

October 13, 2026

3rd Annual

Garden State Conference on Food Security



**Office of the
Food Security
Advocate**

Food, Health & Finding Stability: Mitigating HR1 Impacts on SNAP and Medicaid



Commissioner Stephen Cha

Presenter

**Commissioner of Human Services
New Jersey Department of Human Services**

Dr. Stephen Cha is the Commissioner of Human Services for the State of New Jersey, where he oversees programs that support the health, well-being, and economic security of millions of New Jerseyans, including Medicaid, behavioral health, disability services, aging services, and family and income supports.

A physician and longtime public-sector leader, Dr. Cha brings deep experience in Medicaid, public health, and health care finance from senior roles across state and federal government as well as the private sector. Prior to joining the Sherrill Administration, he served as Counselor to the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, where he helped lead the federal response to COVID-19 and the infant formula shortage, and previously served as Chief Medical Officer for a large national insurance company and leadership roles at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. His career is grounded in improving systems for people who need care the most.

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Johanna Calle

Presenter

**Director at the Office of New Americans (ONA)
New Jersey Department of Human Services**

Johanna Calle is the Director at the Office of New Americans (ONA) at the New Jersey Department of Human Services. In this role, Ms. Calle works on identifying, developing, and executing policies and strategies to advance efforts to welcome and empower immigrant communities in the state.

Prior to joining the Department, Calle served as the Director of the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice (NJAIJ), a coalition of over 40 organizations that work on advocacy campaigns at all levels of government to promote pro-immigrant policies. She played a key role in passing legislation and in the implementation of Attorney General Grewal's Immigrant Trust Directive. Calle's professional experience also includes working the National American Civil Liberties Union and participating in the ACLU of Northern California's MiACLU campaign, visiting various affiliates fighting for immigrants' rights.

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Calle is a longtime New Jersey resident, born in Ecuador and raised in Hackensack, NJ. She has lived experience as a formerly undocumented student with undocumented family members.

She started her advocacy as a high school student urging Congress to pass the Dream Act and has made several visits to Washington D.C. in support of Comprehensive Immigration Reform. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Political Science from The College of New Jersey and a Master of Criminal Justice from Rutgers University.

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Valerie Mielke

Presenter

**Deputy Commissioner for Health Services
New Jersey Department of Human Services**

Valerie Mielke is the Deputy Commissioner for Health Services, overseeing the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, which manages the NJFamilyCare health insurance program.

NJ FamilyCare is New Jersey's Medicaid program. She also oversees the Department's work on Former First Lady Murphy's Nurture NJ maternal health initiative and supports the Catastrophic Illness in Children's Relief Fund.

Mielke had been the Assistant Commissioner leading the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, where she was responsible for the coordination, administration, management and supervision of the community mental health system, and regulating, monitoring, planning and funding of substance use prevention, treatment and recovery support services.

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**Deputy Commissioner for Health Services
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Mielke holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Fairfield University and a Master of Social Work degree from Rutgers University, and has been with the state for more than 20 years.

Mielke has also been honored several times for her efforts, including the State Leadership Award from the National Association of State Alcohol & Drug Abuse Directors.

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Michael J. Wilson

Presenter

**Deputy Commissioner for Social Services
New Jersey Department of Human Services**

Michael J. Wilson is the Deputy Commissioner for Social Services, overseeing the Division of Family Development, Office of New Americans and Human Services' Office of Emergency Management.

Wilson previously served as executive director of Baltimore-based Maryland Hunger Solutions, where he developed and led efforts to increase access to nutritious foods and eliminate hunger in schools and communities. He has worked with state agencies on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Women, Infants and Children program, including successfully advocating before the Maryland General Assembly for expanded school meals.

Wilson also served as an International Vice President of the UFCW International Union and Director of the Legislative and Political Department, as well as in the U.S. Department of Labor in the Clinton Administration, where he helped to administer the Family and Medical Leave Act and laws regarding minimum wage and overtime.

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In addition, he served in a leadership role in several local food councils throughout the state of Maryland, including co-chairing the Maryland Food System Resilience Council, which included state agencies, food councils, food banks, and anti-hunger advocates.

Wilson has been honored multiple times for his efforts, including winning the 2023 Henrietta Lacks Award for the research and advocacy partnership with the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Michigan State University.