

## Guest Editors' Welcome:

### Honoring Voices, Advancing Equity

Christopher Moore<sup>1</sup> and Anna Filip, MD<sup>2</sup>

1. Interim Executive Director, AIDS Delaware

2. Family Physician, ChristianaCare

We are honored to serve as guest editors for this special issue of the *Delaware Journal of Public Health*, dedicated to LGBTQIA+ health equity. As a physician and public health leader and a nonprofit executive rooted in advocacy, storytelling, and HIV services, we share a deep commitment to lifting up the voices and experiences too often sidelined in health care and public discourse.

This issue arrives at a critical time. Across the country and here in Delaware, LGBTQIA+ individuals face escalating threats to their health, safety, and rights. And yet—despite legislative setbacks, systemic underfunding, and persistent stigma—we see courage. We see revolution. We see people rising to meet this moment with care, clarity, and urgency.

From the opening pages, our contributors help us understand the broader landscape of rights, retrenchment, and resistance. Lieutenant Governor Kyle Evans Gay offers a compelling reflection on the role of equity in public health leadership. Mike Brickner draws powerful parallels between the legal rollback of reproductive rights and the potential erosion of LGBTQIA+ protections in our post-Skrmetti world. Dr. Suzan Abdallah reminds us that prevention is more than a strategy—it is an act of resistance, especially when health equity efforts are under attack. Sharon Morgan shows us what happens when funding is stripped away from the most vulnerable, especially in under-resourced areas like Sussex County.

We then turn our attention to young people—those navigating identity, family, and survival in systems not built for them. Rebecca McColl, Erin Nescott, Dr. Eric Layland, and colleagues offer a rare and necessary multi-perspective analysis of LGBTQIA+ youth homelessness in Delaware. That same commitment to intersectional data and compassionate care shines through in Dr. Layland's research team's work on mental health and substance use disparities among SOGI-diverse youth. Stephen Raskauskas brings policy into focus with a clear-eyed look at the urgency of protecting access to gender-affirming care for Delaware youth.

Care—how it's delivered, who it's designed for, and whether it heals or harms—is at the center of the next set of contributions. Dr. Sarah Matthews guides us through the deeply human and often invisible challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ older adults at the end of life. Alex Waad and Tylisha Johnson unpack the practical and ethical considerations of collecting sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data in healthcare settings, while Dr. Catherine Dukes calls on providers to get more comfortable talking openly about sex—not just as a topic, but as an essential element of clinical care. In another vital contribution, Dr. Brett Herb examines how chest masculinization surgery can dramatically improve quality of life for transmasculine individuals, grounding clinical choices in personal and psychological impact.

Of course, no conversation about LGBTQIA+ health is complete without confronting the trauma so many endure—and the paths to healing that must be made available. Karla Fleshman brings this to life through a powerful narrative on dissociation as a response to systemic bullying, paired

with an original poem that both mourns and dares to imagine. Elise Mora writes with clarity and compassion about the psychological damage caused by anti-LGBTQ legislation, especially among people living with HIV. And in one of the issue's most sobering pieces, Noah Duckett and Julissa Coriano trace the devastating legacy of forced and involuntary sterilization—revealing how that legacy still echoes in the present day.

Even as we sit with these heavy truths, we are reminded that change is possible—and already underway. April Lyons-Alls, Dr. Zowie Barnes, Noah Duckett, Emily Nardone, and Nena Rapposelli offer a replicable and community-informed blueprint for building gender-affirming care programs, grounded in the lived experience and practices of Planned Parenthood of Delaware. And Talena Queen closes the issue with a call to care for those doing the work: a deeply resonant piece on burnout, recovery, and sustaining the workforce needed to make equity real.

Together, these contributions offer more than just research and reflection. They offer a roadmap. They challenge us to confront the systems and stories that shape LGBTQIA+ health — and to build something better. We are deeply grateful to the *Delaware Journal of Public Health* for creating space for this critical work, and to every contributor who brought their wisdom, vulnerability, and vision to these pages.

To our readers: thank you for engaging. May these articles inform your work, provoke your thinking, and remind you that equity isn't a notion — it's a practice, a principle, and a promise we must continue to fight for.

---

Copyright (c) 2025 Delaware Academy of Medicine / Delaware Public Health Association.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.