

Proposed Slate of Officers and Directors
Association of Black Cardiologists
2026–2028 Term

In accordance with the ABC Bylaws, the Nominating Committee has completed its work and is pleased to present the proposed slate of nominees for the 2026–2028 term. This slate includes candidates for officer positions as well as for newly created and expiring Board seats, consistent with the Association’s established governance structure. It does not constitute a full reconstitution of the Board; directors whose terms are not concluding will continue to serve.

The proposed slate reflects careful consideration of the leadership, experience, and perspectives required to guide the Association of Black Cardiologists into its next chapter. Each nominee has demonstrated a strong commitment to ABC’s mission and brings expertise aligned with the organization’s strategic priorities.

The Board will be asked to review and vote on the proposed slate at the upcoming meeting of the Board of Directors. The following pages include a photograph and a brief biographical summary for each nominee.

Respectfully submitted,
Joseph Poku, MD
Chair, Nominating Committee



Icilma V. Fergus, MD

Board Chair-Elect

Dr. Icilma Fergus is Professor of Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and an attending cardiologist at The Mount Sinai Hospital/Fuster Heart. She serves as Director of Cardiovascular Disparities and Clinical Lipidology, with clinical expertise spanning prevention, women’s heart health, hypertension, and complex lipid disorders, and a particular focus on caring for patients affected by social determinants of health. Previously, Dr. Fergus served as Chief of Cardiology at Harlem

Hospital Center/Columbia University Medical Center and held leadership roles in echocardiography and non-invasive cardiology at New York-Presbyterian/Queens.

Dr. Fergus earned her BA in Biopsychology from Barnard College, Columbia University, and her MD from SUNY Downstate Medical Center. She completed an internship, residency, and chief residency in internal medicine at Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Bronx Municipal Hospital, followed by a cardiology fellowship at Cornell Medical Center/New York Hospital. Her research and programmatic work have long centered on cardiovascular prevention and health equity, including community-based initiatives such as the Healthy Heart Series and the Harlem Healthy Hearts program, as well as participation in investigator-initiated studies and multicenter clinical research. She has authored peer-reviewed publications and book chapters addressing hypertension, heart failure, and cardiovascular disease in diverse populations, and has been an invited speaker nationally on women’s cardiovascular health and disparities.

A nationally recognized leader in community engagement, Dr. Fergus has received numerous honors for service and outreach and has played key leadership roles within the Association of Black Cardiologists (ABC). Prior to serving as ABC President (2014–2016), she chaired ABC’s Community Programs Committee and led the organization’s signature Spirit of the Heart Awards Program & Fundraising Gala. A Life Member of ABC, Dr. Fergus continues to provide executive leadership for the annual Spirit of the Heart Awards Program &

Fundraising Gala. She has also held leadership positions within the American Heart Association, including serving as President of the Westchester Board, and across a range of other professional and community organizations. Dr. Fergus is multilingual, with fluency in Spanish and clinical proficiency in several additional languages.



Kevin F. Kwaku, MD, PhD

President-Elect

Dr. Kevin Kwaku is Director of Cardiac Electrophysiology (EP) at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth. Previous to this, he served both as EP Director and Chief of Cardiology for Kaiser Permanente in Hawaii. He received his BSc in Physiology from McGill University and combined MD-PhD degrees (in Pharmacology) from Columbia University. He completed internal medicine residency at Massachusetts General Hospital and fellowships in Cardiovascular Disease and Clinical Cardiac Electrophysiology at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, where he also worked as faculty electrophysiologist. Early research contributions focused on the biophysical mechanisms of electrical defibrillation as well as sudden death risk stratification. Current research interests center on the development and validation of novel clinical pacing, defibrillation and ablation technologies and clinical strategies. In addition, Dr. Kwaku has had a career-long interest in health and medical work-force disparities. Dr. Kwaku has authored numerous peer-reviewed papers, book chapters, as well as digital online reference chapters, and serves on the editorial boards of several high-impact journals in the field, including as Associate Editor for the Journal of the American Heart Association. Dr. Kwaku served as Governor on the National Board of Governors for the American College of Cardiology and currently serves as Secretary on the Board of Directors of the Association of Black Cardiologists.



Marlene S. Williams, MD

Secretary-Elect

Dr. Marlene Stephanie Williams is an Associate professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Her research focuses on coronary atherosclerosis and platelet function, and her particular focus is on platelet function as it relates to the acute coronary syndrome.

Dr. Williams has examined platelet function and its correlation to platelet functional genomics and runs a platelet physiology laboratory on the Johns Hopkins Bayview campus. The goal for her cardiovascular platelet laboratory has been to identify the etiology of platelet dysfunction in many disease states and apply methods that may improve this dysfunction, which may eventually be translated to therapies for patients with cardiovascular disease. She is a prior recipient of an NIH career mentored award (K23) examining platelet functional genomics and an NIH RO1 award addressing platelet serotonin signaling in depression and heart disease.

Dr. Williams has several publications covering platelet functional changes in settings of interventional cardiology, acute coronary syndrome, heart disease, and depression. She has participated in several NHLBI advisory committees, review groups, and study sections.

Dr. Williams has been the Course Director of the advanced clinical clerkship in coronary intensive care at the Bayview Medical Center and has mentored many medical residents and cardiology fellows.

Dr. Williams received her undergraduate degree in biochemistry from McGill University. She earned a medical degree from the Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons and completed a residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital. After completing a residency, Dr. Williams was a cardiology fellow at Mount Sinai Hospital and Johns Hopkins Hospital.



Melissa S. Burroughs, MD, MSc

Treasurer-Elect

Dr. Melissa Burroughs is a noninvasive cardiologist at Wellstar Health System in metro-Atlanta with a clinical emphasis on heart failure and inherited cardiomyopathies. Melissa also has expertise in global health, health inequality, and environmental health. She currently serves on the board of directors of the Association of Black Cardiologists and the board of Duke University Cooperative Cardiovascular Society. Melissa is an active member of the American Heart Association, serving on the Scientific Sessions Programming Committee. She is an advocate for environmental justice for communities of color and is on the Board of Scientific Counselors for the Environmental Protection Agency. Melissa has conducted clinical research in the United States, Puerto Rico, Peru and Brazil and has co-authored 23 scientific publications. She is an associate editor at the American Heart Journal.

Dr. Burroughs has a passion for mentorship. She has mentored college students, medical students, medical residents and cardiology fellows in clinical research and clinical medicine. She is committed to promoting innovation in health care, and has served as a medical advisor to Lantheus, Aeon Global Health Clinical Laboratory and Simple Health Kit.

Dr. Burroughs was born in St. Louis, MO, and raised in Atlanta, GA. She graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Anthropology and Human Biology from Emory University. Melissa graduated cum laude from Harvard Medical School. She trained in internal medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. She completed cardiovascular medicine training at Duke University, where she also received a Master of Science in Global Health.



Sara D. Collins, MD

Director-Elect

Dr. Sara Collins is an interventional cardiologist, physician-scientist, and clinical research leader with a demonstrated commitment to advancing cardiovascular health equity through clinical leadership, community partnership, and inclusive research. She currently serves as Medical Director and Principal Investigator at Flourish Research Bowie, where she leads a diverse portfolio of cardiometabolic, lipid, heart failure, and obesity clinical trials designed to address disparities in access to care, preventive services, and cardiovascular outcomes among underserved and historically minoritized populations.

In parallel, Dr. Collins is an attending cardiologist at Chesapeake Cardiac Care, where she works closely with Dr. Barbara Hutchinson to deliver high-quality, patient-centered cardiovascular care deeply rooted in community engagement. This long-standing collaboration has strengthened trusted relationships with patients, referring physicians, and local stakeholders, and has served as a foundation for community-linked

initiatives that bridge clinical care, prevention, and research participation. Her work reflects a shared commitment to improving access, continuity of care, and culturally responsive cardiovascular services.

Dr. Collins is an experienced clinical research and operations leader with a proven track record of fostering diverse participant representation and designing inclusive study frameworks that reduce barriers to participation and align with national efforts to improve equity in evidence-based cardiovascular care. She is a frequent collaborator with healthcare providers, policymakers, community organizations, and professional societies, engaging in multi-stakeholder advocacy to promote affordable, high-quality cardiovascular care and population-level prevention strategies.

Dr. Collins is the current Co-Chair of ABC's Health and Public Policy Committee, and actively supports initiatives addressing cardiology deserts, hypertension control, and community-based prevention. She is also deeply committed to mentorship and workforce development, particularly for trainees and early-career clinicians from underrepresented backgrounds.

Dr. Collins earned her Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Brown University, her Doctor of Medicine from Meharry Medical College, completed her internal medicine residency at the University of Maryland Medical Center, and her cardiology and interventional cardiology fellowship training at Washington Hospital Center/MedStar Health. She is a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology.



Sanul J. Corrielus, MD, MBA

Director-Elect

Dr. Sanul Jean Corrielus is a board-certified cardiologist, physician-executive, and nationally engaged advocate for cardiovascular health equity. He serves as President and CEO of Corrielus Cardiology, bringing more than two decades of clinical and leadership experience to advancing preventive, patient-centered cardiovascular care with a focus on eliminating disparities in underserved populations.

Dr. Corrielus earned his medical degree from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, completed his internal medicine residency at Temple University Hospital, and his cardiovascular fellowship at Howard University Hospital. He also holds a Healthcare Executive MBA from Alvernia College and a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry, Magna Cum Laude, from Brooklyn College, reflecting a strong foundation in both clinical excellence and organizational leadership.

Specializing in non-invasive cardiology, Dr. Corrielus focuses on prevention, early detection, and comprehensive cardiovascular risk management. His clinical expertise includes nuclear cardiology, echocardiography, cardiac CT angiography, and PET CT Nuclear cardiology, which he applies to evidence-based strategies that improve outcomes while addressing systemic inequities in cardiovascular care.

A dedicated leader within the Association of Black Cardiologists, Dr. Corrielus serves on the Community Programs Committee and has acted as a local host for ABC's flagship Spirit of the Heart initiatives in Philadelphia. His work directly supports ABC's mission to reduce the disproportionate burden of cardiovascular disease in Black communities through education, advocacy, and community-based engagement.

Dr. Corrielus is also the Founder and CEO of the Community Cardiovascular Initiative, a nonprofit organization committed to delivering integrated cardiovascular health and wellness education across underserved communities in the Philadelphia region. Through strategic partnerships with faith-based organizations,

community leaders, and healthcare stakeholders, he helps translate cardiovascular science into accessible, culturally relevant action.

A recognized speaker and thought leader, Dr. Corrielus has presented at the American Heart Association Annual Conference and is the author of *Healing the Spartan: A Breakthrough Plan to Heart Health and Longevity* and *Hypertension: Killing the Silent Killer*. His leadership reflects a sustained commitment to advancing ABC's core values of equity, excellence, and community empowerment in cardiovascular health.



Foluso A. Fakorede, MD

Director-Elect

Dr. Foluso Fakorede is the Chief Executive Officer at Cardiovascular Solutions of Central Mississippi. Originally from Nigeria, he immigrated to the United States during his teenage years. Dr. Fakorede earned his medical degree from Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and completed his internal medicine residency at New York-Presbyterian Weill Cornell Hospital. He went on to complete fellowship training in cardiology, interventional cardiology, and endovascular intervention at Cooper

University Hospital in Camden, New Jersey.

Since relocating to the Mississippi Delta in 2015, Dr. Fakorede has been unwavering in his mission to provide timely, high-quality cardiovascular care and educate communities to reduce preventable amputations. His work led to an 88% reduction in amputation rates over four years, a feat recognized in CathLab Digest. He is a nationally recognized leader in raising awareness of Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD) and the amputation epidemic, particularly in underserved and rural communities.

In 2024, Dr. Fakorede was the subject of the award-winning documentary *Bloodlines, Mississippi*, produced by Grain Media in collaboration with Nobel Outreach. The film was selected by the Nobel Prize Foundation for its *Fighting Disease – Three Stories From the Fields of Medicine* exhibition. The documentary highlights Dr. Fakorede's groundbreaking work to combat diabetes-related amputations in the Mississippi Delta's underserved African-American communities through prevention, education, and access to care. "His efforts reflect the Nobel tradition of turning scientific breakthroughs into lifesaving action and align with the exhibition's broader themes of health equity, medical innovation, and the fight against systemic disparities worldwide." The documentary will be screened at prestigious film festivals including DeadCenter, BlackStar, DOC NYC, and BronzLens.

Dr. Fakorede's leadership has influenced national policy as well. He was instrumental in introducing the bipartisan Amputation Reduction and Compassion (ARC) Act, which led to the creation of the inaugural Congressional PAD Caucus. In May 2024, the state of Illinois became the first in the nation to pass legislation modeled after the ARC Act, requiring insurance companies to cover PAD screening for at-risk individuals. "This legislation ensures we meet patients where they are – with the tools to diagnose PAD early and intervene before lives and limbs are lost," Dr. Fakorede said. "Illinois is setting a precedent that every state should follow. Early detection not only saves limbs and lives – it also reduces the financial burden on our health care system by preventing costly surgeries, hospitalizations, and long-term disability care."

Dr. Fakorede serves on the Board of Directors for the Amputee Coalition and holds leadership roles in several national medical societies. He co-chairs the Association of Black Cardiologists' PAD Task Force with Dr. Lee Kirksey, another ABC Board member, and has contributed to influential bodies such as the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions (SCAI), the American Heart Association PAD National Action Plan,

the Society of Interventional Radiology, and the ACC/AHA PAD guideline peer review committee. He also co-authored the “Closing the Gaps in Amputation” research census.

His groundbreaking work has been recognized with the American Heart Association’s 2023 Louis B. Russell Award, the Association of Black Cardiologists’ 2024 Public Policy Award, and inclusion in the 2024 STAT News STATUS List, which honors the most impactful leaders in health, medicine, and science.

Dr. Fakorede’s efforts have been widely covered by national media, including CBS News, NBC Nightly News, BET News, Reader’s Digest, Men’s Health Magazine, and ProPublica’s award-winning exposé “The Black American Amputation Epidemic.” He also appeared in Walgreens’ YouTube series “In Our Words: Saving Limbs and Lives.” At the state level, Dr. Fakorede has served as Vice Chairman of the Mississippi State Medical Association’s Minority Affairs Section and as District 1 Representative on the MSMA Council on Legislation. He advises the Mississippi Alliance for Cardiovascular Health and the Mississippi Department of Health’s Diabetes Advisory Council, working tirelessly to transform public health policy and outcomes across Mississippi and beyond.



Robert L. Gottlieb, MD, PhD

Director-Elect

Professor Robert Gottlieb is a physician-scientist in active clinical practice specializing in Advanced Heart Failure, Transplant Cardiology, and Mechanical Circulatory Support at Baylor University Medical Center and Baylor Scott & White The Heart Hospital in Dallas. He serves on the faculty of the Burnett School of Medicine at TCU (Professor of Internal Medicine) and holds additional academic appointments with Texas A&M Health Science Center.

Dr. Gottlieb is a widely published clinical trialist whose work spans cardiovascular disease, transplantation, and virology. Drawing on rigorous scientific and clinical training—including an MD from the University of Colorado School of Medicine, a PhD in Chemistry & Biochemistry from the University of Colorado Boulder, and an MS in Genetics from Yale University—he completed all of his postgraduate medical training at the University of Iowa, where he trained in Internal Medicine, Cardiovascular Disease, and Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiology. This comprehensive foundation uniquely positions him to bridge molecular science, clinical investigation, and the delivery of advanced cardiovascular care.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Gottlieb led and supported multiple therapeutic and antiviral clinical trials that helped establish the evidence base shaping contemporary care. He continues to contribute to randomized trials and real-world evidence across high-impact areas, including transthyretin amyloidosis and gene therapy approaches for dilated cardiomyopathy.

In addition to his clinical and research leadership, Dr. Gottlieb serves as Deputy Editor of Baylor University Medical Center Proceedings, where he helps elevate the clarity and rigor of medical communication. His educational leadership has included service as an inaugural GME Program Director and ongoing roles in fellowship training within advanced heart failure and transplant cardiology.

Board-certified in Internal Medicine, Cardiovascular Disease, and Advanced Heart Failure & Transplant Cardiology, Dr. Gottlieb also holds diplomate certification in adult echocardiography, nuclear cardiology, and cardiac CT. He has been recognized for scholarly excellence and invited as faculty and speaker nationally and

internationally, including in Brazil, where he has presented on heart failure, mechanical circulatory support, and emerging therapies.

A Lifetime Member of the Association of Black Cardiologists, and active member on the Heart Failure Committee, Dr. Gottlieb is committed to ABC's mission of equitable healthcare access, delivery, and workforce development. He also brings a practical, systems-minded focus to reducing costs and removing barriers to advanced cardiac therapies in the United States, Brazil, and beyond. Fluent in English and Portuguese, he values collaboration across clinical, research, and global health communities.



Onyedika Ilonze, MD, MPH

Director-Elect

Dr. Onyedika Ilonze is currently an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Indiana University School of Medicine and Medical Director of the Heart Failure Program at Eskenazi Health System in Indianapolis, Indiana. He is board-certified in Cardiovascular Disease and Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiology. He is a consultant cardiologist at Indiana University Health Methodist Hospital, the Veterans Affairs Hospital, and Eskenazi Health in Indianapolis, Indiana. Before joining Indiana University School of Medicine, Dr. Ilonze completed general cardiology and advanced heart failure fellowships at Wake Forest University, Virginia Tech Carilion

Clinic, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Clinically, Dr. Ilonze has expertise in heart failure, heart transplantation, pulmonary hypertension, cardiomyopathies – amyloidosis, sarcoidosis, etc., cardiogenic shock. A central component of his practice is navigating the social determinants of health, which contribute to disparities in cardiovascular care among his patient population.

In addition to his clinical activities and teaching responsibilities, Dr. Ilonze's research interest lies at the intersection between substance use, mental health disorders, heart failure and heart transplantation. Specifically, he studies improving clinical decision-making regarding cannabis in heart failure, heart transplantation, non-cardiac chest pain syndromes, and cardiovascular disease. He is also a Certified Hypertension Specialist and keenly interested in the evaluation of disparities in cardiovascular disease outcomes. He has participated as a collaborator and site Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator for several national and international research projects supported by organizations such as the National Institutes of Health, American Heart Association, and industry-sponsored trials. Dr. Ilonze serves as a guest editor in *Circulation: Heart Failure* and is Associate Editor (Cardiology) for the *Journal of the National Medical Association* and has additionally published several papers in peer-reviewed journals. Dr. Ilonze has undergone leadership training in the American College of Cardiology (ACC) Emerging Faculty Leadership Development program as well as the ACC Clinical Trials Research training.

Under his leadership, the heart failure program at Eskenazi Health has improved access to advanced heart failure care for the vulnerable population in Indianapolis and the state of Indiana. Other honors include the meritorious award for teaching and patient care, designation of specialist in clinical hypertension by the American Society of Hypertension, and recognition as a Fellow of several professional organizations, including the American College of Cardiology, American Heart Association (Clinical Cardiology), and the Heart Failure Society of America. Dr. Ilonze has served on several scientific planning committees on heart failure, clinical cardiology, and hypertension. He is a peer reviewer for the American Heart Association as well as ad hoc reviewer for several

scientific journals. He has served as a member of the American College of Cardiology heart failure and transplant cardiology leadership council and an inaugural member of the Cardiopsychology working group. Dr. Ilonze is a long-time volunteer for the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology.

Dr. Ilonze is a life member of the Association of Black Cardiologists and served on numerous committees, such as the Heart Failure, Cardiologists-in-Training, and Communications committees. His interests are many, including gardening, photography, and physical fitness.



Sabra C. Lewsey, MD, MPH

Director-Elect

(Membership Committee Representative)

Dr. Sabra Lewsey is an assistant professor of medicine and an advanced heart failure cardiologist at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, MD.

Prior to her medical training, she completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Virginia in Human Biology with Highest Honors. While at UVA, she was named to Phi Beta Kappa and was bestowed the Gray-Carrington Award, the highest university honor awarded to an undergraduate student. She attended medical school at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons as a J.F. Bohmfalk Scholar. During her time at Columbia, she served on the Executive Committee and Board of Directors of the Student National Medical Association as the National Premedical Board Member. She graduated from Columbia with the Aura E. Severinghaus Award and the distinction of Alpha Omega Alpha. While in medical school, she dual-enrolled and obtained a Master of Public Health degree at the Harvard School of Public Health with a focus in Health Policy and Management. She completed her internship and residency in the Johns Hopkins Osler Medical Residency Program. She also completed clinical and research fellowships in cardiovascular disease and advanced heart failure at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. She has been recognized with the Fellows Teaching Award from the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center. Dr. Lewsey has been named a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology and has recently received the Distinguished Service Award from the Association of Black Cardiologists. She has received national commendation for her academic contributions and was recognized as a 2020 Butler-Williams Scholar.

Her research interests include factors contributing to exercise intolerance, sarcopenia, frailty, and debilitation in aging, particularly in those with heart failure and in patients with HIV. She is also interested in quality initiatives that focus on improving heart failure care, including access, utilization, and outcomes in diverse and aging populations.

Dr. Lewsey currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Association of Black Cardiologists and is Co-Chair of the Membership Committee. Dr. Lewsey also serves on ABC's Heart Failure Committee and previously represented trainees as the Fellows Representative to the Board. Her leadership reflects a sustained commitment to advancing ABC's mission, strengthening the pipeline, and ensuring that the voices of early-career cardiologists are integrated into the organization's governance and strategic direction.