. Prior to working at PhRMA, Ms. Lamberton worked on Capitol Hill, lobbied for long term care issues and Medicare for a senior's association, and worked on rural health issues at the GAO, as well as the Center for Research, Health Policy and Ethics at George Mason University.



Christina McGrath, MPS, Christina McGrath is Vice President of Communications and Membership at the Pharmaceutical Product Stewardship Work Group (PPSWG), where she leads member engagement, strategic communications, and outreach initiatives that support the organization's mission of advancing safe pharmaceutical stewardship and compliance. She works closely with industry stakeholders to strengthen collaboration, provide member resources, and communicate best practices related to pharmaceutical product stewardship and take-back programs. Through her leadership, Christina helps foster engagement across PPSWG's growing network of pharmaceutical manufacturers and partners.



KerriLynn Miller leads the country-level work to develop national plans and policies to reduce plastic pollution and supports crosscutting topics on Pew's efforts to reduce plastic pollution. Before joining Pew, Miller worked on science and policy issues related to fisheries and marine wildlife at Oceana. Miller holds a bachelor's degree in biological sciences from the University of Delaware and a master's in environmental management, with a concentration in coastal environmental management, from Duke University.



Kristin Niakan has eight years of experience in the pharmacy industry, specializing in Medicaid pharmacy benefits, health policy, drug reimbursement, and healthcare claims analysis. At Milliman, she works with state Medicaid agencies, health plans, pharmacy organizations, and other healthcare stakeholders to provide data-driven insights that improve patient care, affordability, and policy decisions. Her expertise includes analyzing complex healthcare claims data, identifying trends and inefficiencies, and developing strategies to optimize pharmacy benefits.



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Robyn Peacher is Director of State Government Affairs at the American Nurses Association, where she leads the organization's state advocacy efforts. With more than a decade of experience in government affairs, grassroots advocacy, and political campaigns, she has held leadership roles with national trade associations and previously represented the Oklahoma Credit Union Association and Oklahoma Farm Bureau. Before joining ANA, she served as Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the National Association of Home Builders and Director of Advocacy and Industry Relations at the American Association of Political Consultants. Robyn holds a Bachelor of Science in Journalism from Oklahoma State University and a Master of Public Policy from the University of Missouri.



Senator Marie Pinkney represents Delaware's 13th district. Pinkney earned her bachelor's degree in social work from Norfolk State University and a master's degree in social work from Delaware State University. After graduate school, she began working at a treatment center for adolescents with mental health and substance abuse issues. She also became the foster mother to a teen mother and her young son for many years. Sen. Pinkney worked as a social worker/case manager at ChristinaCare until 2024, when she left to pursue a second master's degree in Africana Studies from the University of Delaware. She has dedicated her career to advocating alongside families seeking quality healthcare, access to resources, educational support, and government policies that support them.



Jen Rosen is Vice President of State Affairs at the Alzheimer's Association and the Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM), a separately incorporated advocacy affiliate of the Association. She oversees the Association's gubernatorial and legislative engagement strategy for all 50 states, manages state policy staff in the field to advance the enactment of state legislative and regulatory priorities nationwide. Prior to joining the Alzheimer's Association and AIM, she served as Director of Policy and Communications for the National Foundation for Women Legislators, and she continues to serve as a member of the Board of Directors for Women in Government Relations. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science and history from The George Washington University.



Sonya Thompson is the President of Compass Connections, a national non-profit. With over 25 years experience in the health and human services field, Sonya is a Licensed Clinical Social Work Supervisor, Licensed Child Care Administrator, and Licensed Child Placing Agency Administrator. She has dedicated her career to working with children and families, providing oversight ranging from pediatric medical services, foster care and adoption to group home care and shelter and specialized services. She has also overseen human trafficking response, national call center operations, home study, and in-home family preservation services.



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Kristin Wanek is Vice President of Pharmacy and Consumer Wellness at CVS Health, where she leads initiatives focused on advancing pharmacy services and improving consumer health and wellness. A pharmacist by training, she has spent her career at CVS Health driving innovation in pharmacy operations, clinical services, and patient care. In her leadership role, Wanek works to expand access to healthcare, enhance the pharmacy experience for patients, and support the company's mission of delivering accessible, high-quality care through community pharmacy.



Dr. Meghan Walls is Associate Vice President of External Affairs at Nemours, where she leads advocacy and government relations efforts to advance policies that improve the health of children and families. She also oversees community engagement initiatives and advises executive leadership on public affairs and communications. An active leader in healthcare and civic organizations, Dr. Walls serves on several nonprofit boards and has been recognized with numerous honors, including the *Delaware Business Times* 40 Under 40 and the *Delaware News Journal's* Most Influential Delawareans in Politics.



Amy Whited is a seasoned political strategist, lobbyist, and nonprofit leader with more than 20 years of experience in U.S. politics, including roles as a congressional staffer, campaign manager, and chief of staff across the Southeast. She has worked extensively in advocacy and lobbying for highly regulated industries and currently serves as Executive Director of the Pink Granite Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to mentoring and developing women in Texas politics and policy. Amy also serves on several advisory and nonprofit boards, regularly speaks on bipartisan collaboration and women's leadership, and holds degrees from Jacksonville State University, Auburn University Montgomery, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Glenn Wright is Manager of Technical Assistance for SUPTI at The Pew Charitable Trusts, where he supports efforts to provide research, resources, and guidance to help partners advance effective policy solutions. With experience in public policy, stakeholder engagement, and technical assistance, Glenn works to connect communities and decision-makers with tools and strategies that strengthen program implementation and outcomes. He is dedicated to supporting collaborative approaches that improve systems and promote informed, evidence-based decision-making.



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Dr. Tracy Zvenyach PhD, MS, RN is Vice President of Advocacy and Research at the Obesity Action Coalition, where she leads policy and advocacy efforts to advance access to obesity care. She also serves as an Adjunct Assistant Professor at Georgetown University, teaching healthcare policy and advocacy. Previously, she led obesity policy initiatives at Novo Nordisk and worked in the U.S. Senate on healthcare, women's policy, and other legislative priorities, contributing to provisions in the Affordable Care Act and the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. A nurse and health policy expert, Dr. Zvenyach's research focuses on reducing barriers to obesity care and improving maternal nutrition.