

SPEAKER BIOS

ARIELLE DIETZ

- Arielle Dietz is a dedicated advocate serving as the Director of Residential Services at ARISE, a comprehensive victim service provider in Lawrence County. In this role, she provides oversight and strategic direction for residential services, ensuring survivors have access to high-quality housing assistance that is safe, compassionate, and dignified—creating the healing environment they need to rebuild their lives in peace. ARISE’s residential programming spans a full continuum of care, including emergency shelter and a range of rental assistance programs such as Transitional Housing (TH), Rapid Rehousing (RRH), and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Arielle is deeply committed to expanding access to stable housing and believes that safe housing is not only a basic human right but also a critical foundation for survivors’ healing and long-term stability. She is especially passionate about the intersection of survivor advocacy and housing, finding that engaging landlords is both rewarding and essential to helping survivors secure the stability they need to move forward.

JENNIFER BEITTEL

Chief Philanthropic & Communications Officer

- Jennifer is an experienced development professional in the non-profit sector with a passion for social justice and education. As the Chief Philanthropic and Communications Officer for the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV), Jennifer engages in private fund development, government grant management, and strategic relationship building to support the coalition and its 59 direct service member programs statewide. In 2020, she established the GiveForDV with GivingTuesday, a national cause-based giving community encouraging organizations and people to come together to support survivors and domestic violence organizations. Outside of her work at PCADV, Jennifer volunteers as an education tax credit program consultant, helping to raise scholarship dollars for students and families in need.

BRITTANY MELLINGER

- Brittany Mellinger is an experienced fair housing educator and program manager. She joined PHRC in 2021 as Fair Housing Training and Outreach Coordinator. In this role, she has expanded PHRC's housing partnerships and outreach efforts. Prior to joining PHRC, she led fair housing efforts in Lancaster, PA, working to cultivate resources and develop partnerships. Mellinger also has experience in non-profit program development, management and evaluation, serving individuals experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia. She has experience collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders, from community members experiencing housing insecurity, housing providers, lending professionals, social service providers, and local leaders. Mellinger brings a data-based approach, equipping housing professionals and communities with the information and resources to advance housing justice. With a Masters in Public Health from Temple University, she is passionate about the ways that housing impacts the well-being of our communities, and is working towards a day when all Pennsylvanians are able to choose safe and healthy housing that meets their needs.

CIERRA HART

- Cierra is a fierce survivor advocate with unique perspectives who has been advocating for survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual violence for almost two decades. Cierra Hart is the Director of Housing and Economic Justice at the New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence (NJCEDV). Cierra provides advocacy, training, technical assistance, public awareness, and support for advocates and survivors. Cierra has been involved in various federal, state, and local housing and economic justice advocacy and policy initiatives to help survivors heal, restore, and renew their lives. Cierra's community activism is focused on identifying and breaking down barriers that keep people from surviving and thriving in society. Cierra's housing and economic justice work has been recognized locally, statewide, and nationally. Cierra has been instrumental in expanding survivors' access to economic resources and housing statewide. Cierra has worked with many communities in the areas of homelessness prevention, emergency and transitional housing, domestic violence program development, community development, eviction prevention, and rental assistance programs. Cierra was instrumental in creating a statewide hotel aggregator program in March of 2020 to house survivors and children fleeing from domestic violence during the global pandemic and has led planning and implementation of the Domestic Violence Housing First model statewide. Cierra received the Excellence Award in 2018 from the New Jersey Association on Correction. Cierra was also the recipient of the 2021 Excellence Award for Victims' Justice from the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General and most recently the recipient of the Irene Hill Smith Community Service Award from the NAACP Gloucester County chapter. Cierra has provided testified before the New Jersey State Legislature regarding the housing and economic needs of survivors. Most recently Cierra was the speaker during Governor Murphy's signing of landmark affordable housing legislation. Cierra was previously a national consultant for the National Network to End Domestic Violence's Housing Consortium. "I have a duty to fight for justice for all. Each day I fight to end discrimination, oppression, and violence for ALL. Activism, advocacy, and empowerment isn't a job or task-it's my calling! I found my voice and now I help other survivors to find theirs because we rise by lifting others."

DAN CARNEY

Executive Director, The Union Mission

- Dan Carney serves as Executive Director of The Union Mission in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, where he has spent more than two decades helping to strengthen housing stability and homelessness response systems across Westmoreland County and the broader region. Under his leadership, Union Mission has grown from a small shelter program into a comprehensive housing organization providing emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, housing problem-solving services, and leadership within the regional Coordinated Entry system. Dan's work centers on building collaborative systems that help individuals and families move from crisis to stability. He works closely with housing authorities, domestic violence programs, behavioral health providers, healthcare partners, and public agencies to strengthen coordinated responses to housing instability and homelessness. His approach emphasizes systems thinking, cross-sector collaboration, and practical solutions that center the lived experiences of people navigating housing crises. Beyond his work at Union Mission, Dan serves as Chair of the Housing Coalition of Western Pennsylvania and Co-Chair of the Westmoreland County Homeless Advisory Board (WestCoHAB), helping guide regional strategies to improve housing access and system coordination. Outside of his professional work, Dan values community service and connection. He participates in a nursing home outreach ministry and enjoys time with his wife and their dogs, cooking, crossword puzzles, gaming, and cool-weather adventures.

YELIANI FLORES, PHD, MSW

- Yeliani Flores, PhD, MSW, is a scholar-practitioner specializing in intimate partner violence (IPV), language justice, and survivor-centered systems changes. She earned her PhD in Social Work from The Ohio State University, where her dissertation, *The Right to Safety: A Comprehensive Examination of Immigrant Latina Survivors' Access to Civil Protection Orders*, examined structural barriers and facilitators to protection for immigrant survivors through a two-phased qualitative study. With over five years of research experience and post-MSW direct practice experience working alongside survivors of IPV, Dr. Flores bridges research, policy, and frontline advocacy. She currently serves as a Research and Evaluation Manager at the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV), where she convenes research collaboratives, provides technical assistance, and leads initiatives focused on flexible funding, culturally specific services, and language access. Her work supports domestic violence programs nationwide in strengthening survivor-centered practices and advancing equitable service delivery. In addition to her research and technical assistance work, Dr. Flores has independently taught undergraduate and graduate courses in multiple modalities and remains committed to mentoring emerging scholars and practitioners dedicated to advancing justice for marginalized survivors.

DR. DOLLY WIDEMAN-SCOTT

- Dr. Wideman-Scott is a visionary leader, community mobilizer, public speaker, and exceptional advocate with over 45 years of experience in championing the rights of survivors of domestic violence and driving systemic change. Her extensive career includes serving on several influential county-wide, state, and national coordinating bodies. Notably, she is a member of the Governance Board for the Chester County Partnership to End Homelessness, and the Community Services Block Grant; Delegate Chair for the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and a Board Member of the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO) Standards for Excellence. As a licensed consultant, Dr. Wideman-Scott's leadership has been instrumental in earning PANO accreditation for the Domestic Violence Center of Chester County (DVCCC). Dr. Wideman-Scott had the wonderful opportunity to make her vision a reality with the support of many partners in 2006 in developing 13 - three-bedroom housing units and later added four one-bedroom apartments and one two-bedroom homes for survivors in Chester County - now 18 housing units. Throughout her career, she has been honored with numerous community recognition awards for her exceptional contributions to social justice and advocacy. Since 1996 Dr. Wideman-Scott has been serving as the Chief Executive Officer for the Domestic Violence Center of Chester County, PA.

ESMERALDA PEÑA

- Esmeralda Peña is a dedicated social justice professional with over a decade of experience advocating for survivors of domestic violence. Her work is grounded in a deep commitment to survivor-centered advocacy, economic empowerment, and systemic change. Esmeralda began her career supporting children impacted by domestic violence. She later transitioned into case management, where she provided safety planning, financial literacy education, and housing support for survivors in shelter settings. She has also worked with high-risk survivors, offering crisis intervention and comprehensive support services. In a later role, Esmeralda was part of the administrative team that coordinated economic empowerment programming, working closely with community-based organizations and government agencies to increase access to resources for survivors. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Deviant Behavior and Social Control and a Master's degree in Human Rights from John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

SHERYL MECK, MS. IN PUBLIC SAFETY

- Sheryl Meck is a graduate of California University of PA where she earned her Bachelor of Liberal Arts Degree in Criminal Justice with a Concentration in Forensic Science in 2010. Meck has earned a Master of Science Degree in Public Safety with Concentration in Public Administration from Capella University in 2012. She continued on, earning 28 credits toward her Doctorate of Public Administration. Graduate of MLK Leadership Institute 2025, Current Position: Director of Civil Rights Division of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission.

HECTOR L. TORRES-DIAZ, JD CANDIDATE 2027

- Hector L. Torres-Diaz is a legal professional and civil rights advocate with a background in immigration law, public policy, and community engagement. He is pursuing a Juris Doctor at Wilmington University School of Law while serving as a Civil Rights Outreach Coordinator at the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. His experience includes roles as a Senior Paralegal at Diaspora Law and an Immigration Paralegal at Kitay Law Offices, assisting clients with immigration cases. Actively involved in political advocacy, he holds leadership positions in organizations supporting Latino representation and Puerto Rican sovereignty. Fluent in English and Spanish, Hector is committed to legal advocacy, policy analysis, and social justice.

HEATHER TIERNEY

- With almost 10 years of dedicated experience in housing within the domestic violence and homeless services field, Heather has worked extensively to support individuals and families in crisis, connecting them to safe, stable housing and essential resources. Her work has focused on trauma-informed advocacy, housing navigation, and system coordination to break cycles of homelessness and support long-term stability for survivors. She brings a deep understanding of the barriers faced by vulnerable populations and a commitment to equity, empowerment, and client-centered care. She currently serves on the Eastern CoCs's Written Standards Committee and previously co-led the restructure of the Monroe County Homeless Advisory Board. In her free time, Heather enjoys reading, hiking with her husband and two dogs, Hank & Toby, and going to concerts.

LAURA KOVACH

- Laura Kovach, co-leads the Survivor Services Practice Area at Cloudburst and brings over 25 years of experience working to address and eliminate sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking and human trafficking. She is a Penn State alumna and got her start in the work of survivor services as an overnight/weekend shelter counselor at Centre Safe (Formerly known as the Centre County Women's Resource Center) in State College, Pennsylvania. Throughout her career, she has provided survivor-centered training and TA for victim service providers (VSPs), housing programs, campus-based sexual assault programs, youth programs, non-profits, healthcare facilities, government agencies, and the U.S. military. In prior practitioner and consulting roles, Laura oversaw Federally funded domestic violence and sexual assault grants including outreach and education strategies, curriculum development and training and technical assistance. Laura brings an understanding of federal regulations and policies to support grantee compliance with federal funder requirements including VAWA, FVPSA, VOCA, Campus SaVE and Title IX. As a HUD TA provider, she is currently providing direct TA for communities across the country to improve their data collection and coordinated entry systems for survivors and facilitating workshops to support relationship building between VSPs and CoCs. She also served as the Special Needs Lead for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's 5-year consolidated plan and first-year annual action plan.

MICHAEL WATERLOO

- Michael Waterloo is an award-winning journalist and experienced communication and marketing leader in the non-profit sector with a passion for equity, equality, and belonging. As the Director of Communication for the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV), Mike uses a data-driven and collaborative approach to guide the organization's communication strategy and support its 59 direct service member programs. Mike has been with PCADV since 2020. Outside of his work at PCADV, Mike covers baseball and women's basketball for a number of outlets, looking to shine the light and tell stories that would otherwise go untold. He has a B.A. in Communications and Journalism and an M.S. in Communications and Public Relations from Clarion University of Pennsylvania. He resides outside of Atlanta, Georgia with his partner, dog, cat, and unlimited number of books.

NIKKI KERCHEVALE

- Nikki Kerchevale is the Economic Justice Specialist on The Housing Team at The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Nikki has 12 years of experience in the domestic violence field. She attended The University of Delaware with a degree in Women & Gender Studies and Sociology with a Concentration in Domestic violence & Prevention Services. Nikki started serving survivors of domestic violence and other crimes while at a victim advocacy position at a local police municipality in Wilmington, Delaware. Nikki went on to serve survivors at an emergency domestic violence shelter as an overnight residential counselor and later a parent child advocate. In 2016 Nikki moved into a position at The Delaware Center for Justice as the Program Coordinator of Adult Victim services, which included providing case management and supportive services for victims of various crimes. These crimes included domestic violence, sexual assault, victims of shootings, and homicides, and financial crimes. In 2020 Nikki took a position at The Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence as The Rape Prevention & Education Program Manager where she implemented Economic Justice as a prevention strategy for ending sexual violence. Nikki worked in her position at The Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence for three years before taking her current role at The Pennsylvania Coalition. Her role includes providing technical assistance around flexible funding streams and economic justice resources for member agencies to use to help survivors obtain secure housing. Nikki is a very passionate advocate and remains dedicated to helping to serve the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

NINA BLAIR

- Mother of 6, that loves my goats, donkeys and chickens, and as a survivor myself, I have found purpose in giving back. My passion is helping others who are walking the path I once walked, being a voice for those who cannot yet speak, and offering support and opportunities that empower them to succeed, become self-sufficient, and build lives free from abuse for themselves and their families.

PENNY CAMPBELL

- Penny Campbell serves as the Executive Director of the Clarion County Housing Authority and Acting Executive Director of the Elk County Housing Authority. With more than a decade of leadership in public housing administration, she oversees housing programs across a four-county region, including the Housing Choice Voucher Program, public housing communities, USDA Rural Development properties, and supportive programs such as the Family Self-Sufficiency and Homeownership programs. Penny brings a strong background in community health and public service to her work. She holds an undergraduate degree in Community Health Science from Slippery Rock University and completed graduate studies in Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh. Prior to her work in housing, she served as an intake specialist with the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare and worked in marketing and community outreach with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Under Penny's leadership, the Clarion and Elk County Housing Authorities have implemented innovative housing initiatives, including the nationally recognized Northwest 9 Program, which received a National NAHRO Merit Award, a Regional MARC NAHRO Merit Award, and the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies Bellamy Award. Penny and her team actively collaborate with regional partners through initiatives such as the Pennsylvania Re-Entry Coalition, regional Shelter Task Forces, and Local Housing Options Teams to strengthen housing stability for vulnerable households. Penny currently serves on several boards and advisory groups, including the Visiting Nurses Association Board, the Western Pennsylvania Housing Directors Association, the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) Small Agency Advisory Committee, and the Venango Regional Catholic School Board. She resides in Venango County with her husband and three sons.

SUZANNE MARCUS

- Suzanne Marcus has 25 years of experience working at the intersection of survivor services, homelessness, and housing. She co-founded the first low-barrier housing program for survivors in Washington, D.C., directed a transitional housing program for survivors in New York City, and served in key leadership roles providing training and technical assistance at the local, state, and national levels. She worked with more than 50 federal, state, and community-based housing program directors, administrators, researchers, and funders through the creation of a national peer network in support of providing financial assistance (flexible funding) to promote economic self-sufficiency for survivors, and she serves on a federal interagency safe housing technical assistance initiative. Ms. Marcus designed creative grants management solutions that leverage funding, including flexible funding solutions, between various federal grant programs, including creating a grants management training series for grantees of the HHS Family Violence Prevention Services Administration (FVPSA). Ms. Marcus has authored leading guidance, policies, regulations, case studies, procedures, and practices and is an experienced trainer and technical assistance provider on a range of safe housing topics, including housing protections for survivors afforded through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and other federal laws.