



State of Obesity 2019: Better Policies for a Healthier America Speaker Biographies



John Auerbach, MBA
President and CEO
Trust for America's Health

John Auerbach is president and CEO of TFAH, where he oversees TFAH's work to promote sound public health policy and make disease prevention a national priority. Over the course of a thirty-year career he has held senior public health positions at the federal, state, and local levels. As Associate Director at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) he oversaw policy and the agency's collaborative efforts with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), commercial payers, and large health systems. During his six years as the Commissioner of Public Health for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, he developed innovative programs to promote health equity, combat chronic and infectious disease, and support the successful implementation of the state's health care reform initiative. As Boston's health commissioner for nine years, he directed homeless, substance abuse, and emergency medical services for the city as well as a wide range of public health divisions.

Mr. Auerbach was previously a professor of practice in health sciences and director of the Institute on Urban Health Research and Practice at Northeastern University; program director of one of the country's first community health centers; and director of a clinical training program at a tertiary care safety-net hospital.



Devita Davison
Executive Director
FoodLab Detroit

FoodLab is a nonprofit organization that fosters the creation of an inclusive and equitable local food economy by providing food entrepreneurs with education, peer-to-peer mentoring, access to market opportunities and exchange of experiences. As Executive Director, Devita works to build an ecosystem that provides food entrepreneurs with the resources they need to launch, operate and scale good food businesses that create good jobs and catalyze positive change in their communities. Her overall goal is to create a food economy that acknowledges the importance of food justice, community health, local ownership and sustainability.

Devita Davison was a 2016 TEDxBrum and 2017 TED speaker, her TED Talk on the big stage has been seen over 1 Million times, she is a 2014 UIX Urban Innovator, 2017 Grist Top 50 Leader in sustainability, a Southern Foodway Alliance Smith Fellow, and a 2019 Sustainability Champion by the Detroiter.

*Keep the conversation going! Tag briefing highlights, questions and photos
@HealthyAmerica1 or #StateOfObesity*



State of Obesity 2019: Better Policies for a Healthier America Speaker Biographies



Martha Halko, MS, RD, LD
Deputy Director, Prevention & Wellness
Cuyahoga County Board of Health (Ohio)

Martha Halko is Deputy Director in the Prevention and Wellness service area at the Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH) and she has served in this capacity since 2011. Martha is a community focused and outcome driven public health professional with more than 21 years of experience working to address complex public health issues among diverse populations in Cuyahoga County. She has extensive experience in applying an equity lens to collaborative, multi-sector work, which fosters collective impact and community engagement in their efforts to improve health and reduce inequities. Martha has served as the coordinator for the Health Improvement Partnership- Cuyahoga (HIP-Cuyahoga) since 2011 and as the Principle Investigator for the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) grant project since 2014. Within the CCBH, she coordinates and guides several organizational level equity, diversity and inclusion efforts.

Martha earned a Master's of Science Degree in Community Nutrition from the University of Akron in 2000 and she is a 2010 graduate of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Ladder to Leadership Program.



Ruth Petersen, MD, MPH
Director, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Ruth Petersen serves as the director of CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO). The Division provides national leadership on nutrition, physical activity, and obesity prevention through policy and guideline development, surveillance, epidemiological and behavioral research, and technical assistance to states and communities. Dr. Petersen has held numerous leadership positions in multiple settings including health care, local and state health departments, national advisory groups, academic settings, the private sector, and global health platforms. Her broad, deep, and diverse experience with populations and partners and stakeholders are strong assets for leading DNPAO in its focused efforts to prevent chronic diseases through population-wide public health initiatives and health system innovations.

Dr. Petersen received her MD and MPH from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After training in obstetrics and gynecology in Rochester, New York, she completed the UNC Preventive Medicine Residency and a post-doctoral fellowship in health services research. Throughout her career, she has drawn on her expertise in patient care, health system change, disease prevention, and community engagement to develop and guide programs, research, and policy to improve health behaviors and reduce chronic disease.

*Keep the conversation going! Tag briefing highlights, questions and photos
@HealthyAmerica1 or #StateOfObesity*