

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

GOVERNOR MURPHY APPOINTS CABINET MEMBERS TO LEAD THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION, MOTOR VEHICLE COMMISSION, AND CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Newark - Governor Phil Murphy today announced the appointments of Zakiya Smith Ellis as the Secretary of Higher Education, B. Sue Fulton as Chair and Chief Administrator of the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, and Deirdre Webster Cobb, Esq. as Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the Civil Service Commission.

“For the first time in New Jersey’s 242 years, the majority of a Governor’s Cabinet appointments are female,” Governor Murphy said. “While it has taken too long to get to this first, I am proud to stand with this diverse group of leaders, all of whom are committed to building a stronger, fairer New Jersey that works for everyone. This is who we are – strong and diverse, smart and talented, and committed to making our state a better place. Our team is made up of the best and brightest and their accomplishments and dedication will ensure that our residents and businesses have a state government that is responsive, responsible, and professional.”

Smith Ellis is the Director of Finance and Federal Policy at the Lumina Foundation, a role where she leads efforts to develop new models to help students afford postsecondary education, including working with states to design college affordability initiatives. She also directs the Foundation's federal policy engagement, and has testified before Congress on the importance of college access, completion, and affordability.

“I am thrilled to have this opportunity to serve the people of New Jersey,” Smith Ellis said. “I know from personal experience the transformative power of education and have worked for my entire professional career to ensure those opportunities are available for more students. I’m excited that Governor Murphy recognizes and understands the increasing necessity of higher education in today’s society and am looking forward to building out his vision to make learning after high school more affordable and accessible for residents of New Jersey of all ages and backgrounds.”

Smith Ellis previously served on the White House Domestic Policy Council as the Senior Policy Advisor for Education under President Barack Obama. She is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and Vanderbilt University.

Fulton is a veteran of the United States Army and a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Most recently, Fulton served as a Global Project Lead at Pfizer Consumer Health, a role in which she developed programs to extend access to products for low-income customers.

“I’m honored -- and humbled -- to be asked to lead the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, and to be part of Governor Murphy’s administration,” Fulton said. “We will make it our aim every day to better serve the people of New Jersey. There is tremendous opportunity to bring about a positive change in New Jersey and I am excited to be a part of that change.”

Fulton currently serves as Executive Director of the Women in The Service Change Initiative, a nonprofit dedicated to advocating for women in the U.S. Armed Forces. She also currently serves on the U.S. Military Academy Board of Visitors, a position to which she was appointed by President Barack Obama.

Webster Cobb is the current Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Officer at the New Jersey Department of Treasury, where she oversees enforcement of state policies prohibiting discrimination in the workplace.

“I am honored by the trust Governor Murphy has bestowed upon me,” Webster Cobb said. “As a career public servant, I understand the issues that the civil service system has experienced over the last 28 years. My goal is to implement Governor Murphy’s agenda by working diligently to address these issues in cooperation with labor and management with a clear and open mind. I plan to undertake a thorough review of the current system to determine the areas that need improvement for the well-being of all government employees.”

Webster Cobb previously served in senior leadership roles at the Department of Treasury, the Department of Community Affairs, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. She earned her J.D. at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, and is a graduate of Chatham College.

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