Once Upon A Preemie, Inc.
The 54th Annual Legislative Congressional Black Caucus Conference: Black Maternal Health and Neonatal Equity Panel

SPEAKER BIO'S

Jenné Johns MPH, President Once Upon A Preemie, Inc.

Jenné Johns is a national health equity leader, author and advocate committed to reducing healthcare disparities. Inspired by her own NICU journey, Jenné authored, *Once Upon a Preemie*, the first of its kind children's book written for parents of preemies navigating the NICU. A graduate of the Disparities Leadership Program at Harvard University Medical School, she brings more than a decade of experience driving policy and community change to improve health outcomes for low-income families. She has guided quality improvement and health equity transformation initiatives with some of the nation's largest health insurers. Today, Jenné serves President of Once Upon A Preemie, Inc. and is the Founder of *Once Upon A Preemie Academy*, the first virtual training academy dedicated to advancing health and racial equity education for perinatal and neonatal healthcare professionals. Her work bridges lived experience and system-level expertise, driving innovation in maternal and neonatal care to reduce disparities.

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Kimberly Seals Allers

Kimberly Seals Allers is an award-winning journalist, five-time author, and international speaker recognized for her leadership in advancing racial equity in maternal and infant health. She is the executive director of *Narrative Nation*, the only Black woman-led technology non-profit creating narrative-centered products to address racial disparities in maternal and infant health, and creator of *Irth*, a groundbreaking "Yelp-like" app where Black and Brown parents review and rate OB/GYNs, hospitals, and pediatricians to address bias in healthcare. Irth won the 2021 MIT Solve Global Challenge in the Anti-Racist Technology category. Kimberly also hosts *Birthright,* the award-winning podcast highlighting joyful Black birth stories, co-founded Black Breastfeeding Week, and serves as editorial director of the *Birth Justice Communication Collective*. A graduate of NYU and Columbia University and frequent contributor to *The New York Times and Washington Post*, she uses media, technology, and storytelling to amplify Black voices and reimagine maternal and infant care.

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State Rep. Gina H. Curry

The Honorable Gina H. Curry represents the 164th Legislative District in Delaware County and is a leading advocate for racial equity in health, education, and housing. Elected in 2021, she brings over 20 years of experience as an educator, DEI consultant, and community leader. She co-founded the PA Black Maternal Health Caucus and champions of PA MOMNIBUS legislation, driving statewide efforts to address racial disparities in maternal health outcomes. Her career includes service as the vice president of the Upper Darby School Board, leadership in behavioral health, and mentoring youth through community programs. Gina's work is grounded in empowering families and creating systems change that supports healthy birth outcomes and thriving communities. She holds bachelor's and master's degree in criminal justice with a sociology concentration from St. Joseph's University. She remains committed to shaping policy and community change that protects Black mothers and ensures healthier futures for families.

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Dr. Regina Davis Moss

Dr. Regina Davis Moss, a doctorate in maternal and child health from the University of Maryland, has dedicated her career to empowering women and adolescent girls to make healthy decisions amid urgent challenges. A health equity, sexuality and reproductive health expert, she leverages her experience in non-profit, private sector, and political settings to make communities inclusive and supportive. Dr. Moss serves as the President & CEO of *In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda* and the *In Our Own Voice Action Fund*, and is Principal Counselor and Founder of Buna Consulting Group, Inc. She has also held senior roles at the American Public Health Association, Kaiser Family Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Author of *Black Women's Reproductive Health and Sexuality*, she combines research, media, and advocacy to advance equity. Her work continues to expand access and opportunity for Black mothers and families.

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Councilmember Katherine Gilmore Richardson

Katherine Gilmore Richardson serves Philadelphia as a Councilmember At-Large and in 2024 became the youngest and first at-large majority leader in City Council history. She is a champion for workforce development, safe communities, family-supportive policies, small and diverse businesses, and environmental justice. Her legislation has increased transparency in city government, and returned over $7.3 million in unclaimed property, improved the city's bond rating, and created the Philadelphia's first *Apprenticeship Guidebook*, connecting residents to family-sustaining careers. She has also advanced programs for youth, including *Community Evening Resource Centers* and Tier I conflict resolution in schools. Formerly, she served 11 years a staff for Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown. A lifelong Philadelphian, she graduated from the Philadelphia High School for Girls and West Chester University. Through her leadership, she is helping create stronger, healthier communities where families and children can thrive.

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Moderator: Dr. Kanika Harris

Dr. Kanika Harris is the Executive Director of the *National Association to Advance Black Birth*, a national nonprofit improving birth outcomes for Black and Indigenous families facing maternal and infant health disparities. A behavioral health scientist, she is a recognized expert in health equity, and maternal and reproductive health. Dr. Harris previously served as maternal health equity advisor for the State of Maryland and public health expert for the Washington, D.C., lactation commission. She leads research, policy, and programming to address maternal health inequities and developed *NOURISH* (New Opportunity to Uncover our Resources Spirit Intuition and Healing), expanding the birth worker pipeline and providing structural solutions. She holds a master's in public health and international development from Morehouse School of Medicine and a PhD in Health Behavior and Health Education from the University of Michigan. Through her leadership, she is shaping a more equitable future for Black mothers and infants.