

## **National Committee on Housing and Health**

Meri-K Appy, BA, President, Appy and Associates, LLC

Georges Benjamin, MD, FACP, Executive Director, American Public Health Association

Gail Christopher, DN, PhD, Vice President for Programs, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Henry Cisneros, Chairman, CityView

Carlos Dora, MD, PhD, Coordinator of Interventions for Healthy Environments, World Health Organization

Ruth A. Etzel, MD, PhD, FAAP, Professor of Epidemiology, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee

David Fukuzawa, M.Div., MSA, Program Director for Health, The Kresge Foundation

Lynn Goldman, MD, MPH, Dean, George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services

Moises Loza, BA, Executive Director, Housing Assistance Council

Nic Retsinas, MCP, Senior Lecturer in Real Estate, Harvard Business School

Megan Sandel, MD, MPH, Pediatrician and Associate Professor, Boston University Medical Center

Steve Thomas, Spokesperson, Habitat for Humanity International

Thomas M. Vernon, MD, Chair, National Center for Healthy Housing

## National Committee on Housing and Health – Members' Biographies

### Meri-K Appy

Former president of the nonprofit Home Safety Council, Ms. Appy is widely regarded as the fire and emergency services' leading advocate for public safety education. She specializes in simplifying injury prevention and disaster preparedness messages, concepts, and strategies for greatest impact, especially for audiences at highest risk. She has appeared on many national television networks and programs, including *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, CNN, *Dateline NBC*, CBS' *The Early Show*, *Good Morning America*, and HGTV. Ms. Appy spearheaded the development and national delivery of three award-winning injury prevention programs including Risk Watch (NFPA), The Home Safety Literacy Project (Home Safety Council) and Start Safe: A Fire and Burn Safety Program for Preschoolers and Their Families (Home Safety Council). Now head of her own consulting company, Meri-K is working on a number of national fire safety initiatives, including Vision 20/20 and an exciting new public education initiative with USFA: "Fire Is Everyone's Fight." Ms. Appy was the recipient of the 2012 Anne W. Phillips Award for Leadership in Fire Safety Education. She graduated with honors from Smith College with a Bachelor's degree in French.

### Georges Benjamin, MD, FACP

Georges C. Benjamin, MD, has been the executive director of the American Public Health Association, the nation's oldest and largest organization of public health professionals, since December, 2002. He came to that post from his position as secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Dr. Benjamin became secretary of health in Maryland in April, 1999, following four years as its deputy secretary for public health services. As secretary, Dr. Benjamin oversaw the expansion and improvement in the state's Medicaid program. An established administrator, author, and orator, Dr. Benjamin started his medical career in 1981 in Tacoma, WA, where he managed a 72,000-patient visit ambulatory care service as chief of the Acute Illness Clinic at the Madigan Army Medical Center. A few years later, he moved to Washington, DC, where he served as chief of emergency medicine at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Currently, Dr. Benjamin serves on the boards of Research!America, Partnership for Prevention, and the Reagan-Udall Foundation and is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. In 2008, he was named one of the top 25 minority executives in health care by *Modern Healthcare* magazine, in addition to being voted among the 100 most influential people in health care from 2007 through 2011 and one of the nation's most powerful physician executives from 2009 to 2011. Benjamin, of Gaithersburg, MD, is a graduate of the Illinois Institute of Technology and the University of Illinois College of Medicine. He is board certified in internal medicine and a fellow of the American College of Physicians, a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, a fellow emeritus of the American College of Emergency Physicians, and an honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Public Health.

### Gail Christopher, DN, PhD

Dr. Christopher is currently vice president for health at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. She was previously vice president of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies' Office of Health, Women, and Families in Washington, DC. She directed the Joint Center Health Policy Institute, a multi-year initiative created to engage underserved, racial, and ethnic minorities in health policy discussions. Prior to that, she was guest scholar in the Governance Studies Department at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC, and executive director of the Institute for Government Innovation at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, MA. In addition, Christopher served as director and naprapathic physician with the Naprapathic Health Centers in Chicago. Christopher took her doctor of naprapathy degree from the Chicago National College of Naprapathy in Illinois and completed advanced study in the interdisciplinary Ph.D. program in holistic health and clinical nutrition at the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities at Union Graduate School of Cincinnati, OH.

Dr. Christopher received a 2007 Leadership Award from the Health Brain Trust of the Congressional Black Caucus, for her work with Health Policy Institute of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and its impact on public policies to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities. She has authored and co-authored three books, a monthly column in the *Federal Times*, and has written more than 250 articles, presentations, and publications. Her list of national broadcast and print media credits is also extensive.

#### **Henry Cisneros, Founder and Chairman**

In 1981, Mr. Cisneros became the first Hispanic-American mayor of a major U.S. city, San Antonio, TX. He was subsequently elected to four terms. In 1992, President Clinton appointed Mr. Cisneros to be Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). After leaving HUD in 1997, Mr. Cisneros became President and COO of Univision Communications, the Spanish-language broadcaster which has become the fifth-most-watched television network in the nation. Mr. Cisneros currently serves on Univision's Board of Directors. He has served as president of the National League of Cities and as Deputy Chair of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. He is currently a member of the Advisory Boards of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Broad Foundation and was honored by the National Housing Conference as the "Housing Person of the Year." Mr. Cisneros sits on each of CityView's investment committees. He is a graduate of Texas A&M with a Masters from the Kennedy School at Harvard and a Doctorate from George Washington University.

#### **Carlos Dora, MD, PhD**

Dr. Carlos Dora works on the interface between knowledge and practice. He is presently coordinating the development of a global program on health impact assessment at the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland. He is building on the work on health impact assessment of transport, energy, and agriculture policies; he has been leading the WHO Regional Office for Europe. At the WHO, he has previously developed a program on the environmental health implications of transport policies, and before that worked on environmental health problems in eastern Europe. He has also served as a senior policy analyst at the WHO Director General's office. He has recently completed comparative research on risk communication strategies in policymaking, investigating perceptions of food and environment and food risks (BSE), their interplay with media, government and health care discourses in a few countries. Before joining the WHO, Dr. Dora worked in environmental epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene. He completed his Doctorate at the London School and involved a retrospective cohort study on risk factors for cardiovascular disease in developing countries (focus on micro-nutrients and in older populations). Before that, he worked in internal medicine, in post-graduate medical training and in the organization of local preventive and health care services in Brazil and in the United Kingdom.

#### **Ruth A. Etzel, MD, PhD, FAAP**

Ruth A. Etzel, MD, PhD, FAAP, is a professor at the Zilber School of Public Health at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. She specializes in pediatrics, preventive medicine, and environmental health. As a Commissioned Officer in the U.S. Public Health Service for 20 years, Dr. Etzel served in public-sector leadership positions including: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Founding Chief of the Air Pollution and Respiratory Health Branch), Department of Agriculture (Director of the Division of Epidemiology and Risk Assessment) and Indian Health Service (Research Director at the Alaska Native Medical Center). She led the children's environmental health activities at the World Health Organization in Geneva from 2009 to 2012. She is the Founding Editor of *Pediatric Environmental Health* (now in its third edition), and serves on the Editorial Review Board of *Environmental Health Perspectives*. She founded the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Epidemiology and served as its first Chair, and also served as Chair of the AAP Committee on Environmental Health. Her research interests include investigating the effects of environmental contaminants on children,

identifying the environmental precipitants of asthma attacks and studying the health effects of children's exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollutants.

**David Fukuzawa, M.Div., MSA**

David D. Fukuzawa, The Kresge Foundation's program director for Health, has more than 20 years of experience in philanthropy, with a special focus on vulnerable children and youth. Mr. Fukuzawa joined Kresge in 2000 and has served as a program officer and senior program officer. In 2002, he helped develop the Special Opportunities Initiative. The initiative focused on building the capacity of high-impact organizations that reached underserved populations but were uncompetitive in the foundation's historic bricks-and-mortar challenge program. He then managed the initiative. Mr. Fukuzawa was a program officer at the Skillman Foundation in Detroit from 1990 to 1999. At Skillman, he focused on child and youth health. He was responsible for a major initiative to address the lack of safe and accessible out-of-school opportunities for Detroit youth, a major factor in the city's high incidence of violence, delinquency, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy. He also helped develop Michigan's first statewide childhood immunization registry. A Yale University graduate, Mr. Fukuzawa also holds a Master of Divinity degree from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and a Master of Science in Administration degree from Central Michigan University. He has written and edited several articles and booklets about urban neighborhood issues.

**Lynn Goldman, MD, MPH**

Dr. Lynn R. Goldman is Dean of the School of Public Health and Health Services and Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health. As Dean of SPHHS, Dr. Goldman's responsibilities are informed by her broad and deep public policy and academic experience. She joined the school in August, 2010 from Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, where she had been Professor of Environmental Health Science since July, 2000. In that capacity, she served as principal investigator of the National Children's Study Center at Hopkins. That ambitious research initiative, part of a DHHS study that follows 100,000 children from birth to age 21, examines the interaction of numerous environmental influences on children's health. Dr. Goldman was also the co-PI of the National Study Center for Preparedness and Critical Event Response, which supports the mission of the Department of Homeland Security through research and educational initiatives designed to build the science of preparedness. Prior to joining Hopkins, Dr. Goldman was Assistant Administrator for Toxic Substances in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from 1993 to 1998 under President Clinton. Dr. Goldman also worked in environmental health for the California Department of Public Health Services. Currently, Dean Goldman is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Environmental Defense Fund. She is a member of the Institute of Medicine, where she has chaired or served on committees focused on secondhand smoke, public health preparedness, environmental health, and health sciences policy. She is also a member of the National Academy of Sciences Board on Environmental Sciences and Toxicology.

**Moises Loza, BA**

Moises Loza is Executive Director of the Housing Assistance Council (HAC), a national nonprofit corporation and CDFI that works to increase the availability of decent housing for rural low-income people. HAC maintains a special focus on high-need groups and regions, including Indian Country, the Mississippi Delta, farm workers, the Southwest border colonias, and Appalachia. The organization provides technical assistance, training, and research and has a revolving loan fund with assets of approximately \$67 million. Since its founding in 1971, HAC has loaned more than \$217 million to help build more than 60,000 units of affordable housing in 49 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Mr. Loza currently is the chair of the Rural Development Leadership Network; treasurer of the National Low Income Housing Coalition; and a member of the boards of the National Community Reinvestment Corporation, the National Housing Conference, and the National Rural Housing

Coalition. Growing up in south Texas, Mr. Loza traveled extensively with his migrant family seeking farm work in the South, Midwest, and West.

#### **Nic Retsinas, MCP**

Nicolas P. Retsinas is a Senior Lecturer in Real Estate at the Harvard Business School, where he teaches courses in housing finance and real estate in frontier markets. Mr. Retsinas is also Director Emeritus of Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies, a collaborative venture of the Graduate School of Design and the Harvard Kennedy School, and a Lecturer in Housing Studies at the Graduate School of Design. Prior to his Harvard appointment, Retsinas served as Assistant Secretary for Housing-Federal Housing Commissioner at the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and as Director of the Office of Thrift Supervision. Mr. Retsinas also served on the Board of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Federal Housing Finance Board and the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation. He received a Meritorious Service Award from the U.S. Treasury Department in 1997. He also received the Excellence in Public Service Award from the Rental Housing Association in 1998 and the Housing Leadership Award from the National Low Income Housing Coalition in 2001. He is in the National Housing Hall of Fame and was named one of the most influential people in real estate by the National Association of Realtors, in home building by *Builder* magazine, and in multifamily housing by *Multi-Housing News*. In 2008, he was inducted into the Affordable Housing Hall of Fame and in 2009 was named by *Builder* magazine as one of the top 30 innovators in the home building industry in the past 30 years. In 2010, *Bloomberg Business Week* named him one of the 50 most powerful people in real estate. In 2011, *Inman News* named him as one of the 100 most influential real estate leaders and the National Housing Conference named him Person of the Year. He received his master's degree in city planning from Harvard University and his AB in economics from New York University. In 2008, he received an honorary Doctorate in Public Service from Rhode Island College.

#### **Megan Sandel, MD, MPH**

Megan Sandel, MD, MPH, is the Interim Executive Director of the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership. She was the first Medical Director of the Family Advocacy Program in 1998, and was appointed Medical Director of the National Center in 2007. Dr. Sandel is an Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Public Health at the Boston University School of Medicine, the former Director of Pediatric Healthcare for the Homeless at Boston Medical Center, a research scientist with Children's Health Watch and a nationally recognized expert on housing and child health. She served as a general academic fellow at Boston Medical Center with a concentration in environmental health in children, earning a Masters of Public Health with a dual concentration in environmental health and epidemiology and biostatistics in 2002. In 1998, she published with other doctors at Boston Medical Center, the DOC4Kids report, a national report on how housing affected child health. In 1999, she followed as an author on *There's No Place like Home*, a second report documenting how asthma, lead, injuries, homelessness, food insecurity, chronic disease, and educational attainment were all affected by housing. In 2000, she was a co-principal investigator of the Boston Healthy Homes Partnership, a grant from Department of Housing and Urban Development to the Boston Public Health Commission, to study if housing changes improved the health of children with asthma. She is a founding member of the Asthma Regional Council of New England. Over the course of her career, Dr. Sandel has written numerous scientific articles and papers. She has served on numerous committees and advisory boards, such as the Alliance for Healthy Homes, a national advocacy group, and Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

#### **Steve Thomas**

Emmy Award winning Steve Thomas is spokesman for Habitat for Humanity International, with a special emphasis on the ReStore and Women Build! He also works with [Planet Green](#) to host [Renovation Nation](#), which premiered June 4, 2008. He celebrated his final year as host of television's most popular home improvement

series, *This Old House*, during the 2002-2003 television season. Over the course of his 14 years as host, Steve became known as the "ultimate home enthusiast" and helped catapult *This Old House* to the top of PBS' list of most-watched ongoing series of all time. He also contributed to the successful debut of *Ask This Old House*, an all-new series in which viewer questions are addressed on-air, as host during its first year. A much in-demand speaker as well as a serial renovator, Steve also consults on residential building and renovation for clients all over the United States. Steve was honored with a 1997-1998 Daytime Emmy Award and a total of nine nominations for "Outstanding Service Show Host."

### **Thomas M. Vernon, MD**

Thomas M. Vernon, Jr., Chair of the NCHH Board of Directors, has served on NCHH's board since 1993. Dr. Vernon has played a key role in NCHH activities, serving as a long-standing member of NCHH's executive committee and, more recently, chairing the nominating committee. Dr. Vernon's roots are in the South: North Carolina, Virginia, and Florida (West Palm Beach). He graduated *magna cum laude* from Duke University and subsequently from Harvard Medical School (in 1964). Board-certified in internal medicine, Dr. Vernon spent several years with the Centers for Disease Control as an epidemiologist, including two years in Nepal as a part of the global malaria eradication effort. In 1972, Dr. Vernon joined the State Health Department in Colorado as State Epidemiologist. He was appointed Executive Director of the department by Governor Richard Lamm in 1983 and was re-appointed in 1987 by Governor Roy Romer. After more than seven years as Executive Director, Dr. Vernon moved east to become Director of Health and Human Services for the Pew Charitable Trusts. He joined Merck in May, 1993, where he remained until his retirement from his position as the Vaccine Division's Vice President for Policy, Public Health, and Medical Affairs. As Vice President, he was responsible for policy matters as related to state, federal, and international public health agencies, including state health departments, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization.