

Governor Phil Murphy

ICYMI: University Hospital Announces Carole Johnson as New President and CEO

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Johnson, a former New Jersey Cabinet member responsible for Medicaid and Social Services improvement, will lead New Jersey's only public academic medical center

NEWARK – New Jersey's only public academic medical center and the only state-designated Level I Trauma Center for Northern New Jersey – today announced that Carole Johnson has been named its new President and Chief Executive Officer. The appointment, which takes effect later this year, follows an extensive nationwide search.

"Carole is an agile, renowned health care leader who has devoted decades of her career to improving health outcomes for underserved populations. This is a critical time in history for health care, and as we tackle complex challenges like ongoing federal Medicaid reductions, University Hospital needs a leader with a proven track record of success. I am confident she will bring her wealth of experience in State and federal settings to University Hospital," **said New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy**. "I thank Dr. Kaitlan Baston for stepping in to serve as interim President and CEO and for her work and commitment to patient care and institutional excellence."

Carole has dedicated her life to expanding access to health care services in the communities who need it most. As Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services, she directed the State's largest Cabinet-level agency – serving one in every five New Jersey residents. Her understanding of the day-to-day challenges many New Jerseyans, including many University Hospital patients, encounter in accessing care helped drive her work to improve and expand the State's lifesaving and life-sustaining Medicaid program that provides health care to nearly two million New Jerseyans and to increasing access to vital social service programs.

Most recently, Carole served as the federal Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services with a clear mission to improve health care access in historically underserved communities. Here she led federal efforts to address the maternal mortality crisis, advance health equity and access to care, and recruit and train the next generation of the health care workforce. Her work also led to the first major restructuring of the national organ transplant network in 40 years – an important and significant process for hundreds of hospitals, including University Hospital, which is a national leader in long-term liver transplant survival.

"I am honored to join the incredible team at University Hospital that works tirelessly every day to serve the people of Newark. I thank the Board for their strong support and look forward to working together with them and state, local, and community leaders as we continue to expand access to high-quality health care services at New Jersey's only public academic medical center," **said Carole Johnson, incoming President and CEO of University Hospital**. "Having

spent my career focused on strengthening and supporting the health care safety net, I understand and value University Hospital's critical role in delivering care to the diverse communities of our state's most populous city. The work of University Hospital is a historic commitment and a sacred trust, and I hope to bring my experience to continue to advance UH's community-driven approach to health care and to work with the community to make a meaningful impact on the health and well-being of the people of Newark."

During Carole's tenure as New Jersey's Human Services Commissioner, she developed and implemented new Medicaid benefits to improve access to care across New Jersey, including creating and increasing access to prenatal care in response to the maternal mortality crisis, significantly expanding substance use disorder services, and launching new preventive services like diabetes prevention benefits. Her leadership led to increased support to make child care more affordable, expanded food assistance programs, the launch of the 211-assistance line to support people experiencing homelessness, and the creation of the New Jersey Office of New Americans. Carole also oversaw state facilities and community placements, providing 24/7 health care and services to thousands of New Jerseyans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

At the federal level, Carole led the significant federal investment in growing community health centers (also known as FQHCs) to provide more access to primary care, mental health and substance use disorder services, and prenatal care in high-need communities. She also changed federal policy to make it easier for health centers to care for people as they plan to return home to the community from jails and prisons. Carole used her role to help improve working environments and professional development opportunities for healthcare providers, including her work to develop modernized nurse training programs, expand loan repayment to encourage health professionals to practice in underserved areas, and create new physician residency programs in high need communities.

Carole previously served in both the Obama-Biden and Biden-Harris White Houses, working on critical health care and public health issues, including the Affordable Care Act, the maternal mortality crisis, the national responses to COVID, Ebola and Zika, and the opioid epidemic. She worked with national cardiology and neurology leaders during her tenure with the American Heart Association, and with national public health leaders when she designed and implemented programs with The Pew Charitable Trusts' health care team.

"I welcome Carole to Newark and to University Hospital. This is an important moment for our hospital, and our Board looks forward to working with her to carry our mission forward in this next chapter. Together, we'll make sure University Hospital is ready to meet the needs of our patients and community today and in the future," **said Tanya L. Freeman, Chair of the University Hospital Board of Directors.**

Freeman also thanked Dr. Kaitlan Baston for her leadership during the interim period. "Dr. Baston's leadership during this transition has been invaluable. Her unwavering dedication to patient care and her support for our staff have strengthened the hospital at a pivotal time. We are truly grateful for her contributions and wish her continued success in all that lies ahead."

Kaitlan Baston, MD, MSc, DFASAM, has served as Interim President and CEO since May, working with the executive team to maintain momentum as University Hospital continues progress on the multi-year, phased campus plan.

"Over these last several months, I have had the privilege of working alongside the dedicated staff at University Hospital that are committed to providing exceptional patient care and pushing the mission of the public hospital forward," **said Dr. Kaitlan Baston, outgoing President and CEO of University Hospital.** "Carole Johnson has a decades-long career working with some of the brightest minds in health care on public health and health policy issues. I am confident that the hospital will continue to grow and flourish under Carole's staunch leadership."

Following her tenure at University Hospital, Dr. Baston, former Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health, will be named Chief Executive Officer of New Jersey-based healthcare A.I. company, Vinyl Health. Guided by her unwavering north star to make state, national, and global health systems work better for both patients and clinicians, Dr. Baston brings her proven track record of innovation, compassion, and system-wide leadership to Vinyl Health. She is thrilled to know University Hospital is in good hands as she takes on this new role, and she will continue in a supporting role for a smooth transition.

“Newark welcomes Carole Johnson as she takes the helm at University Hospital,” **said Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka**. “Known for her talent to welcome all stakeholders to the table, we are excited to create a close partnership with her to ensure that Newarkers are involved, and to put our city at the pinnacle of America’s healthcare policies.”

“This is a critical moment for healthcare in this country. As some work to dismantle care for those who need it most, I am glad to have a community partner in the work of getting people the care they deserve,” **said U.S. Congresswoman LaMonica McIver**. “Carole’s leadership comes at a crucial time for Newark’s only state-owned hospital, and I am eager to work with her to ensure this institution continues to provide the high-quality, accessible care that all residents of the 10th District and beyond deserve.”

“The thread that ties Carole Johnson’s career together is her unwavering commitment to health equity, meeting the needs of every community with creativity, strategic investments, and steady guidance through unforeseen challenges,” **said Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz**. “Her record of expanding access to care, addressing the maternal health crisis, and responding proactively during the COVID-19 pandemic makes her the right person to lead and oversee the expansion of University Hospital into a premier destination for practicing medicine and delivering compassionate care to every patient who walks through its doors. Newark and all of New Jersey welcome her and look forward to the continued transformation of University Hospital and its lasting impact on our state.”

“Strong leadership at University Hospital is essential to ensure equitable access to care for every family,” **said State Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin**. “As New Jersey’s only state hospital, it holds an irreplaceable role in providing critical services for the most urgent moments. Carole’s experience and vision make her well prepared to guide the hospital through its campus expansion plan, and I look forward to working with her to build a stronger and healthier future.”

“University Hospital is not just a hospital – it is a lifeline for the people of Essex County, especially in Newark, where access to high-quality, compassionate care is essential,” **said Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo Jr.** “Carole’s deep understanding of community-based care will help improve outcomes for University Hospital patients and their families. I welcome her to Newark and am optimistic about the impact her leadership will have.”

About University Hospital

University Hospital is one of New Jersey’s leading academic medical centers and the only public acute care hospital in the state. As the principal teaching hospital for Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, University Hospital is a regional resource for advanced care, a Level I Trauma Center, and a hub for innovation and community health.

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