

# About the Speakers

Equity on the Mall brings together a powerful cross-section of community leaders, advocates, public officials, and organizers who are driving change across the San Joaquin Valley and beyond. From grassroots champions to statewide policymakers, each speaker brings a unique voice and deep commitment to advancing equity in health, housing, education, environmental justice, immigration, and economic opportunity. Together, they reflect the strength and diversity of a movement working toward a just and inclusive California for all.



## **Regina Cuellar**

*Chairwoman, Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians*

Regina Cuellar is Chairwoman of the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians and a longtime leader in Tribal governance. Under her leadership, the Tribe has expanded its land base, built a hotel and entertainment center, and launched culturally responsive family services. She was instrumental in establishing the Feather Alert system for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People and serves on both the California Commission on the State of Hate and the Greater Sacramento Economic Council.



## **Shelly Covert**

*Spokesperson, Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe*

Shelly Covert is the Spokesperson for the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe and Executive Director of CHIRP, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving Nisenan culture. She leads outreach and education efforts to uplift the Tribe's history and supports the community's fight to restore federal recognition. Shelly's work emphasizes truth-telling, cultural preservation, and advocacy for social, environmental, and racial justice.



## **Reyna Villalobos**

*Managing Director, Regional Programs, The Center at Sierra Health Foundation*

Reyna Villalobos brings nearly 30 years of public health experience to her role at The Center. She oversees the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund's grantmaking, policy advocacy, and capacity-building efforts. Bilingual and culturally competent, Reyna has deep expertise in health equity, coalition building, and program development, and has served in leadership roles across higher education and community health.



## **Chet P. Hewitt**

*President & CEO, Sierra Health Foundation*

Chet Hewitt is President and CEO of the Sierra Health Foundation and The Center, where he leads bold efforts to advance health equity, racial justice, and inclusive economic development. A nationally recognized leader in philanthropy, Chet has received numerous honors, including the Terrance Keenan Leadership Award and induction into the National Academy of Public Administration.



### **Kaying Hang**

*President, The Center at Sierra Health Foundation*

Kaying Hang serves as President of The Center and Senior Vice President of Programs and Partnerships at Sierra Health Foundation. She leads strategic program development, partnerships, and oversees the implementation of initiatives advancing health equity and social justice across California. Her leadership has been central to expanding impact across the San Joaquin Valley and beyond.



### **Dolores Huerta**

*Founder & President, Dolores Huerta Foundation*

Dolores Huerta is a legendary civil rights activist and labor organizer. Co-founder of the United Farm Workers, she has spent over 50 years fighting for worker rights, education equity, and social justice. In 2012, President Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Through the Dolores Huerta Foundation, she continues to build grassroots power and advocate for equity across California.



### **Dr. Perfecto Muñoz**

*Executive Chief Officer, West Modesto Community Collaborative*

Dr. Perfecto Muñoz is a public health leader and longtime advocate for underserved communities in Stanislaus County. With a background in research and policy at UC Berkeley, he now leads the West Modesto Community Collaborative, emphasizing racial equity, community advocacy, and climate resiliency. His work reflects a lifelong commitment to empowering low-income families and advancing social justice through local leadership.



### **Noé Páramo**

*Project Director & Legislative Advocate, CRLAF*

Noé Páramo serves as a Project Director and Legislative Advocate at California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation (CRLAF). With decades of experience in rural justice, he works to expand health access and immigrant rights for farmworker communities. A proud son of immigrant farmworkers, Noé holds a JD from UC Law San Francisco and a BA in Political Science from UC Davis.



### **Eileen Espejo**

*Senior Director, Children Now*

Eileen Espejo leads equity-driven policy efforts at Children Now, where she champions access to oral health care and racial justice for California's children. She co-chairs the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund's Policy Committee and has played a pivotal role in developing The Children's Movement Equity Fellows Program, mentoring the next generation of policy advocates.



### **Abraham Bedoy**

*Policy and Community Specialist, Immigrant Legal Resource Center (IRLC)*

Abraham Bedoy leads immigrant rights advocacy at the IRLC, advancing pro-immigrant policy at the state level while supporting grassroots efforts in California's Central Valley. His expertise spans immigration, voting, and criminal justice reform. Abraham holds a Master of Public Policy from UC Berkeley and is deeply committed to empowering immigrant communities.



### **Galen Dobbins**

#### *Policy Analyst, California Coalition for Rural Housing*

Galen Dobbins is a policy analyst with the California Coalition for Rural Housing, where he advocates for affordable housing access for rural, farmworker, and Tribal communities. He brings experience from the State Legislature and nonprofit sector, with degrees in Government and Public Policy from CSUS and USC.



### **Nora Zaragoza-Yáñez**

#### *Nonprofit Leader & SJVHF Health Subcommittee Co-Chair*

Nora Zaragoza-Yáñez is a nonprofit leader with a background in public health, legal advocacy, and immigrant community services. Her career spans policy development, direct service, and grassroots organizing. As Health Subcommittee Co-Chair of the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund, Nora brings a strong equity lens and a commitment to empowering underserved communities through systems change and coalition building.



### **Ashley De La Rosa**

#### *Education Policy Director, Dolores Huerta Foundation*

Ashley De La Rosa is the Education Policy Director at the Dolores Huerta Foundation. A first-generation college graduate, she leads campaigns to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline and strengthen educational equity for BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ youth in Bakersfield. Ashley works closely with families to build grassroots power and demand accountability from public officials.



### **Nayamin Martinez Cossio**

#### *Executive Director, Central California Environmental Justice Network*

Nayamin Martinez Cossio leads the Central California Environmental Justice Network, equipping immigrant and frontline communities with tools to advocate for clean air, water, and climate resilience. Her advocacy has led to statewide policy wins, including California's first pesticide notification system. Nayamin holds dual master's degrees in Public Health and Sociology.



### **Daniel O'Connell**

#### *Executive Director, Central Valley Partnership*

Daniel O'Connell is Executive Director of the Central Valley Partnership, a progressive network advancing equity across the San Joaquin Valley. His work centers on community development, rural justice, and environmental sustainability. A published author and scholar, Daniel draws on his background in education and conservation to support grassroots leadership and structural reform.



### **Dr. Adria Tinnin**

#### *Director of Race Equity Policy, TURN*

Dr. Adria Tinnin leads race equity policy at TURN (The Utility Reform Network), where she works to eliminate systemic racism in energy and telecommunications regulation. A former UCLA lecturer and political science researcher, Adria's work addresses environmental justice and regulatory disparities affecting low-income communities and communities of color.





### **Blanca Marin-Candelario**

*Executive Assistant, West Modesto Community Collaborative*

Blanca Marin-Candelario is a lifelong West Modesto resident and passionate community advocate. With a background in child development and early education, she now serves as Executive Assistant at West Modesto Community Collaborative. Blanca's work is grounded in lived experience and focuses on uplifting local families, improving services, and ensuring community voices are heard.



### **Melanie Lee**

*Community Advocate*

Melanie Lee is a first-generation Hmong and Lao-American advocate from Fresno. Raised by her grandmother, she became a bridge between her family and institutions at a young age. Today, she channels that experience into advocacy for youth, housing rights, and racial equity. Melanie is committed to amplifying the voices of overlooked communities and building a more just future.



### **Roberta Meneses**

*Community Leader, Fresno*

Roberta Meneses is a longtime Fresno resident and community advocate focused on immigrant rights and education. She serves as secretary of the District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC) and works closely with parents and educators to improve access for English language learners. Roberta is pursuing her education while continuing to champion equity in her neighborhood.



### **Olivia Calderon**

*Mayor of Arvin*

Mayor Olivia Calderon is a lifelong advocate for economic equity and community empowerment. Her career spans local, state, and national service, including work with the California Legislature and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. She has championed financial inclusion, poverty reduction, and systemic reform. As Mayor of Arvin, she continues to advance policies that uplift working families and drive lasting, community-centered change.



### **Richard Figueroa**

*Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom*

Richard Figueroa is Deputy Cabinet Secretary in the Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, focusing on health, human services, and veterans' affairs. With decades of policy experience, he has held leadership roles under multiple California governors and in major health philanthropy. His career reflects a deep commitment to public service and systems-level impact.



### **Castle Redmond**

*Managing Director, The California Endowment*

Castle Redmond leads statewide education and racial justice strategies at The California Endowment. He previously directed the Sons & Brothers Campaign and co-lead the foundation's racial equity framework. A former leader in Oakland's juvenile justice reform efforts, Castle brings decades of experience advancing systems change and community health.



### **Richard Vezina**

*Senior Program Officer, Blue Shield of California Foundation*

Richard Vezina leads efforts to align public systems with community priorities at Blue Shield of California Foundation. With a background in public health and strategy consulting, he previously served as a vice president at Harder+Company Community Research. Richard is also board chair of Food Connect and brings a deep commitment to health equity and systems transformation.



### **Senator Jerry McNerney**

*California State Senate, District 5*

Senator Jerry McNerney represents California's 5th Senate District, following 16 years in the U.S. Congress. A longtime champion for veterans, clean energy, and innovation, he authored the AI in Government Act and helped bring a new veterans' health facility to the Central Valley. He now chairs the Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee.



### **Assemblymember Rhodesia Ransom**

*California State Assembly, District 13*

Assemblymember Rhodesia Ransom represents District 13, including Stockton and Tracy. A former city councilmember, nonprofit founder, and planning commissioner, she brings more than 20 years of experience to the Legislature. She has led efforts to address youth development, housing, and public safety, including securing funding for Tracy's first permanent homeless shelter.



### **Assemblymember Dr. Joaquin Arambula**

*California State Assembly, District 31*

Dr. Joaquin Arambula is the first Latino physician elected to the California State Assembly. Representing District 31 since 2016, he has championed health equity and authored key "Health4All" legislation to expand Medi-Cal to undocumented Californians. A former emergency room doctor, he is a fierce advocate for safety net programs and Central Valley families.