

Breakout Session 2 - Session 1: Women's Health: Access and Coverage

Unlocking Care: Solutions for Women's Health Access

**Delegate
Lesley Lopez**

Lesley Lopez serves her community and the people of her state as a Delegate from District 39 in the Maryland General Assembly. Since she was first elected in 2018, Lesley rapidly has become an effective legislator and leader, spearheading efforts to alleviate student debt, improve the delivery and efficiency of health care, and protect the limited financial resources of economically vulnerable Marylanders. In 2022, she successfully stood up to powerful special interests and gun lobbyists to pass one of the nation's first bans of unserialized handguns or "ghost guns." In 2023, she served as president of the Maryland Women's Legislative Caucus and garnered support for a package of laws that guarantees reproductive rights for all women in the state.

Outside of her work as a community leader and lawmaker, Lesley is an Assistant Professor at The George Washington University and director of the Public Relations and Communications graduate degree programs. For twelve years, she was an adjunct professor and a proud union member of SEIU Local 500.

Lesley has spent much of her career in leading change through communications work. Before she went to Annapolis, Lesley served as communications director for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and worked as a staffer on Capitol Hill. Trained as a journalist, she also worked for several news organizations, including "This Week with George Stephanopoulos," CNN, BBC and the European Press Corps. She also was one of the founding employees of the start up Run for Something, which recruits young progressives to run for state and local office. She lives in Germantown, Md, with her husband Richard Kelly, and their two sons, Max and Graham.

Most recently, she served as the Director of Communications for the National Immigration Forum and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, where she fought to improve the lives of immigrant families

like her own. Ms. Lopez was a journalist for nearly a decade, including stints with ABC's This Week with George Stephanopoulos, BBC, CNN, America's Most Wanted and Eurovision.

She served on the Montgomery County Board of Social Services and NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland board, where she works to ensure all Maryland families have access to healthcare resources. She is a lifetime Girl Scout and served as a National Volunteer Partner for Girl Scouts USA. As a domestic violence survivor, Lesley has served on the national board of YWCA USA, one of the oldest and largest women's organizations in the nation.

Lesley has spent much of her career in leading change through communications work, first as journalist, then as a communications professional advising some of the country's top leaders in government, nonprofits, and business.

At the urging of her father, Lesley joined the high school newspaper and quickly discovered a passion for writing. By graduation, the senior class president and features editor was bound for the University of California, at San Diego to pursue a degree in Political Science and Spanish Literature.

As an undergrad, Lesley interned at every media outlet that would accept her. She graduated with a one-way ticket to Washington D.C. and an internship lined up at the Washington Business Journal. Soon after, Lesley became a "crimefighter" as a production assistant at America's Most Wanted, based in Bethesda. It turned out that dealing with heinous crimes wasn't her thing, so Lesley went back into hard news and worked as a producer for four years in the European press corp in D.C. She also had the opportunity to work on the production team for ABC's This Week with George Stephanopoulos, which was a thrilling endeavor she will always remember.

Having been inspired by the 2008 Obama for America campaign, Lesley earned her master's degree in Management at the George Washington University and began work as a press secretary for Congressman Henry Cuellar (TX 28) on Capitol Hill. The congressman's district is 94 percent Hispanic and Lesley found a renewed passion for working on issues that impacted the communities she grew up in.

Lesley was thrilled to have served as the communications director for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, under Reps. Charlie Gonzalez and Ruben Hinojosa. In this position, she coordinated with 27 Hispanic members of the House and Senate, Democratic Leadership, the White House Hispanic Media Office and advocacy groups on important issues like education, the Violence Against Women Act, the Dream Act and the Affordable Care Act. Among the most impactful of those topics was immigration reform.

As the granddaughter of immigrants from the Philippines, Lesley was profoundly moved by the stories of families like her own and was thankful to have been a part of the movement for comprehensive immigration reform by serving as the head of communications for the National

Immigration Forum. At the Forum, Lesley was also proud to lead communications efforts for the Bethlehem Project, an integration program that provides resources to employers and employees who may be eligible for citizenship.

When the fight for immigration reform was tamped down by lack of Republican support, Lesley served as the director of communications for the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, the arm of the Democratic party that works on state legislative races. At the DLCC, Lesley got to see firsthand that some of the most important work was done at state houses across the country.

To better understand the needs of the private sector, Lesley took on the challenge of heading communications and publications at the US-China Business Council, the leading organization for U.S. companies trying to gain market access in China.

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Robyn Elliott

Robyn Elliott is Managing Partner of Public Policy Partners, a policy and lobbying firm based in Annapolis. Robyn has led the work on groundbreaking reproductive justice initiatives including coverage of over-the-counter birth control, public health funding for abortion, and electronic health record privacy.

She is a published author in peer-reviewed publications such as *Contraception*. She has been honored by many reproductive justice organizations including American Society for Emergency Contraception, Reproductive Justice Maryland, and the Women's Law Center of Maryland.

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Stephanie Klapper

Since joining Maryland Health Care for All in 2014, Ms. Klapper has successfully advocated for legislation to increase access and affordability of coverage offered through Maryland Health Connection, invest \$59 million dollars to reduce health disparities across the state, and create and fund the first-in-the-nation

Prescription Drug Affordability Board. She has served as a consumer representative on state workgroups hosted by the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, Health Services Cost Review Commission, and Maryland Health Care Commission.