

Public Funds into Private Pockets: How Nursing Homes May Be Hiding Profits and Depriving Residents of Care and Quality

Wednesday, June 4, 2025
Anderson House Office Building – Mackinac Room

Event Speakers

Alison Hirschel

Alison Hirschel (she/her) is the Program Director and Managing Attorney of the Michigan Elder Justice Initiative which she founded in 2011. She is also the elder law attorney at the Michigan Poverty Law Program and a consulting attorney for the Crime Victims Legal Assistance Project-Elder Justice. Previously, Alison worked at Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service (now Disability Rights Michigan) and Community Legal Services in Philadelphia and served on the adjunct faculty of both the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan Law Schools. Alison is the immediate Past President of the Governing Board of the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long Term Care and was a Commissioner of the American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging. Alison received her B.A. from the University of Michigan and her J.D. from Yale Law School.



Dr. Ashvin Gandhi

Ashvin Gandhi is an assistant professor at the UCLA Anderson School of Management and a faculty research fellow at the National Bureau of Economics Research. His research examines strategic behavior by healthcare providers.



Elaine Hearn

Elaine Hearn is a Designated Long Term Care Ombudsman at AgeWays, the host agency for Region 1-B. Elaine covers homes in Macomb and St. Clair Counties, providing services to residents in over 200 homes. Elaine has been a long term care ombudsman since 2007. She has dedicated over 17 years to advocating for residents in nursing homes, homes for the aged, and adult foster care homes to address their concerns. She also supports nursing home resident and family councils, provides education to the public and staff on a variety of long term care topics, and supports nursing home residents wishing to return to the community. Prior to this role, Ms. Hearn served as the Elder Abuse Education Coordinator for Citizens for Better Care. Ms. Hearn earned her Bachelor of Science Degrees in Business Management and Marketing from the University of Phoenix and she is a certified SHIP Counselor.



Laura De Palma

Laura De Palma (she/her) is the Project Director for the Nursing Home Transparency and Accountability project. She has nearly a decade of campaigning and organizing experience and spent the last several years working on corporate accountability campaigns to advance racial equity, improve conditions for workers, and hold corporations accountable for having robust climate transition plans. She was the campaign director of the Michigan Caring Majority from 2018-20 and worked alongside partners and stakeholders to pass a long-term care study and managed the stakeholder engagement component of the study. She has a Master of Social Work (MSW) from University of Michigan in community organization and community and social systems.



Kevin D. Walsh

Kevin D. Walsh is New Jersey's Acting State Comptroller. Appointed in 2020, Walsh leads the office in advancing accountability and transparency across government and to advocate on behalf of taxpayers. He has released numerous reports regarding one-star nursing homes, finding that they cost New Jersey's Medicaid program over \$100 million each year and continue to receive funding despite having been repeatedly cited for serious health and safety issues.

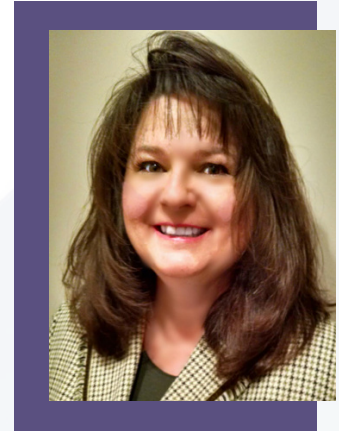
Prior to joining the New Jersey Office of the State Comptroller, Walsh spent two decades as a civil rights attorney and as the Executive Director of the Fair Share Housing Center, an organization involved in advocating for affordable housing for families, seniors, and people with disabilities and representing the interests of lower-income households impacted by disasters, among other issues.

OSC's Medicaid Fraud Division (MFD) has worked to protect the integrity of New Jersey's Medicaid program and works to detect and recover funds that are improperly used. The Division acts as the State watchdog responsible for ensuring that providers properly deliver care funded by the Medicaid program. OSC works to improve the efficiency and integrity of Medicaid in New Jersey and returns millions of dollars back to taxpayers each month.



Salli Pung

Salli Pung started her role as Michigan’s State Long Term Care Ombudsman in November 2016. Ms. Pung brings over 35 years of experience to this position. For the previous 13 years, she served as the Nursing Facility Relocation Coordinator at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) within the Medical Services Administration where she oversaw nursing facility closures and ensured that residents were protected and empowered in this process. During her time at MDHHS, she also served as the Program Manager for MI Health Link, Michigan’s financial alignment demonstration. Previously, Ms. Pung served as Senior Program Manager at the Center for Long Term Care at the Michigan Public Health Institute, and Director of Education and Shared Services at the Michigan Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (now called Leading Age). Ms. Pung began her career in this arena when she served as a nursing assistant in a nursing home during college. She brings a diverse experience and longstanding dedication to improving the lives of residents of licensed long term care facilities.



Sam Brooks

As the Director of Public Policy at National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, Sam Brooks leads the organization’s policy efforts to improve the lives and care of long-term care consumers nationwide.

With over 17 years of experience as a lawyer and a policy advocate, Sam has a strong background in legal services, human rights, and elder justice. Sam leads Consumer Voice in policy development, policy writing, and strategic communication to influence legislation, regulations, and enforcement on issues affecting long-term care consumers, such as quality of care, resident rights, and abuse and neglect. Before joining Consumer Voice, Sam was an attorney for twelve years in the Aging & Disabilities Unit of Community Legal Services in Philadelphia, where he became an expert in public benefits, Medicare and Medicaid, and long-term care supports and services.



Sarah Slocum

Sarah Slocum is a Systemic Public Policy Advocate at MEJI working on a number of special projects and initiatives and representing MEJI and MLTCOP in several coalitions and Task Forces. She recently retired from the Altarum Institute where she worked on government and philanthropy-supported projects aimed at improving the quality of life and care for frail elders living with disability. Before Altarum, Sarah served for 13 years as Michigan's State Long Term Care Ombudsman. She also worked at AARP, served as the director of the Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program, was an Assistant Ombudsman, and was a VISTA volunteer working on eldercare issues. Sarah has led legislative and policy efforts to improve the state Medicaid program, long-term care regulations, and the Certificate of Need program. She testified on nursing home quality before the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging. She has a Masters Degree in Bioethics from Michigan State University.

