

NV Commission for
Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

ENGAGEMENT CONFERENCE


Empowering Advocacy in Policy Making & Legislative Change



Saturday | December 16, 2023



Southeast Career Technical Academy
5710 S Mountain Vista St, Las Vegas, NV



Photography Consent

Please be advised that the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing will photograph and/or record video and/or audio at the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Engagement Conference 2023. Speakers, attendees, guests, and all others present may be photographed by the conference photographers. By registering for and attending this conference, you acknowledge that you have been informed that you may be photographed, video recorded, and/or filmed. You grant the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing, the NGCDD, and the State of Nevada permission, without further notification, to publish photographs and video taken of you and containing your image/likeness for publicity, general information purposes, social media platforms, press releases, etc. If you do not wish to be photographed or videotaped at the conference, please notify the photographers or videographers if they approach you.

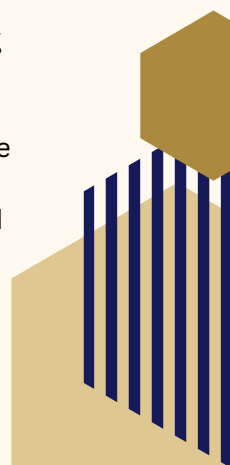


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NV Commission for
Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing



Joe Lombardo
Governor



Richard Whitley, MS
Director

DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DIVISION
Helping people. It's who we are and what we do.



Dena Schmidt
Administrator

Welcome!

The Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division (ADSD) is excited to welcome you to the 2023 Engagement Conference. As a supporter of the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, we are excited to be a part of this event. It is our hope that today will provide insights into the Nevada Legislative process and the importance of your role in this process as a citizen of Nevada. Thank you for taking the time to be here today!

To all of the organizations who have joined with the Commission to bring this Conference to the community...we appreciate your partnership! It is through these shared events and collaborations that we can help ensure the needs of all Nevada citizens are heard, understood, and addressed.

The Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division has long been a supporter of the Deaf and hard of hearing community in Nevada. We know that ADSD is not able to meet all the needs that exist in our state and that improving the lives and the experience of this community requires collaboration among various agencies, organizations, and the legislature. We look forward to the opportunities ahead!

This conference will help to open the door to a collaborative, community focused conversation that will lead to lasting change in Nevada. We will continue to be a supporter of this community and look forward to the opportunities to strengthen our efforts alongside you.

We hope you enjoy today and once again...we thank you for being here!

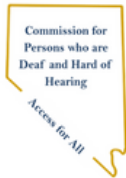
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dena Schmidt".

Dena Schmidt
ADSD Administrator



NV Commission for
Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing



**Nevada Commission for Persons who are
Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

Dear D/HH Engagement Conference Attendees,

On behalf of the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, welcome to our inaugural Engagement Conference! At recent town hall events we hosted across the state, the message delivered by our community was loud and clear. Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Nevada are struggling. The state is not living up to its obligation to ensure that the rights of those in our community are honored and that their access to the services they need is assured. Change needs to come to Nevada and that charge starts with you.

At the Engagement Conference we seek to empower you to carry this message of change to the 83rd Nevada legislative session in 2025. We aim to bring all our community stakeholders together to educate, empower, and identify our common cause and find our common voice.

We thank all of the many community partners who worked to make this conference happen. We thank our allies who are joining us from across the US to help our cause. Most of all we thank you for committing to working with us at today's conference and on to the next legislative session and beyond.

We hope you all have an empowering and productive day with us here in our wonderful state of Nevada!

Warmest regards,

Eric Wilcox, Ph.D., Commission Chair &

Obioma Officer, MA, Executive Director



CONFERENCE INFORMATION

ENGAGEMENT CONFERENCE 2023 “Empowering Advocacy in Policy Making and Legislative Change”

This conference will provide Legislative Advocacy training to stakeholders and Community partners through a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Lens with presentations from nationwide leadership advocates in policy change that are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and/or Speech Impaired including ally state representatives. This conference includes a recap of the efforts and recognition of Legislative and Community engagement through the Commission’s ongoing efforts to fulfill the state plan initiatives of Access, Engagement, and Advocacy.

The Nevada Commission for Person who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired is seeking to educate and empower individuals who are Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing on Policymaking and Change. This initiative is to impact the potential of stronger presence in the legislative process for the 83rd session in 2025.

As a community, we must make a **choice**,
to take a **chance** or things will never **change**.

Change starts with you!

Accommodations

CART transcription and ASL translation will be available during all sessions and panels. For any accommodations not requested in advance of the conference, please see NVCDHH Planning Team or a conference volunteers at the Registration Table to assist in an on-site request. Conference materials and PowerPoint presentations will be available on the conference webpage after this event.

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

ADDITIONAL THINGS TO KNOW

Need Information or Assistance?

The NVCDHH Planning Team will be wearing pink ribbons on their name badges and Volunteers will be wearing orange. Please ask one of them or come to the Registration Table if you need assistance.

Conference Evaluations

Please help us improve our events by completing an evaluation which will be available after each session, or a hard copy can be retrieved at the Registration Table throughout the day. Please note this will be available following platform sessions and through QR Codes posted throughout the venue.

Audio-Visual Equipment

If you are a speaker who needs assistance with the audio-visual equipment, a member of the NVCDHH Planning Team will be happy to assist you or connect you with UNLV's technology staff that can help.

Navigating the Meeting Space

Please see the maps on page 13 to identify the location of the meeting space, courtyard, and exits.

Do you need anything?

Come to our check-in table or visit a volunteer for assistance!

NV Commission for
Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**CONFERENCE
PLANNING TEAM**



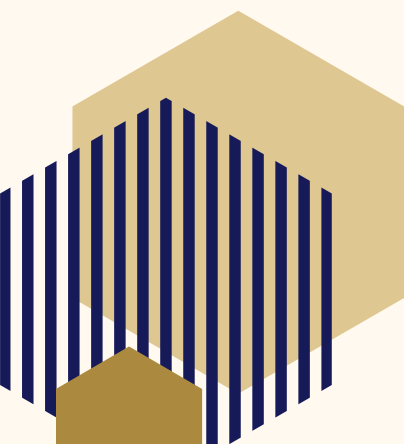
Beth Jones, Executive Director, Nevada Hands & Voices
& NVCDHH Legislative Subcommittee Member

Catherine Nielsen, Executive Director, Nevada Governor's
Council on Developmental Disabilities
& NVCDHH Commissioner

Eli Schwartz, NVCDHH Commissioner
& Legislative Subcommittee Chair

Lora Turner, Rehabilitation Supervisor, Nevada Department
of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation

Obioma Officer, MA, Executive Director, Nevada Commission
for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NVCDHH)



SCHEDULE

▶ 07:30AM - 08:30AM ◀

Breakfast & Registration

▶ 08:30AM - 09:00AM ◀

Welcome & Opening Remarks
Keynote - "Kick-Off"

▶ 09:00AM - 10:00AM ◀

Session 1: "Statewide Policy Making and Legislative Change - Health Equity through Advocacy"

▶ 10:00AM - 10:45AM ◀

Session 2: "Nevada Legislature: Connecting People to Policy"

▶ 10:45AM - 11:00AM ◀

Break: Networking & Vendor Fair

▶ 11:00AM - 11:45AM ◀

Session 3: Keynote - "Nevada Association of the Deaf (NVAD) and National Association of the Deaf (NAD) - Advocacy & Accountability"

SCHEDULE

11:45AM - 12:30PM

Session 4: Inspirational Speaker - "The 'How to' of Advocacy through Legislative Testimony"

12:30PM - 01:00PM

Working Lunch: Food, Networking, & Vendor Fair

01:00PM - 2:15PM

Lunch and Community Partner Panel: "State and Community Resource Panel on Policy Change Needs & Legislative Initiatives"

02:15PM - 02:30PM

Break: Networking & Vendor Fair

02:30PM - 03:15PM

Session 5: "Self-Care & Transformational Leadership"

03:15PM - 04:15PM

Session 6: "Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) - New Low Cost or Free Services"

SCHEDULE

04:15PM - 04:30PM

Break: Networking & Vendor Fair

04:30PM - 5:15PM

Session 7: Youth Advocates in Leadership Panel –
“The Next Generation is NOW!”

05:15PM - 5:45PM

Session 8: Reflection Session –
“2023 Community Impact: A look back to look
forward towards Legislative Change”

05:45PM - 06:00PM

Wrap Up & Closing Remarks
Keynote – “Next Steps”

VENDOR FAIR

Vendor Fair Hours:
10AM - 4PM

Location:
STUDENT UNION COURTYARD

ASL Communication

ADSD - Communication
Access Services Program

College of Southern Nevada

Communication Service for
the Deaf, Inc.

Department of Employment,
Training & Rehabilitation -
BVR

Global Technical
Communications

Hearing Loss Association of
America Southern Nevada
Chapter

Lango

Las Vegas Deaf Seniors

Nevada Association of the
Deaf

Nevada Black Deaf
Advocates

Nevada Telecommunication
Equipment Distribution Program

Nevada Commission for
Persons who are Deaf and Hard
of Hearing

Nevada Division of Emergency
Management

Nevada Governor's Council on
Developmental Disabilities

Nevada Hands & Voices

Nevada State University

Nevada Weather Service

Preston Bass Interpreting
Services

State of Nevada Aging and
Disability Services Division

Sorenson
Communications

ZP Better Together

CATERED MENU

Hot Meals Caterer By:

Black & Blue Diner

Services & Seating:

STUDENT UNION LOBBY & OUTDOOR COURTYARD

*Seating is first come first serve in Student Union Food Court.

BREAKFAST MENU

Scrambled Eggs w/Cheese
NY Diner Potatoes
Bacon/Sausage
Mini Pancakes

Condiments: Individually
packed Butter, Syrup, &
Ketchup

LUNCH MENU

Single Patty Burger w/
American cheese
Crispy Buffalo Chicken
Sandwich (not spicy)
Chips/French Fries

Optional Toppings:
Tomatoes, Onions, &
Lettuce

Condiments: Buffalo
Sauce, Mayo, Lettuce,
Pickles, & Ketchup

SNACKS **Popcorn**

Catered by: Jack's Popcorn Company

Better Butter/ Klassic Kettle/ Sweet Butter/ Cheesy
Cheddar/ Triple White Cheddar

*ONLY popcorn & bottled water allowed in Theatre.

STUDENT UNION MAPS

first floor where rebels reign

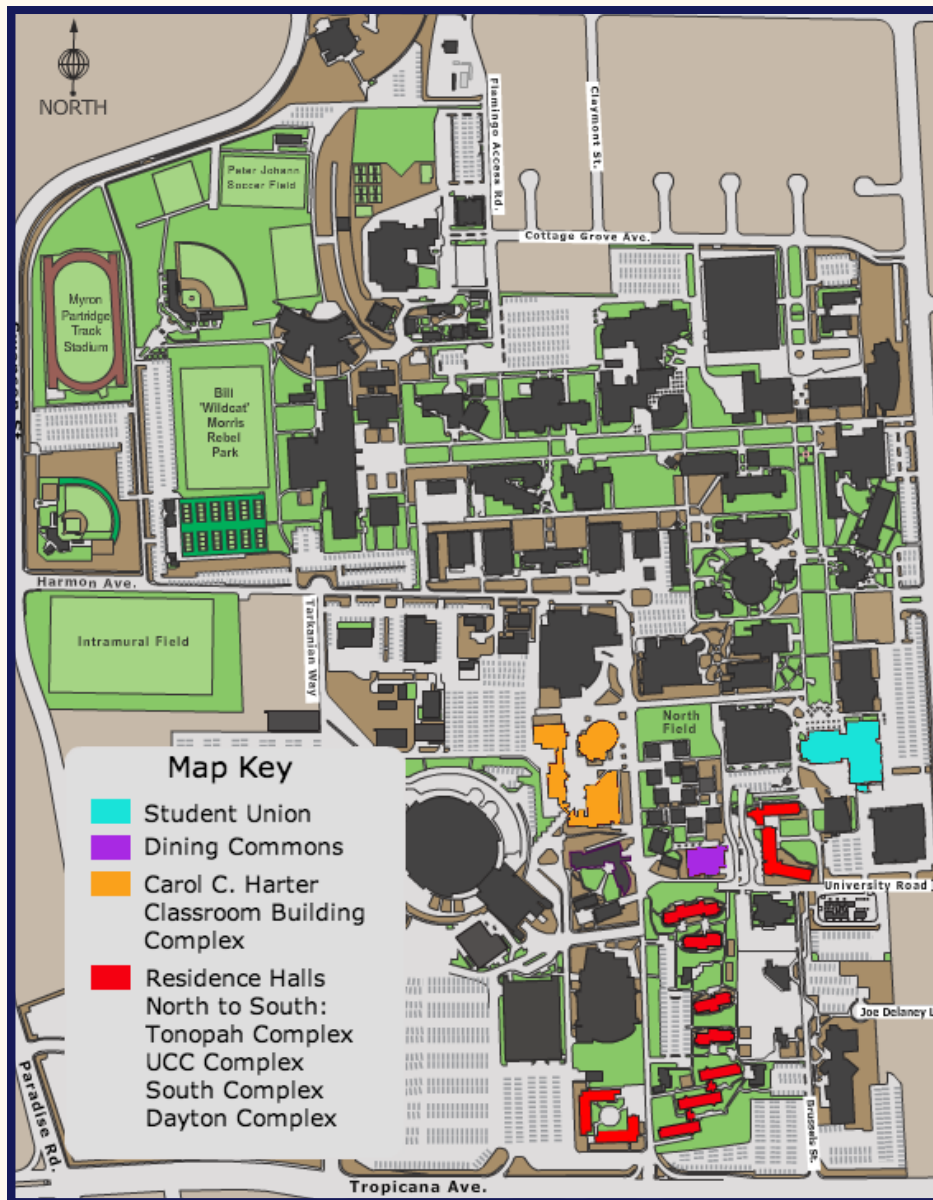
- 111 ----- Philip J. Cohen Theatre & Box Office
- 115 ----- Green Room
- 118 ----- Rebel Card Office
- 119 ----- US Bank Full Service Branch
- 121 ----- The Intersection: Academic Multicultural Center
- 122 ----- Student Union Information Desk
- 124 ----- Copy & Send



questions?
we're here to help!
www.unlv.edu/studentunion
(702) 895 - 3221

UNLV student
union ●●●
where rebels reign

STUDENT UNION MAPS



NV Commission for
Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



DARRIN SMITH, MSA

Darren Smith was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. He is an alumnus of the Maryland School for the Deaf and graduated from the University of Maryland University College (now known as University of Maryland Global Campus) with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History and with a Master of Public Administration from the University of Baltimore. Darren is very passionate about a lot of issues that range from political activism to education to community engagement, hence his knowledge of public policy. He enjoys reading, watching the news, and debating political issues. Darren engages in community outreach with different organizations, also serving as a member of the Governor's Advisory Board of the Telecommunication Relay and as member of the Maryland Commission on Disabilities. He also tries to consult with different organizations and different political entities here in Maryland when it comes to inclusion because it's important to be able to recognize that without inclusiveness, many people would miss out on the overall benefits of making sure that everyone gets to reap the rewards at the end of the day.

Isidore Niyongabo, MA, SHRM-SCP is Human Resources Leader, an international Inspirational Speaker, and a Human Rights Advocate by education and lived experience. Isidore holds a Master's degree in Peace and Justice studies from the University of San Diego where his studies focused on Human Right Advocacy, International Human Rights Law, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. He also holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from San Diego State University. Most recently, Isidore served 2 terms as the President for National Black Deaf Advocates, Inc. (NBDA). As a member and President of the NBDA, he served 8 years on the Federal Communication Commission Disability Advisory committee and was appointed twice to co-chair this committee from 2018-2022. Isidore continues his advocacy work through International Deaf Education, Advocacy and Leadership, inc. (IDEAL), a non-profit organization that he founded while as student at San Diego State with focus in advancing human rights for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in developing countries. He is currently the Director of Employee Engagement at Sorenson Communications and a proud father to his precious CODA daughter.

ISIDORE NIYONGABO, MA, SHRM-SCP



NV Commission for
Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

▶ HOWARD ROSENBLUM ◀



Howard Rosenblum is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD). He also serves as the Legal Director and works closely with the NAD lawyers on policy advocacy and litigation work. He has been instrumental in significant legal victories such as: NAD v. Netflix, NAD v. Harvard, NAD v. MIT, NAD v. Trump, and Perez v. Sturgis Public Schools. Mr. Rosenblum has been a lawyer for over thirty years, including: twelve years at the NAD; nine years as a Senior Attorney at Equip for Equality, a nonprofit organization in Illinois; and ten years with a private law firm. He currently serves as the legal advisor to the World Federation of the Deaf. In 2010 and again in 2014, he was appointed by President Obama to serve on the U.S. Access Board. Mr. Rosenblum received his law degree from IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law (1992), and his Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Engineering from the University of Arizona (1988).

▶ TIMOTHY SMALLEY ◀



Tim Smalley was born and raised in Las Vegas, NV and currently resides in Henderson, NV. He is a Customer Care Tier 1 Supervisor for Sorenson is Video Relay Service (VRS). VRS is a service where we provide accessibility to our D/HH who use American Sign Language (ASL) in our D/HH community where they can make phone call using video with interpreter on the screen who will interpret the phone call between Deaf and Hearing person by using ASL.

Mr. Smalley has been working for more than 20 Years in VRS Industry for various VRS Providers, in various roles such as Installer/Trainer, Technical Support Tier 2, Technical Support Tier 2 Lead, and Customer Care Tier 1 Supervisor.

Tim is the President of Nevada Association of the Deaf and has been actively involved in Deaf Community since graduating from High School. He grew up finding himself advocating for accommodations and accessibility for various Deaf community members. He has also been involved with various non-profit organizations in this community and is President Emeritus for a Southern Nevada LEO Club (Youth organization of Lion Clubs), and Las Vegas Club for the Deaf (LVCD). Lastly, Tim is also a member of the Accessibility sub-committee and Employment sub-committee for the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

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CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Dr. Felicia Rutledge

Dr. Felicia Rutledge liberates learning by leveraging brilliance as a creative strategist, special education and wellness advocate, and pedagogy and systems innovator. She has had a wide range of roles within education as a Teacher of the Deaf/Blind, a Teacher of the Deaf teaching a range of subjects in early childhood through middle/high school education, a K-12 Project Facilitator for Multi-Tiered System of Support supporting both in Language/Literacy and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and a Regional Coordinator for Multi-Tiered System of Supports. She continues her commitment to scholar achievement, supporting families, human talent development, and implementing systems rooted in equity and liberation as a special education consultant, coach, and advocate for both scholar and adult wellness and brilliance.



Tina Dortch, MPA

Born in Detroit, Michigan, Tina Dortch relocated to Nevada in 2006, carrying a BA in Political Science/Public Administration from Michigan State University, an MPA in Urban Administration/Planning from The Ohio State University, and a Fund Development Certification from the Center on Philanthropy - Fundraising School at Indiana University. Her professional journey has been marked by a commitment to urban planning and program administration. Noteworthy roles include Planner at the Southeast MI Council of Governments and Program Manager for federally funded housing assistance programs.

Tina served as Executive Assistant to former Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer, championing initiatives to diversify the city's construction industry and on the City of Detroit's Board of Zoning Appeals. As a partner in a small contracting firm, she provided strategic mentorship to minority-owned subcontractors. Additionally, Tina served as Director of the National Association of Minority Contractors.

While employed by Tesla, Tina optimized state-issued incentives for diversified recruitment pipelines. Since 2018, she has actioned health equity initiatives with the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health and Equity. She develops system-changing initiatives and policies, incorporating culturally and linguistically sensitive approaches to address disproportionately experienced health outcomes.



Alex Neal

Alexandra Neal is a dedicated Minority Health and Equity Specialist with the Nevada Office of Minority Health and Equity (NOMHE). She received her Master's in 2021 in Medical Health Science from Touro University, Nevada. A Las Vegas native, she holds a Bachelor's degree in Animal Science from the historically black institution, Fort Valley State University.

As a seasoned professional in the fields of diversity, inclusion, and health equity, she oversees various healthcare initiatives, including health education, advocacy, diversification of clinical research, examination of social determinants of health, and monitoring legislative activities and their implementation for the Nevada Office of Minority Health and Equity. Furthermore, as part of her responsibilities, she collaboratively facilitates the development of programs and products centered on diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and outreach.

Alexandra is deeply passionate about enhancing health outcomes for historically marginalized communities through policy advocacy, increased literacy, and collaborative efforts. She remains steadfast in her commitment to health equity and is resolute in her pursuit of transformative initiatives aimed at addressing disparities in wellness determinants.

NV Commission for
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**CONFERENCE
PRESENTERS**



April Cruda, MPH

April, a Program Officer II at the Nevada Office of Minority Health & Equity, directs equity action planning initiatives and strategic development. Originally from San Jose, California, she earned her Bachelor's Degree in Public Health from San Jose State University before relocating to Las Vegas in 2018. In 2020, April completed her Master's Degree in Public Health with a focus on Social and Behavioral Health at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Throughout her career, April has been dedicated to advancing community health among diverse populations. She began by promoting health in underserved areas with the San Jose Parks & Recreation Department, while concurrently coordinating employee wellness programs at the Stanford School of Medicine. Her experience spans direct work with racial/ethnic minorities, individuals with limited English proficiency, seniors, and those facing homelessness or low-income circumstances. Following her master's program, April supervised and trained the UNLV COVID-19 Contact Tracing Team, recognized as the Program of the Year in 2021 by the Nevada Public Health Association. Passionate about enhancing health outcomes through holistic community approaches, education, and engagement, April's overarching goal is to develop and implement high-quality programs for the betterment of underserved populations.



Nicolas C. Anthony

Nicolas Anthony is the Research Director of the Research Division of the nonpartisan Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB), headquartered in Carson City, Nevada. Mr. Anthony started his LCB career with the Research Division in 1999 and was appointed Research Director in 2021. During his time with the LCB, he also worked for 13 years in the Legal Division as a Senior Principal Deputy Legislative Counsel. He has served as a Policy Analyst and Committee Counsel to the Assembly and Senate Committees on Judiciary, and most recently provided staffing and policy assistance to the Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections. Mr. Anthony holds a Bachelor of Arts in Politics from Washington and Lee University, and a Masters in Business Administration and Doctor of Jurisprudence from Golden Gate University.



Obioma Officer, MA

Obioma Officer was born and raised in the East Bay Area of California. Growing up in a mainstream setting with hearing loss, diagnosed at the age of 8 with Auditory Processing Disorder, Obioma didn't begin signing until she was a freshman in High School. Graduating in 1999 from James Logan High School in Fremont, CA, Obioma went on to Ohlone College in Fremont, CA to pursue a degree in Deaf Studies. Obioma now holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in strategic leadership.

As a founder of nonprofit organizations, advocacy movements, and a strong background in executive leadership, Obioma actively utilizes her degrees to open doors in the community for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) community. Prioritizing full access for the D/HH and their families, while bridging hearing organizations to Deaf culture and D/HH community needs.

Currently the Executive Director of the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Obioma continues to strive to see greater attention and acknowledgment of the current needs those who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Speech Impaired (D/HH/SI) throughout the state of Nevada while supporting and educating providers and community members with statewide resources.

Being a promoter of Deaf advocacy and awareness for over two decades, Obioma's personal mission is to seek equitable treatment and access for all within the D/HH/SI community nationwide.

CONFERENCE SESSION OVERVIEWS

KEYNOTE "KICK-OFF":

"Making the Choice, to take a Chance, for Legislative Change through Political Advocacy"

This session provides participants the messaging, understanding of manpower, and tools to engage with legislators. While emphasizing effective data collection through research to support overall legislative change. Participants will leave this session with a stronger sense of legislative strategic planning and a 2 year action plan overview for legislative changes in Nevada pertaining to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

"Statewide Policy Making and Legislative Change - Health Equity through Advocacy"

This session will focus on how different voices can be heard, received, and included in public policy. The Nevada Office of Minority Health Equity plays a role in highlighting the value of data and experiences. This presentation will show how we can use community-level experiences and trends to support evidence-based programming within Nevada. This presentation is an introduction to public health and political determinants. Attendees will leave with an understanding on how policies can be made to be fair and reliable.

SESSION ONE:

SESSION TWO:

"Nevada Legislature: Connecting People to Policy"

This session will provide an overview of the Nevada Legislature and insight on how interested persons can become involved in the policy making process at the State level. It will focus on the history and composition of the Nevada Legislature, Nevada's biennial legislative sessions, the interim period between legislative sessions, the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB), the legislative process and how a bill becomes a law, bill draft requests, fiscal notes, and tips for testifying before legislative committees. The session will include the distribution of printed educational materials and publications related to the Nevada Legislature, and a general discussion of the legislative process from nonpartisan staff of the Research Division of the LCB.

CONFERENCE SESSION OVERVIEWS

SESSION THREE:

Keynote Address: "Nevada Association of the Deaf (NVAD) and National Association of the Deaf (NAD) - Advocacy & Accountability"

The Nevada Association of the Deaf (NVAD) and the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) both have missions of serving Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened people. This session will focus on each organization's structure, resources, and board of directors, as well as the NAD's staff/team members. Participants will learn what services and assistance they can get from the NVAD and the NAD.

Inspirational Speaker: "The 'How to' of Advocacy through Legislative Testimony"

We all want change. When change has to go through the legislative process, we must convince both our friends and foes that change is necessary and present our stories the way that we get a win from and for everyone.

In this session, we will hear inspirational experiences with examples of lived experience that are results of successful legislative testimonies and collective advocacy efforts.

Participants in this workshop will not only take away key strategic tools for effective advocacy, but they will also understand how to narrate persuasive stories that will influence the opposing side to side with your objectives and desired outcomes.

SESSION FOUR:

"Self-Care & Transformational Leadership"

This session aims to empower leaders to navigate the complexities of advocacy while fostering their own well-being and the well-being of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community they support. After participation in this session participants will be able to:

- Define transformational leadership
- Identify signs of burnout to increase self-awareness
- Understand the power of self-care in leadership
- Curate practical tools for joy, mindfulness, and inclusive communication
- Create an actionable personalized wellness blueprint

SESSION FIVE:

CONFERENCE SESSION OVERVIEWS

SESSION SIX:

“Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) - New Low Cost or Free Services”

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and the National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA) have a grant from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to help more people get Internet connectivity. This effort is called the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP helps people who have not been able to afford Internet connectivity to get it for a low cost or for free. Come and learn how you might be able to get cheap or free Internet services.

Youth Advocates in Leadership Panel - “The Next Generation is NOW!”

In this panel made up of local Nevadan teens and young adults who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, attendees will learn how these self-advocates began their journey to becoming leaders in their community. The diverse group of panelists, who have a wide variety of educational backgrounds, communication modalities and lived experiences will share how they obtained the necessary skills at an early age. Through their present endeavors, they have gained the knowledge and confidence to advocate for their needs at home and at school.

*For more details, see the Panelist Overview section.

SESSION SEVEN:

Reflection Session - “2023 Community Impact: A look back to look forward towards Legislative Change”

SESSION EIGHT:

The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing initiative to Engage the community has led to a revitalization of community and allyship. This session takes a moment to reflect on the year’s activities with the Commission and Community Partners. Highlighting milestones that have led to renewed knowledge and awareness from a community perspective that has gained us access to empowerment conferences like today. Join us as we take a moment to reflect on how what we have learned up to today as a community can all tie together for true impact on Legislative Change in the 83rd legislation.

NV Commission for
Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**LUNCHEON
PANELISTS**



**Beth Jones,
NVHV Executive
Director**

Beth lives in Henderson, Nevada with her amazing husband Josh and their three wonderful kids Alexis, Coleman, and Harrison. Before becoming a mother, Beth earned a Bachelor's degree in Special Education and a Master's degree in Special Education, working for many years as a teacher of students with Autism and a Behavior Mentor Teacher. Her oldest and youngest children were diagnosed at early ages as being deaf/hard of hearing and has worked diligently ever since to educate herself to be able to support her own children in their needs, as well supporting others throughout Nevada. Beth has been involved with Nevada Hands & Voices since 2013, starting out as "just a mom" and then quickly moving into a Parent Guide position. She has served as the Guide By Your Side Program Coordinator since 2016 and became Executive Director in 2020. Beth also sits on the Nevada EHDI Stakeholder and the Legislative sub-committee for the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Speech Impaired. Beth is a graduate of Partners in Policymaking, a member of the Hands & Voices Fostering Joy Core Team and is a Mentor for the Hands & Voices Leadership-to-Leadership Program.



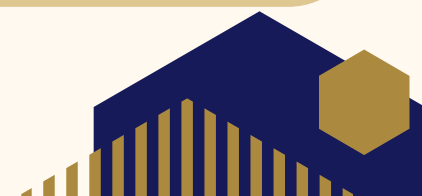
**Shelly Freed,
LVDS Secretary**

Shelly Freed was a passionate educator with 25 years of experience of being principal, curriculum specialist and teacher. She held different positions at California School for the Deaf, Riverside Alumni Association for 14 years. While being retired, she continues to teach Explore Your Future at National Technical Institute for the Deaf past two summers. She was a board member of Deaf Centers of Nevada She has the passion working with deaf and hard of hearing children along with the adults in the deaf community to educate on what they need to know. Currently, she is an intern secretary of Las Vegas Deaf Seniors. She has been an advocate by participating in several community events and projects.



**Michael
Pimentel, GTC
VP of
Technology**

Michael Pimentel is the Chief Executive Officer and Founder of Heart Cruises, LLC, which specializes in cruises, land tours, and all-inclusive resorts all around the world. Michael is passionate about international travel and has visited 70+ countries. He has given presentations at several workshops specializing on travel interpreting. Michael was also a world-class professional sports photographer for 17+ years and his photos were published in Sports Illustrated and ESPN Magazines. He works for Global Technical Communication as Vice President of Information Technology. He helped his wife, Genevieve, operate Blue Hawk Branding, and resides in Stuart, Florida with his family of six children.



NV Commission for
Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

LUNCHEON PANELISTS



**Lance Ledet,
HLAASNC
President**

Lance Ledet is a lifelong advocate dedicated to securing disability rights and expanding equitable health access. As someone who suffers profound hearing loss, as well as a spinal cord injury. Lance is a daily user of assistive technology. His lived experience has provided him with thorough knowledge of assistive technologies, both for his personal use as well as the role these technologies can play in the lives of others. To this end, Lance previously founded the Southern Nevada Chapter for the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAASNC) and serves as the organization's inaugural president. Lance was re-elected as Chairman of the Nevada Assistive Technology Council for the State of Nevada's Aging and Disability Service Division (ADSD) in August of 2022 to August of 2024, after originally being appointed to serve as Nevada AT Council Chairman from 2020-2022 AT Council session. Lance was the Project Coordinator for NCED's (NATRC) and (NTEDP) programs in the Las Vegas Office from November 2020. To September 2023. Lance provided the AT services required by both grants to more than 800 consumers during that time frame, as well as attended and held nearly 100 public awareness outreaches for both programs. Currently Lance is in the early planning stages of starting his own nonprofit to targeting gaps in services that individuals with disabilities deal with on a daily basis.



**Lora Lee Turner,
DETR-VR
Rehabilitation
Supervisor**

Vocational Rehabilitation transforms people through meaningful employment for Nevadans with disabilities. Lora specializes in services to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind community and Pre ETS/Transition Services for youths with disabilities. We provide transition services to students as young as age 14 in schools across Nevada. We assist students in learning how to request the support and services they need, learn about their rights and responsibilities, identify career interests, develop skills needed in today's workforce and experience hands on learning in the workplace.



**Scott Youngs,
NATRC
Senior Project
Manager**

Scott Youngs has been a trainer, educator, and advocate for individuals with disabilities for more than 30 years. He is a Senior Project Manager with the Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities at the University of Nevada, Reno. Managing several different grants and contracts he provides statewide programs that promote an independent living model regarding accessibility, universal design, assistive technology, and telecommunication related services, to people with disabilities. He has served on several boards and commissions statewide over the years and is a tireless supporter of systems change that improves the quality of life of people with disabilities. He has been a wheelchair user from an early age and participates in various adaptive recreation opportunities offered in Northern Nevada.

YOUTH ADVOCATE PANELISTS



**Audrey Adeola,
DETR Youth Self-
Advocate**

Hi, my name is Audrey Adeola. I'm deaf, from Los Angeles, CA and raised in Las Vegas, Nevada. I'm 19 years old and graduated from Liberty High School. I'm currently a freshman college student at Nevada State University. I'm excited to share in this event with you!!



**Alexis Jones,
Nevada Hands &
Voices Youth
Self-Advocate**

Alexis is a high school junior majoring in Culinary Arts. She is a scholar athlete, maintains above a 4.0 GPA, plays on both varsity soccer and flag football teams, serves as Junior Class Treasurer, is a member of the National Honor Society, and assists her school as an Ambassador Student Leader. As a representative of her school, Alexis also serves on the CCSD Superintendent Student Advisory Council and meets with school district leaders about the needs of DHH students and the importance of inclusion. Outside of school, Alexis has presented at multiple local conferences and workshops, and has been featured in a documentary entitled "Our World in Our Words" with other self-advocates. Alexis has also been involved with the Nevada legislature since 2019, testifying and meeting with multiple legislators on DHH issues. As a proud member of the US Women's National Deaf Soccer team, Alexis also advocates for diversity, inclusion, and equity rights by helping to lead inclusive "Adapt and Thrive" soccer camps and helping to call on US Congress for SafeSport reform to protect all athletes against abuse.

YOUTH ADVOCATE PANELISTS



**Cassandra Ayala,
DETR Youth Self-
Advocate**

My name is Cassandra Ayala, I born and raised in Las Vegas. I am hard of hearing, and I am attending College of Southern Nevada. My major is Math teacher and minor is DHH teacher and I am planning to Secondary Education teacher.



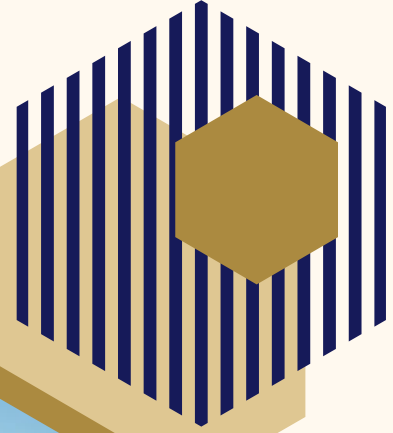
**Preston Mierr,
DETR Youth Self-
Advocate**

Preston Mierr, I am born and raised in Las Vegas, Nevada. I am deaf. I use cochlear implant (CI) and went to mainstream school from Pre-School to High School. I have two favorite hobbies which are socializing with the peers and building a Lego set to help me reduce stress and enjoy. Finally, I love being able to do learn new things. I believe in a journey of lifelong learning!



PANEL SESSIONS INFORMATION

Luncheon Community Partner Panel: "State and Community Resource Panel on Policy Change Needs & Legislative Initiatives"



MC/Host:

Eli Schwartz,
Legislative Subcommittee Chair

Nevada Black Deaf Advocates (NVBDA):

Just/Equitable D/HH Ed Programs for
Diverse Intersectional Students

Nevada Hands & Voices (NVHV):

School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
D/HH Focused Education

Las Vegas Deaf Seniors (LVDS):

Skilled Nursing Facilities
Deaf Center
Hospital Hospitality/Access
ADA Technology Access
Public TV CC Access

Nevada Association of the Deaf (NVAD):

Interpreters in Schools
Interpreters in Medical/Legal
Access to Resources



PANEL SESSIONS INFORMATION

Luncheon Community Partner Panel (Continued): "State and Community Resource Panel on Policy Change Needs & Legislative Initiatives"

Panelist Continued:

Global Technical Communications (GTC):

State funded Access to ASL Anywhere
Full ASL Access in and out
of State ran Agencies
Government Access Statewide

Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation - BVR (DETR-BVR):


Employment & Training
Accessibility & Communication Access
Youth Transition Services

Hearing Loss Association of America Southern Nevada Chapter (HLAASNC)


T-Coils & Bluetooth Systems &
Accessibility in Government/Public/Non-
Profit Service Providing Buildings

Nevada Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (NTEDP)

Telecommunication Access Statewide
Assistive Technology for D/HH



PANEL SESSIONS INFORMATION



Youth Advocates in Leadership Panel – “The next Generations is NOW!”

Host/MC:

Alexis Jones,
Nevada Hands & Voices Youth Self Advocate

SESSION OVERVIEW

In this panel made up of local Nevadan teens and young adults who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, attendees will learn how these self-advocates began their journey to becoming leaders in their community. The diverse group of panelists, who have a wide variety of educational backgrounds, communication modalities and lived experiences will share how they obtained the necessary skills at an early age. Through their present endeavors, they have gained the knowledge and confidence to advocate for their needs at home and at school. Becoming leaders in their local community, throughout the state, and even at national levels. This panel emphasizes strategies on how families, Deaf/Hard or Hearing adults, and medical and/or educational professions can support advocacy efforts of our next generation of leaders.



The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing is established to provide advocacy on behalf of individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Speech-Impaired, Deaf-Blind, and Deaf Plus. The Commission was established in 2017 to make recommendations to the state of Nevada and local governments concerning the services to these communities.

Created within the Office of the Governor, the Commission consists of members appointed by the Governor. The Governor shall consider recommendations made by the Nevada Commission on Services for Persons with Disabilities and appoint to the Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Mission Statement

“The mission of the Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired: All Nevada citizens will have equal and full access to resources, services and opportunities in all aspects of community life.”

Vision Statement

“All Nevada residents who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Persons with speech disabilities along with their families and professionals who support them have timely access to information, effective communication, education, and services that promote choice and independence.”



COMMISSION MEMBERS



**Eric
Wilcox,
Chair**



**Susan
Beckett,
Vice Chair**



**Ryan
Feldman,
Commissioner**



**Laura
Fink,
Commissioner**



**Eli
Schwartz,
Commissioner**



**Catherine
Nielsen,
Commissioner**



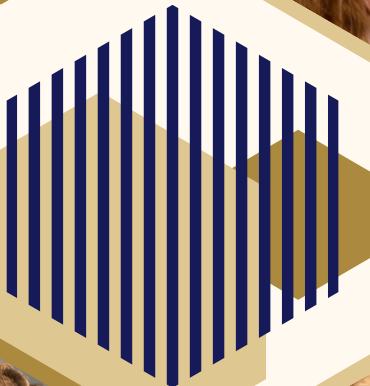
**Jaime
Vitale,
Commissioner**

BOARD
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COMMISSION MEMBERS

Subcommittee Members



Accessibility Subcommittee:

Thom Duva
Laura Fink
Lee Bullock

Education Subcommittee:

Eric Wilcox, Chair
Dr. Felicia Rutledge
Dr. David Kelsey
Dr. Kimberly Bauer-Schaub

Employment Subcommittee:

Laura Fink, Chair
Michelle Albrecht
Laura Thompson

Interpreter Subcommittee:

Jaime Vitale, Chair
Alina Duncan
Dr. David Kelsey
Ehren Dei

Legislative Subcommittee:

Eli Schwartz, Chair
Beth Jones
Susan Beckett
Catherine Nielsen
Julie Gwin

COMMISSION STATE PLAN

NVCDHH State Plan 2022-2027

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To address the critical issues identified above, the Commission focus efforts within three strategic priorities: Access, Engagement, and Advocacy. These strategic priorities help to inform recommendations and serve as a guide for Commission efforts throughout the duration of the plan.

ACCESS

The Commission is committed to working with partners and stakeholders to increase access to services for the target population throughout Nevada. This includes:

- Effective communication access to priority services such as healthcare, education, employment, and other social services.
- Quality workforce of sign language interpreters, including certified-deaf interpreters (CDI), and captioning providers.
- Inclusion of appropriate accommodations during emergency situations and public meetings such as the Legislative session.

COMMISSION STATE PLAN

ENGAGEMENT

The Commission's efforts are most impactful through the development of working relationships with a multitude of partners including state, local, private owned and public businesses to increase diversity and inclusion efforts. This includes:

- Continuous engagement with the target populations to improve efforts.
- Increase awareness of the target population and effective communication strategies among state and local partners, as well as other community providers.
- Building partnerships to increase the access and support of the target population throughout the state.

ADVOCACY

The Commission is deeply invested in advocating on behalf of the target populations in Nevada. Ensuring that all citizens are treated with equity, dignity, and respect is a top priority for the Commission.

- Evaluate policy decisions and program designs to advocate for the needs of the target populations.
- Increase awareness of the legislative process among the target population, including how to participate as advocates for themselves and the community.
- Coordinating with other advocacy groups to amplify efforts on behalf of the target population.
- Addressing the needs of marginalized communities within the target populations.



Special thanks and appreciation to all who assisted with conference planning and support!

Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation
(DETR) - Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR)

Global Technical Communications (GTC) – ASL Anywhere

Hearing Loss Association of America Southern Nevada
Chapter (HLAASNC)

National Association of the Deaf (NAD)

Nevada Association of the Deaf (NVAD)

Nevada Black Deaf Advocates (NVBDA)

Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard
of Hearing (NVCDHH) – HOST

Nevada Governor’s Council on Developmental
Disabilities (NGCDD)

Nevada Hands & Voices (NVHV)

Nevada Office of Minority Health and Equity (NOHME)

*Including our Conference Accommodations Team,
Agencies, & Volunteers who helped make this possible.

NV Commission for
Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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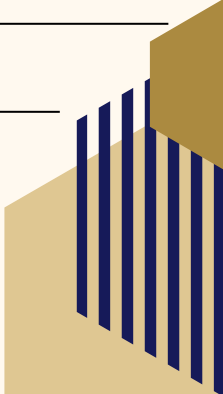


**Better
Together**

ZVRS & Purple Communications



NOTES



CONTACT INFORMATION

For further assistance and/or future engagements with the D/HH Commission, please use contact information below:

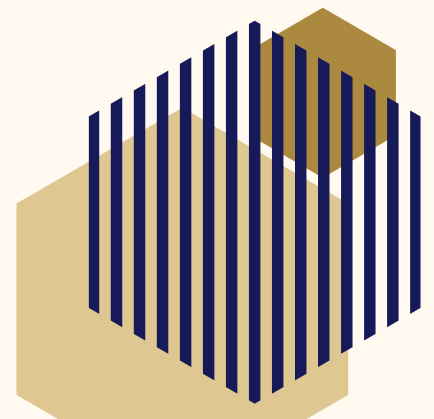
Eric Wilcox, Commission Chair &
Susan Beckett, Commission Vice Chair
NVCDHH Board of Commissioners
NVDeafCommission@adsd.nv.gov

Obioma Officer, MA, **Executive Director**
Obioma@adsd.nv.gov

Lorraine Belt-Dolan, **Admin Assistant**
lorrainebelt@adsd.nv.gov

**Interested in becoming a commissioner or joining us for a future meeting?
Check out our Webpage for more details!**

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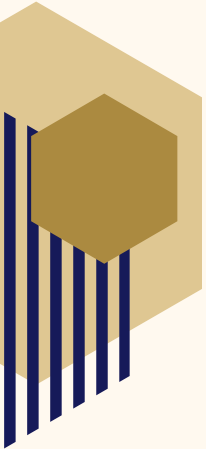

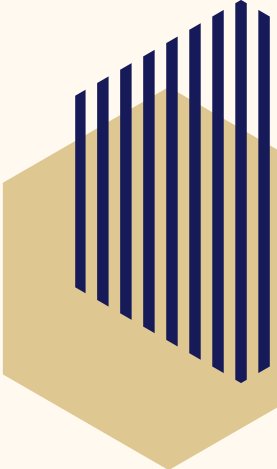
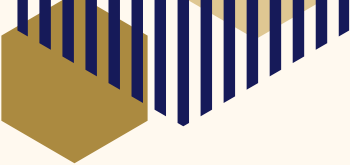
CONFERENCE SURVEY

Please take your end of conference survey using the QR Code below or ask a conference volunteer for a paper copy! This is important for us to continue events like this in the future.

THANKS IN ADVANCE!



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Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Access for All

This conference is supported by the Nevada Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities through 75% of grant funds from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services; Administration on Community Living grant #2301NVSCDD and 25% matching funds appropriated by the Nevada State Legislature under NRS 232.320 administered through the State of Nevada Department of Health and Human Services for a total of an estimated \$20,000. The contents are solely the responsibility of the Commission for Persons who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and do not necessarily represent the official views of any other associated or supporting agency.