

INSPIRING WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Black Men In White Coats

YOUTH SUMMIT

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2026

Saint Mary's Hospital
Trinity Health

BLACK MEN IN WHITE COATS



WELCOME LETTER FROM DR. OKORODUDU



Greetings! Welcome to the Black Men In White Coats Youth Summit!

On behalf of the entire Black Men in White Coats team, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Black Men in White Coats Youth Summit, proudly hosted by Saint Mary's Hospital!

Today is about possibilities, opportunities, and discovering the incredible potential that exists within each of you.

As a physician, I can look back on my own journey and recognize the moments and people who helped shape my future. Sometimes it was a teacher who believed in me, a mentor who offered encouragement, or someone who simply reminded me that my dreams were worth pursuing. Often, it takes just one moment to change the direction of a life.

My hope is that today will be one of those moments for you.

When I founded Black Men in White Coats, my mission was simple: to help more young people, particularly those who may not often see themselves represented in medicine, recognize that a career in healthcare is within their reach.

The future of medicine needs your ideas, your compassion, your creativity, and your unique perspective. Whether you dream of becoming a physician, nurse, researcher, therapist, or another healthcare professional, there is a place for you.

I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to Saint Mary's Hospital and the dedicated professionals, volunteers, and community partners who have made this summit possible. Their commitment to investing in the next generation demonstrates what can happen when a community comes together with a shared purpose.

To every student attending today: ask questions, make connections, explore something new, and don't be afraid to dream bigger than you did when you arrived.

You belong in every room where your dreams can take you.

Enjoy the summit, embrace the experience, and remember that your journey toward greatness may begin with a single moment—perhaps even today.

With encouragement and best wishes,

Dale Okorodudu, MD (Dr. Dale)
Founder of Black Men in White Coats



SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

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Thank you to the following partners for their gracious contributions to the event: Aroma Joe's, City of Waterbury, Palace Theater, and UConn Waterbury.

Black Men In White Coats
YOUTH SUMMIT



AGENDA

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Registration/Check-In	
9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.	Welcome & Opening Remarks	Pastor Kristopher Reese Master of Ceremonies Robert Roose, MD, MPH President, Acute Care Trinity Health Of New England Dr. Darren Schwartz Superintendent of Waterbury Public Schools Mayor Paul Penerewski City of Waterbury US Congresswoman Jahana Hayes
9:15 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.	Black Men and Women In White Coats Panel Discussion	Sabrina Marsella, Pre-Med Student Jayden Simo, MD Candidate Oluwakorede T. Akele, MD Marlaine Jean-Miller, MD, FACOG MODERATOR: Amir Johnson
9:50 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.	**Student Breakout Sessions at UConn Waterbury**	Please follow your group leaders to UConn Waterbury.
	Adult Breakout Sessions at The Palace Theater	
SESSION 1: 10:00 a.m. – 10:25 a.m.	Level Up: Building a Portfolio That Opens Doors	Alisa Ocone Admissions Officer, UConn Waterbury Campus
SESSION 2: 10:30 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.	Mind Over Matter: Prioritizing Mental Wellness in the Journey to Success	Shawniel Chamanlal, LCSW
SESSION 3: 11:00 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.	Behind the White Coat: A Candid Look into the Life of a Doctor	Obinna J. Nwosu, DMD Candidate
SESSION 4: 11:30 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.	Inspiring What's Possible: UConn Health's Health Career Opportunity Programs	Gerald Birmingham, DMD, MPH Durand Jones, Education Specialist
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Lunch with a White Coat	Informal networking lunch for 11th grade students and above with physicians and providers.
12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Lunch at The Palace Theater	
12:30 p.m. – 12:40 p.m.	Welcome Back Remarks	Pastor Kristopher Reese
12:40 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.	Keynote	Lou Hart, MD, MBA Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Yale School of Medicine
1:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Student Giveaways/Event Survey/Closing Remarks	
2:00 p.m.	Event Concludes	



MEET OUR EVENT SPEAKERS

OPENING REMARKS:

Mayor Paul K. Pernerewski, Jr.
City of Waterbury



Mayor Paul Pernerewski Jr. was born and raised in Waterbury, where he and his wife Kim continue to live and raise their three sons. A graduate of Holy Cross High School, UConn, and Georgetown Law, the Mayor practiced law for 37 years, including roles as Assistant Attorney General for the State of Connecticut and General Counsel for the Connecticut Airport Authority. He also taught Business Law at Naugatuck Valley Community College. Serving the community has always been a priority for him. In 2001 he felt passionate that his law background would help Waterbury overcome mismanagement, fiscal irresponsibility, and corruption. Appointed to the Board of Aldermen in 2001, he became President in 2009 and was elected Mayor of Waterbury in 2023. Mayor Pernerewski led efforts to improve Waterbury's bond rating and city management. As Mayor, he focuses on economic growth, education, and public safety. His collaborative leadership reflects his lifelong commitment to community and integrity.

Dr. Darren Schwartz
Superintendent of Waterbury Public Schools



Dr. Darren Schwartz serves as Superintendent of Waterbury Public Schools, having previously held leadership roles as Deputy Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, and Instructional Leadership Director. His career in education also includes experience as a principal and teacher in Hartford and East Granby Public Schools.

He holds a Doctor of Education from Northeastern University, master's degrees from the University of Connecticut and Columbia University, and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Hartford. He also earned Superintendent certification through UConn's Executive Leadership Program.

A proud Waterbury resident and district educator since 2012, Dr. Schwartz is committed to equitable, high-quality education that empowers students to lead fulfilling lives and make meaningful contributions to their communities and the world.



MEET OUR EVENT SPEAKERS

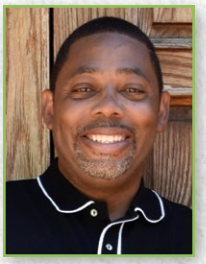
OPENING REMARKS:

Congresswoman Jahana Hayes



Congresswoman Jahana Hayes represents Connecticut's 5th District in the United States House of Representatives. The district spans northwest and central Connecticut, including her hometown of Waterbury. Elected in 2018, she is the first African-American woman to ever represent Connecticut in Congress. Congresswoman Hayes serves on the House Committees on Education and Workforce, and Agriculture, where she is Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Nutrition and Foreign Agriculture. Her legislative focus includes equitable access to quality education, health care, labor, agriculture and veterans. During her Congressional tenure, the Congresswoman has had 11 bills signed into law. To date she has introduced 133 bills and cosponsored over 2,900 pieces of legislation across a broad range topics. Hayes holds degrees from Naugatuck Valley Community College, Southern Connecticut State University, University of Saint Joseph, and University of Bridgeport.

Pastor Kristopher Reese
MASTER OF CEREMONIES



Pastor Kristopher Reese has served as Senior Pastor of Grace Baptist Church since 2015, leading impactful ministries that uplift the Waterbury community. He partners with local businesses to support families in need and organizes annual initiatives like the Adopt-A-Family Christmas Drive and free weekend meals for seniors. Under his leadership, Grace Baptist Church has adopted Brass City Charter School and Walsh Elementary School, offering student recognition programs and teacher appreciation events. He also provides resume and interview workshops and hosts career fairs. Pastor Reese serves on numerous boards, including the Interfaith Action Fellowship and Waterbury's Diversity Committee. He holds multiple degrees, including an honorary Doctorate in Strategic Leadership, and in 2025, was named one of Connecticut's 100 Men of Color.



MEET OUR MODERATORS & PANELISTS

BLACK MEN AND WOMEN IN WHITE COATS PANEL DISCUSSION
PANEL SPEAKERS:

Sabrina Marsella, Pre-Med Student



Sabrina Marsella is a senior Biomedical Sciences student at Quinnipiac University and is originally from Massachusetts. As a first-generation pre-medical student, she is passionate about expanding mentorship, access, and support for students pursuing careers in healthcare. She serves as President of the Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students and mentors in the QUEST program, where she supports first-year students as they navigate academic and personal challenges. Her experiences navigating the pre-med track have shaped her commitment to supporting younger students and creating spaces where they feel encouraged and capable. She hopes to become a physician who advocates for underserved communities and empowers future students to pursue careers in medicine.

Jayden Simo, MD Candidate



Jayden Simo is a first-year medical student at Quinnipiac University's Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine. A first-generation American of Cameroonian descent, he graduated from The Ohio State University in May with a degree in Health Sciences and a minor in Biology. During his undergraduate years, Jayden actively engaged in mentorship, community service, and clinical research, contributing to several orthopedic surgery publications. His passion for medicine stems from his upbringing and a desire to address healthcare disparities in underserved communities. Beyond academics, Jayden enjoys connecting with others, cooking, and weightlifting.

Oluwakorede T. Akele, MD



Dr. Oluwakorede Akele is a Nigerian American, born and raised in Jersey City, New Jersey. He is a first-generation medical graduate. Dr. Akele is currently a resident in Internal Medicine at the University of Connecticut. He is passionate about addressing social determinants of health and health disparities, which has led him to develop a deep love and interest in cardiology and clinical research. Outside of the hospital, Dr. Akele loves to work out, run, play the piano, and spend time with friends.



MEET OUR MODERATORS & PANELISTS

PANEL SPEAKERS:

Marlaine Jean-Miller, MD, FACOG



Dr. Marlaine Jean-Miller attended Hunter College of the City of New York, where she received her undergraduate degree in 2005. She earned her medical degree from Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta in 2011. Dr. Jean-Miller completed her obstetrics and gynecology residency training at Albany Medical Center in 2015, where she was appointed ObGyn Junior Administrative Chief, and then ObGyn Administrative Chief.

Dr. Jean-Miller has received numerous honors, including the Albany Medical Center Golden Apple Award, the Albany Medical Center ObGyn Department Excellence in Teaching Award, the Gold Foundation Humanism in Medicine Award, and the Morehouse School of Medicine Auxiliary to the Atlanta Medical Association Scholarship. She practices general and high-risk obstetric care, general gynecology, and laparoscopic and robotic gynecologic surgery. She is fluent in Haitian Creole. Dr. Jean-Miller joined Gynecology & Obstetrics - Women's Health Connecticut in 2015 and became board-certified in obstetrics and gynecology in 2017.

MODERATOR:

Amir Johnson



Amir Johnson is a dynamic leader, speaker, and moderator whose work advances community development, political advocacy, and organizational capacity building. He currently serves as Director of External Relations and Programs at iQuilt Partnership, where he leads strategic partnerships, public engagement, and policy advocacy efforts that drive transformational urban planning aligned with the organization's bold Hartford400 vision.

Deeply committed to civic leadership, Amir extends his impact well beyond his professional role. He serves as Vice-Chair of the Hartford Parking Authority, Chair of Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs, and as a town committee member—positions that reflect his dedication to strengthening local governance, economic development, and community engagement.

Amir is an alumnus of the number one HBCU, Morehouse College, in Atlanta, Georgia, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a minor in Sociology. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in Organizational Leadership at Goodwin University, further sharpening his expertise in strategic leadership and organizational transformation.

Driven by strength, joy, and advocacy, Amir brings vision, collaboration, and measurable impact to every space he enters.



MEET OUR MODERATORS & PANELISTS

ADULT BREAKOUT SESSION PANELISTS:

Level Up: Building a Portfolio That Opens Doors

Alisa Ocone, Admissions Officer



Alisa Ocone is the Admissions Officer at the University of Connecticut's Waterbury campus, bringing eight years of experience in college admissions and a background in secondary education. Before transitioning into higher education, she worked as a public high school English teacher, literacy coach, and College and Career Coordinator. Her admissions experience includes working with Connecticut-based colleges and serving as a regional admissions officer for institutions in New York and California. Alisa recently completed UCLA's College Counseling Certificate program and is passionate about helping students and families navigate the college search and admissions process and make informed decisions about their educational futures.

Mind Over Matter: Prioritizing Mental Wellness in the Journey to Success

Shawniel Chamanlal, LCSW



Shawniel Chamanlal, LCSW, is the Founder and CEO of Healing Springs Wellness Center in Plantsville, Connecticut. A Fordham University graduate, she blends evidence-based mental health practices with holistic healing to support mind, body, and spirit. Passionate about creating inclusive spaces, especially for communities of color, Shawniel's mission is to make mental wellness accessible and culturally responsive. She's a sought-after speaker and trainer, leading workshops nationwide for schools, corporations, and nonprofits. Her talks focus on emotional wellness, leadership, and mindset—empowerment. At her core, Shawniel believes healing is about more than survival; it's about building a life of wholeness, purpose, and abundance.



MEET OUR MODERATORS & PANELISTS

ADULT BREAKOUT SESSION PANELISTS:

Behind the White Coat: A Candid Look into the Life of a Doctor

Obinna J. Nwosu, DMD Candidate



Obinna Nwosu is a second-year dental student at the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine. He currently serves as President of the UConn Black Men in White Coats Chapter and Political Advocacy Chair for UConn's Student National Medical Association. Born in Nigeria and raised in New York City, Obinna is grateful for the opportunity to pursue his aspirations in dental medicine. He is excited to connect with others, engage in meaningful discussions, and share his journey thus far.

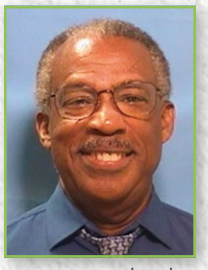


MEET OUR MODERATORS & PANELISTS

ADULT BREAKOUT SESSION PANELISTS:

Inspiring What's Possible | UConn Health's Health Career Opportunity Programs

Gerald Birmingham, DMD, MPH, MS, MAGD



Dr. Gerald Birmingham earned his Doctorate from the UConn School of Dental Medicine in 1989 and began his career serving as Dental Director at Southwest Community Health Center in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Driven by a passion for public health, he went on to earn both a Master of Public Health and a Master of Science in Nutrition. His expertise in oral health, nutrition, and wellness helped shape community health initiatives during his tenure with the Bridgeport and Milford Health Departments. Dr. Birmingham continues to own and operate a private dental practice in Milford, Connecticut. An active leader in the profession, he serves as a dental examiner for the American Board of Dental Examiners. He has held leadership roles with local and state dental associations, and achieved Fellowship and Mastership status in the Academy of General Dentistry. He was recently appointed part-time Assistant Clinical Professor at the UConn School of Dental Medicine and Assistant Director in the UConn Health Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs.

Durand Jones, Education Specialist



Durand Jones is the Community-Based Education Specialist for the Health Career Opportunity Programs Department at the University of Connecticut. He grew up in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, a neighborhood made up mostly of immigrants from the West Indies.

As the child of immigrants from Barbados, he has always understood that education is the great equalizer. A graduate of Brooklyn College, he became a public school teacher and taught at every level, from elementary to high school, in the same communities where he attended school as a child. After watching funding and support for programs that helped students like him succeed decline, he dedicated his time to creating new opportunities for students from underserved areas to succeed.



MEET OUR MODERATORS & PANELISTS

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Lou Hart, MD, MBA



Dr. Lou Hart is a physician-executive, academic hospitalist, and healthcare entrepreneur committed to building a more reliable, effective, and financially sustainable health care system. His personal and professional work interests include human-centered high-value care, clinical decision support tools, personal financial health literacy and health care economics.

He has served in inaugural enterprise leadership roles at two major leading health systems: System Director of Equity, Quality & Safety at NYC Health + Hospitals, and System Medical Director of Health Equity at Yale New Haven Health. Dr. Hart architected and led system-wide strategies to reduce costly and unnecessary healthcare variability through redesign of clinical pathways, algorithmic clinical decision support tools, patient data collection and advanced analytics, patient safety practices, clinical quality improvement and operational governance.

Dr. Hart studied financial economics, public health, and philosophy as an undergraduate at Vanderbilt University. He attended medical school at the University of California-San Diego and completed his residency training in Pediatrics at New York University (NYU). He was the inaugural Clinical Leadership Fellow in Quality & Safety at NYC Health + Hospitals. Most recently, he was a Pozen-Commonwealth Fund Fellow in Health Equity Leadership and MBA graduate from the Yale School of Management.



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Earn More Chances to Win a Giveaway!

Each Career Explorer Card comes with three tickets:



Your first ticket is a bonus ticket and can be entered as soon as you check in and get your backpack.

Your remaining two tickets can be entered once you've completed your Career Explorer Card by collecting all required stamps.

Be sure to place your tickets in the prize box marked for your grade level.



Student Giveaway

MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN!

At the end of the summit, students will be randomly selected to win one of these exciting prizes:

APPLE IPAD 11-INCH (A16) SILVER, 128GB, WI-FI



SKULLCANDY RAIL WIRELESS EARBUDS, TRUE BLACK



SKULLCANDY WIRELESS 2 HEADPHONES, TRUE BLACK



SKULLCANDY TERRAIN WIRELESS SPEAKER, NAVY



GREATER WATERBURY YMCA MEMBERSHIP GIVEAWAY

20 students ages 13 – 18 will be randomly selected to receive a free 6 month membership. Winners will be notified by email after the event.



Event Survey

Scan the QR code to complete our event survey.

Upon completion, participants are added to the drawing pool.

Winner will be announced after the Keynote. Must be present to win.

Saint Mary's Hospital Medical Staff **Proudly Supports** Black Men In White Coats and their commitment to our community!



Thank you to the Saint Mary's Hospital Medical Staff for your support with the Black Men In White Coats mission! We are grateful for your commitment to providing a personalized patient experience centered around our patients.

To find an expert primary care provider near you, please schedule by calling us at 833-C-YOU-NOW (833-296-8669) or by scanning our QR code.

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