

# 2024 Annual Meeting Speakers

## Keynote Speaker

**Robert Espinoza, MPA, CEO of the National Skills Coalition and Board Chair of the American Society on Aging**

Robert Espinoza is an advocate and thought leader in the fields of workforce, aging, and caregiving. He is CEO of the National Skills Coalition, where he promotes access to inclusive, high-quality skills training. Prior to his role at the National Skills Coalition, Robert served as the Executive Vice President of Policy at PHI, the nation's foremost organization focused on the direct care workforce. He is also host of the award-winning podcast, *A Question of Care*, which explores the many challenges facing our country's caregiving system, and he serves as board chair for the American Society on Aging.

## Panelists and Moderators

**Amanda Biggs, Specialist, Project C.A.R.E. ("Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty"), Mid-East Commission Area Agency on Aging**

Amanda Biggs is the Project C.A.R.E. Family Consultant with the Mid-East Commission Area Agency on Aging, supporting 29 counties in the NORTHEASTERN Region of North Carolina. Amanda is a National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioner (NCCDP) and has obtained the Certification in Advance Clinical Dementia Practices from the University of Michigan. She has over 27 years of experience in working with care partners and their loved one who lives with dementia.



**Paul L. Delamater, PhD, Faculty Fellow, Sheps Center for Health Services Research and Associate Professor of Geography, UNC Chapel Hill**

Dr. Paul Delamater is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, a Fellow of the Carolina Population Center, and a Fellow of the Sheps Center for Health Services Research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In his research, Dr. Delamater uses geographic information systems and statistical/spatial analysis to study access to and utilization of health care services. For nearly 15 years, he has worked with the Michigan Certificate of Need Commission to develop data-driven approaches to predict future need for health care services across the state.

**Lee Dobson, MPA, CPHQ, Deputy Executive Director, BAYADA Hearts for Home Care**

Lee Dobson, MPA, CPHQ, is the Deputy Executive Director of BAYADA Hearts for Home Care (a social welfare advocacy org). Lee is an experienced healthcare executive with over 30 years in home and community-based services focused on government affairs, public policy, and grassroots advocacy. She works at the state and federal-level to help seniors, children and adults living with disabilities and medical complexities get the home care services they need.

**Corye Dunn, JD, Director of Public Policy, Disability Rights NC**

Corye Dunn joined DRNC in 2011 as the agency's director of public policy. Dunn, who was born and raised in Durham, N.C., graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill and NC Central University School of Law. She also served as a direct care provider to adults and children with developmental disabilities and worked in nonprofits seeking to expand access to education and increase investment in low-wealth communities.

**Trish Farnham, JD, MPA, Coordinator of *Essential Jobs, Essential Care-NC*, NC Coalition on Aging**

Trish Farnham is with the NC Coalition on Aging where she coordinates Essential Jobs, Essential Care-NC, a cross-sector collaboration of direct care workforce advocates, service providers, trade associations, and



individuals with lived experience that advocate for improved systemic supports of NC's direct care and support workforce.

**Ted Goins, BA, President and CEO, Lutheran Services Carolinas**

Ted W, Goins, Jr. is president/CEO of Lutheran Services Carolinas, and an advocate for health/human services clients and caregivers. He began as a nursing assistant in 1978, was certified for twenty years, and has been a nursing home administrator since 1982. Goins is Chair of the Board of the North Carolina Health Care Facilities Association and board member of Portico Benefit Services.

**Steve Freedman, Caregiver and Former Service Operations Section Chief, NC Division of Aging**

Steve Freedman retired from state government in 2023 after a 50 year career working with DHHS - Division of Aging in a number of management positions including Chief of the Service Operations Section which included managing a number of caregiver support programs including Project CARE, Family Caregiver Support program, respite for older adults and their families, and certification of Adult Day Care and Adult Day Health programs.

**Julie Ghurtskaia, RN, MPA, Vice President, Population Health, Carolina Complete Health**

A Registered Nurse with over 26 years of experience, Julie Ghurtskaia is Carolina Complete Health's Vice President of Population Health, supporting care management, utilization management, health equity, community outreach, transition of care, and plan benefits for over 270,000 Medicaid Managed Care members in North Carolina.

**Tracy Hayes, JD, CHC, Area Director and Chief Executive Officer, Vaya Health**

Ms. Hayes is Area Director and Chief Executive Officer of Vaya Health where she leads the executive team and oversees general administration



and daily business activities, including the recent launch of Vaya's Behavioral Health and I/DD Tailored Plan, Vaya Total Care. She brings nearly 20 years of experience with North Carolina's Medicaid and State-funded programs to the role of Area Director and CEO. Prior to accepting the role as CEO, she served as Vaya's General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer.

**Mark Hensley, MA, Associate State Director, AARP NC**

Mark Hensley is a North Carolina aging and caregiving expert. He joined AARP North Carolina as Associate State Director for Community Outreach and Advocacy in the Triad Region. Hensley previously coordinated North Carolina's Alzheimer's and dementia services for the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Aging and Adult Services (DHHS).

**Jenny Hobbs, BS, Board Chair, Advocates for Medically Fragile Kids NC**

Jenny Hobbs calls North Carolina home, having lived in Winston-Salem for 25 years. Jenny worked as a CAP/C social work case manager before focusing her energy on Advocates for Medically Fragile Kids NC. As one of its co-founders, Jenny is determined to ensure that services and supports remain available for all families who need them.

**Courtney Van Houtven, PhD, Professor, The Department of Population Health Science, Duke University School of Medicine and Duke-Margolis Institute for Health Policy**

Courtney Van Houtven, PhD, MSc, is Professor of Medicine in the Department of Population Health Science at Duke University School of Medicine and a Research Career Scientist at the Center of Innovation to Accelerate Discovery and Practice Transformation (ADAPT), Durham Veterans Affairs Health Care System. Her research focuses on long-term care policies and economics of aging, especially care at home.



**Erin Kent, PhD, MS, Associate Professor and Associate Chair for Research in Health Policy and Management, Gillings School of Global Public Health, UNC Chapel Hill**

Dr. Erin Kent is an Associate Professor and Associate Chair for Research in Health Policy and Management at the UNC Chapel Hill Gillings School of Global Public Health. She currently serves as the Chair of the Caregiving Research Special Interest Group for the American Psychosocial Oncology Society. In partnership with UNC Sheps, she is leading the development of a data dashboard and data-driven implementation plan to accompany the North Carolina Multisector Plan for Aging.

**Bill E. Lamb, MSW, MPA, Executive Committee Member, Friends of Residents in Long Term Care**

In 2011, Bill retired after a 40-year career working in The Department of Health and Human Services and The UNC Institute on Aging. He now remains actively involved in aging-related advocacy in North Carolina. He serves on the board of Friends of Residents in Long Term Care as chair of their public policy committee.

**Sabrena Lea, BS, Deputy Director, NC Medicaid and LTSS, Division of Health Benefits, NC Department of Health and Human Services**

Ms. Lea has deep experience serving in a variety of roles at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. She is currently

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**Denise Lugo, CNA, Home Health Aide, Progressive Home Health Care**

Denise Lugo has played many roles within the direct care workforce in Texas and North Carolina for over 30 years. Most recently, she is a CNA home health aide and has stayed in direct care because of her passion for caring for older adults.



**Andy MacCracken, MPA, Director, NC Center on the Workforce for Health, NC AHEC**

Andy MacCracken is the inaugural director of the NC Center on the Workforce for Health. In that role, he leads collaborative efforts to develop and deploy statewide strategies that tackle today's severe health workforce shortages and prepare for the future. Andy joined the Center from the NC Pandemic Recovery Office, where he drove policy and research initiatives.

**Julian Montoro-Rodriguez, PhD, Professor of Sociology and Gerontology, School of Social Work, UNC Charlotte**

Dr. Julian Montoro-Rodriguez is Professor of Sociology, Gerontology and Social Work at the UNC Charlotte School of Social Work. He is interested in testing theoretically based interventions designed to help family caregivers to reduce stress, depression, and burden to improve the quality of life of older adults and their families.

**Shannon Pointer, DNP, RN, CHPN, Senior Vice President of Hospice and Home Health Services and Professional Development Director, Association for Home & Hospice Care of North Carolina (AHHNC)**

Shannon Pointer, DNP, RN, CHPN has over 20 years of experience in nursing, within a variety of clinic, health system, school-based and community settings. Shannon is the Senior Vice President of Hospice and Home Health Services and Professional Development Director for the Association for Home & Hospice Care of North Carolina.

**Ursula Robinson, MSW, Executive Director and Program Director, Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) of the Triad**

Ursula Robinson is the founding President & CEO of PACE of the Triad, located in Greensboro, NC. PACE is an acronym for Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly. Under Ursula's leadership, PACE of the Triad has grown to be the third largest PACE program in NC. PACE employees over 100 employees, and volunteers, and contracts with approximately (250) acute, long-term care and medical specialist to serve participants in the program.



### **Kezia Scales, PhD, Vice President of Research & Evaluation, PHI**

Dr. Kezia Scales is the Vice President of Research & Evaluation at PHI, a national organization committed to promoting quality direct care jobs as the foundation of quality care for older adults and people with disabilities and serious illness. She leads PHI's strategy for building the evidence base on state and national policies and workforce interventions that improve direct care jobs, elevate this essential workforce, and strengthen care processes and outcomes.

### **Alicia Stokes, MHA, Vice President, Strategy, Planning & Performance, Government Markets, Blue Cross NC**

As the Vice President, Strategy Planning and Performance, Government Markets, Alicia is accountable for Blue Cross NC's Government Markets' go to market strategy, market performance, marketing strategy, product and performance innovation, and portfolio delivery. This includes Medicare, Medicaid, and the Federal Employee Program.

