

WVAHC Welcomes Jessica Ice as our new Executive Director

It gives me great pleasure to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of West Virginians for Affordable Health Care. I feel very privileged to lead this organization as I am a passionate advocate for good health care policy.



I am excited to work with so many brilliant and like-minded individuals, both in the organization as well as community partners. This is a crucial time in the health care debate as more and more people are losing their coverage, premiums are rising, and proposed policy is threatening access. As an organization, we must be a go-to resource for people who need to navigate the health care system as well as a trusted source of information for policymakers and community stakeholders. I believe health care is a human right and with the significant talent and passion on our team we can continue to achieve great things.

A little bit about my background, I am a native of Braxton County and received my BA in History and African American Studies from the University of Virginia. After graduation, I moved back to West Virginia and attended West Virginia University for Masters' in Social Work and Public Administration. It was there that I discovered my passion for promoting public policy that works for the people. To that end, I continued my education at Florida State University, receiving my MS and PhD in Political Science with a concentration in Public Policy and then moved back home (again) in 2011 where I have remained ever since, putting my skills to use in a variety of ways from working with labor unions to volunteering with non-profits to analyzing policy to teaching my skills to others.

As writer Nancy Snow said, "Democracy cannot function or survive without a sufficient medium by which citizens remain informed and engaged in public policy debates." Non-profits are a crucial link between the people and the policies that inform their lives and I am thrilled to be a part of that linkage.

When I am not working, I am chasing my two beautiful children (Lucille and Byrne), spending time with my partner, Danny, and sitting on the couch with my dog, Brooks.

I try to live by the motto I once heard someone on the Internet say, "Do what you can, where you can, when you can, as often as you can." It is my pledge to do what I can, when, where, and as often as I can to further promote the mission of West Virginians for Affordable Health Care. Thank you for your support.

Moms and Babies Make Big Gains with Medicaid Expansion

by Sharon L. Carte, Interim Executive Director and Board President

After a long public health career frequently reading and learning of poor health statistics or rankings for West Virginia, nothing cheers me like learning we are on top for a change, and it should cheer you, too!

Yes, West Virginia is among the top three states (along with New Mexico and Kentucky) with the highest declines in the rate of uninsured women of child bearing age (18 to 44 years), [according to a recent report by Georgetown University's Center for Children and Families \(CCF\)](#). This good news means most women of child bearing age in our state now have increased access to preventive care during pregnancy, their chances for adverse health outcomes are reduced, and maternal mortality can be reduced.

This is a clear effect of coverage gains for women of child bearing ages in states where Medicaid expanded under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and it has led to amazing differences for moms and babies.

The CCF report states “women are getting better health care coverage before pregnancy, leading to improved prenatal nutrition and prenatal care. And postpartum coverage has improved for women, helping them get the care they need following the birth of their child.”



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A key reason why: in the states with expanded Medicaid, the chances that women of child bearing age experience the frequent on-again and off-again coverage breaks and disruptions over short time periods (known as “churn”) is decreased. Churn is much more common among women in lower income ranges. Now it is clear: better continuous coverage means better health for moms and their babies. The uninsured rate for women of child bearing age is nearly twice that in states that did not expand Medicaid under the ACA as it is in those that did (16% versus 9%). For states with expanded Medicaid, infant mortality rates saw a 50% greater reduction than it did in states that did not expand. In states that did not expand Medicaid, many of which have higher minority populations, there is an opportunity to decrease strong racial disparities which, if tackled, could help decrease our national maternal mortality overall.

We also get a “two-for-one” effect in areas such as maternal mental health screening and tobacco cessation which can boost the health of both moms and babies. For states like ours challenged with opioid use and other substance use disorders, the chance to treat and restore a mom to parenting is perhaps the greatest boon of all.

Even with this positive movement, there is still the challenge of next steps. There is the not-so-good news of how maternal mortality in the U.S. lags behind that of other developed nations. A sudden loss of coverage after 60 days past their delivery is a time when women may still encounter serious health care issues. This is another churn that can undo much of what was positive before delivery.

Thanks to the work during the last session by West Virginians for Affordable Health Care and other partners, there is another piece of good news: this study was based on data through 2017. In this year’s legislative session West Virginia has now increased Medicaid to cover more uninsured pregnant women up to 300% FPL, so we will see even more women and babies benefit! Only a very small percentage of women in our state should be faced with not having healthcare coverage upon learning they are pregnant and will need prenatal care. **These dramatic gains mean it is time to assure continuous health care coverage for moms well after a birth.** No child needs to lose mothering and nurturance in its critical first year to postpartum depression. We do not need to funnel more children into foster care because substance use treatment stopped when a mother lost coverage. Building on the outstanding improvement effect seen in this report surely make this a worthwhile goal.

Rockefeller Lifetime Achievement Award

This year's recipient of the **Rockefeller Lifetime Achievement Award** is **Nancy Tyler**. Nancy is receiving this honor for being a leading advocate for her long-term commitment to people with disabilities and advocating for their complete integration with the community.

Nancy is a private healthcare consultant working in the Charleston area. Prior to July 1, 2012 she worked as Counsel for the House Health Committee for the West Virginia Legislature for five years and as Counsel for the House Finance Committee of the Legislature for seven years. She was primarily responsible for all health-related bills for the Legislature. She also participated on a variety of committees as a liaison to the legislature.

Nancy's background includes a variety of health related duties including serving as Director of the Office of Health Facilities Licensure and Certification in the WV Department of Health and Human Resources, Director of West Virginian Operations for United Health Care, West Virginia Deputy Attorney General over the Employment Program Litigation Unit, Executive Director of Boulder Valley Women's Health Center, Health Policy Analyst for the Sunrise/Sunset Committee of the Colorado Legislature and other positions in the health arena. She also has worked for United Cerebral Palsy, and Shawnee Hills Community Behavioral Health Center.



Nancy Tyler, M.S.W., J.D.

More recently she has provided consulting services to many organizations including the West Virginia Partnership for Elder Living, the Perinatal Partnership, Cabin Creek Health Systems and the Center for Rural Health Development to name a few. She also serves as Vice President of West Virginians for Affordable Health Care.

She received her Bachelor of Arts in Family Services from Auburn University, her Masters in Social Work from West Virginia University and her Law Degree from the University of Denver.

Mark your Calendar!

September 10, 2019

Medicaid Matters for West Virginia Summit

Holiday Inn and Suites, South Charleston

This year marks the third annual Medicaid Summit hosted by WVAHC – we will be bringing together stakeholders from around West Virginia to discuss a variety of topics important to Medicaid – both local and national experts will be in attendance.

Our topics of discussion for this year's Summit include:

Why Medicaid Matters to West Virginians
 Why Medicaid Matters to Children
 One Year Postpartum, 1115 Waiver, Pregnancy
 Seniors, the Disabled and Long-Term Services and Support

[Register Here](#)

***Texas v. United States* is currently before the federal 5th Circuit of Appeals
and arguments will be heard the week of **July 8, 2019****

To learn more about this case and what it could mean for West Virginians,
read the [WVAHC statement opposing the case](#)

West Virginia Attorney General, Patrick Morrisey, joined West Virginia to this case calling for the ACA to be struck down as unconstitutional. Let him know that the ACA protects your family from pre-existing condition discrimination and helps make health insurance affordable.

To ask the Attorney General to remove West Virginia from the lawsuit, please visit
[Community Catalyst's action page](#)

Membership Form

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care

Reminder... We are only as strong as your support!

Please consider how to contribute!

_____ \$20 **Concerned Citizen**

_____ \$50 **Health Booster**

_____ \$100 **Mountain Strong**

_____ \$500 and up **Health Care Champion**

_____ **Action Supporter:** Students/under-employed folks -- signup as a member and share information on issues with friends; write letters to the editor to share your concerns on health care topics, make your legislators aware of how much health care issues mean to you!

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

(Please print clearly)

- All members receive our online quarterly newsletter.
- For more information on other member benefits and on sponsorship/partnership, please go to our website at wvahc.org

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Please return your membership form to:

WVAHC, 600 Leon Sullivan Way, Suite 215, Charleston, West Virginia 25301