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Georgia Insurance Commissioner John King recognized with Powerhouse Policymaker Award alongside three other awardees by Georgians for a Healthy Future

ATLANTA – On Tuesday, September 12, Georgians for a Healthy Future (GHF) celebrated its 15th anniversary, and thus 15 years of reimagining and reshaping Georgia's health laws.

“Georgians for a Healthy Future has always been driven by a simple yet powerful vision, a healthier and more equitable future for all Georgians,” said Deanna Burke, Chair of Georgians for a Healthy Future. “Over the past 15 years, we have worked to tirelessly transform this vision into a reality, advocating for better health care access, improved outcomes and a brighter future for our communities.”

As part of this celebration, GHF recognized four individuals with awards. The awardees were headlined by Georgia Department of Insurance Commissioner John King who received the Powerhouse Policymaker Award for his consequential work protecting Georgia consumers in the insurance and healthcare access space. Commissioner King took a leadership role in 1) Enforcing the accuracy of insurers' provider directories, which provides consumers with much greater transparency in selecting the best coverage for their families, 2) Supporting the passage of Surprise Billing Consumer Protection Act, which protects patients from unjust out of network billing charges after receiving care at an in network facility, and 3) Being one of the first and strongest supporters of the Georgia Mental Health Parity Act, which ensures that mental health insurance coverage is held to the same standards as physical health coverage. With this award, GHF recognizes Commissioner King's collaborative work with many organizations and health policy advocates throughout Georgia.

“Because of the Commissioner’s leadership and his team’s support we know that Georgia families and Georgia consumers can better rely on accurate lists of in-network providers and not get unaffordable bills from an out of network provider. Georgia families can look forward to many fewer paperwork headaches when they need mental health and substance use services,” said Laura Colbert, Executive Director, Georgians for a Healthy Future. “For all these reasons, GHF was honored to present one of the Powerhouse Policy Awards to Commissioner John King and express our gratitude to the Commissioner and his team on all their hard work over the last few years.”

Along with Commisioner King's award, three Georgians who have had outsized impacts on GHF's past and present, and on the well-being of Georgia families, were presented with the following awards during the celebration.

The Lowe Health Advcoacy Award was presented to Cindy Zeldin, Vice President of Health Policy & Government Affairs, Healthcare Georgia Foundation. Mindy Binderman, Executive Director, Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) presented Cindy's award.

“Sound policy, effective action is part of the work that we have always set for Georgians for a Healthy Future, but Cindy made it far more than a tagline,” said Mindy Binderman. “Her knowledge of health policy runs deep, her community advocacy continues to run deep and the relationships she has built has led to great progress in health policy and GHF’s success today. Let us honor Cindy's impact on Georgia's health advocacy landscape with this award.”

The Powerhouse Policymaker Award was also presented to Dante McKay, Director, Office of Children, Young Adults & Families at the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities. Polly McKinney, Advocacy Director, Voices for Georgia's Children presented Dante's award.

"I had the honor to work with and alongside Dante. I found him to be a person of great insight and integrity and what’s more is he is one of the most genuine and thoughtful people I know,” said Polly McKinney. “He is a major force behind child behavioral health as well as helping the state collaborate with advocacy groups. Dante has a deep understanding of government and how systems can meet needs, hopes and dreams for many of us. Together let us celebrate Dante's work on behalf of Georgia children and youth and his dedication to mental wellness.”

The Community Impact Award was presented to Vira Salzburn, Program Director for Safety and Resilience Programs, Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council. Lisa Hayes, a strategy consultant and the former Executive Director of the Savannah-based organization presented Vira's award.

“It has been a gift to watch Vira and watch her grow these past few years. She is not just a colleague, she is a beacon of hope, a catalyst for positive change and a true embodiment of agape love,” said Lisa Hayes. “Join me in celebrating Vira Salzburn’s contributions to the Savannah community and to Georgians.”

More on the event and awardees [here](#).

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Georgians For a Healthy Future

Georgians for a Healthy Future collaborates with communities and partners to lead policy change that advances health equity for all Georgians. Our vision is of a day in which all Georgians have equitable opportunities to achieve their highest level of health. We do this by delivering actionable health policy information to policymakers and advocates; providing resources to help consumers become strong advocates; and elevating the consumer experience to inform policy change. Read more at healthyfuturega.org.

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