



# INTERIM STRATEGIC PLAN

# 2021-2023



HEALTH SCIENCES ASSOCIATION  
The union delivering modern health care



At its 2015 Annual Convention, the union's Board of Directors presented a strategic plan to see the union through to its 50th anniversary in 2021.

The strategic plan helped guide the work of the union through challenges identified in a thorough research and consultation process that included conversations with activists, members, and many of HSA's allies. The issues identified included:

- Changing demographics
- Constant organizational change in our members' workplaces
- Undermining of or even hostility to labour rights and values
- Economic pressures on the health care and social services systems

As we began an undertaking to renew the plan in early 2020, we – collectively and world-wide – were met with a new and unanticipated challenge that would have an unimagined and significant impact on each and every one of us – in our work as health care and community social service workers, in our personal lives, and in our communities.

LION'S GATE BRIDGE, MARCH 2020, PHOTO JOSH BERSON

And while the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown our work and personal lives into crisis, HSA continues to be committed, as in 2015, to grow stronger and more focused than ever before, to achieve our members' goals in the next round of collective bargaining, to ensure that we deliver on our mission, and to continue to move closer to our vision.

## OUR MISSION

HSA is a collective voice, proudly advancing and defending members' rights and interests in our workplaces, communities and society

## OUR VISION

Respectful workplaces where our members provide health care and social services with professional pride

HSA's values guide our policies and practices. Our core values include those found in the Code of Conduct policies introduced to our Constitution in 2020, and in our Diversity Awareness and Anti-Harassment Statement, which speak to values of diversity, dignity, trust, honesty, loyalty, mutual respect, cooperation, and solidarity.

This interim strategic plan renews HSA's commitment to the guiding principles and priorities identified in the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan as we navigate through the next two to three years of operating in a much changed environment.

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## BACKGROUND

The Health Sciences Association of British Columbia (HSA) represents more than 20,000 health science and social services professionals working at more than 265 worksites in acute care, long-term care and community health, including hospitals, child development centres, mental health and substance use programs, and transition houses. In addition to negotiating collective agreements for the union's members, HSA is active on many other fronts of importance to its members, including health care policy, labour rights, occupational health and safety, wage equity, diversity and inclusion, women's issues, and the solidarity movement.

HSA also works to preserve and promote public health care in Canada through campaigns, and through affiliations with like-minded organizations. As a component of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), and an affiliate to both the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the BC Federation of Labour, HSA works to improve conditions for all working Canadians by advocating for better working conditions, better pay, improved benefits, and public pensions.

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# HSA TODAY

The face of the Union is changing, and as we plan for the future it's important to know about who makes up our union. The following data provide some insights into the diversity of HSA's 22,530 members:

The union's database shows among its members:

- 82 per cent identify as female
- 18 per cent identify as male
- Less than 1 per cent identify as other
- The average age is 43
- 27 per cent of members are under 35
- 20 per cent are over 54

FILIPPO BERNA, PERFUSIONIST



While HSA has not historically gathered demographic information beyond gender, age, geography and profession, in February 2020, a membership survey of 2,327 members found the following:

- 15 per cent identify as Person of Colour
- 6 per cent identify as LGBTQ+
- 4 per cent identify as person with disability
- 3 per cent identify as Indigenous
- 3 per cent identify being as from another equity-seeking group
- 60 per cent do not identify as being from an equity-seeking group
- 13 per cent declined to answer

HSA is organized into ten geographical regions within BC, each with its own elected Regional Director, who, along with HSA's President, serve on HSA's Board of Directors.

HSA employs some 100 staff providing labour relations, bargaining, and legal support; WCB, LTD, pension, and OHS advocacy; activist development and education; member engagement strategies and support, and government relations and communications campaigns, supported by a robust operations staff providing administrative and information systems.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic priorities identified in 2015 remain the guideposts for the union and inform annual budgets, operating plans, and activities.

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## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



### SERVICE

Improve service to members



### ENGAGEMENT

Enhance member engagement



### RIGHTS

Defend and strengthen the collective agreement and our representational rights



### RELATIONSHIPS

Effectively manage our essential relationships



### RESOURCES

Match organizational needs with resources

## MEASURABLE PROGRESS TOWARD OUR VISION:

Respectful workplaces where our members provide health care and social services with professional pride

# SERVICE



## IMPROVE SERVICES TO MEMBERS

HSA dedicates resources to providing the membership with a broad array of services, including contract administration and labour relations (Servicing, Classifications, Disability Management, Legal), communications, research, union education, government relations, organizing and member mobilization, occupational health and safety, financial stewardship, and administrative and information technology support.

HSA stewards work collaboratively with HSA staff to assist members with workplace issues, including collective agreement disputes, disability management, and occupational health and safety concerns. Members require timely assistance from their stewards and HSA staff, and HSA strives to have active steward representation at every worksite and appropriate staffing levels to support members.

From feedback received in a February 2020 membership survey, overall, members are generally satisfied with their membership in HSA and its role in representing

their interests: 38 per cent of those surveyed say they get good or excellent value service from HSA, and 32 per cent say they get fair value. This has remained constant since 2016. Survey respondents overwhelmingly put labour relations, contract support and advocacy at the top of the list of priorities they want their union to focus on, with 91 per cent ranking this as the first priority. Other priorities are: educational opportunities (77 per cent), enhancing relationships with health care stakeholders (75 per cent) increasing activity related to social, economic, and environmental justice (44 per cent).

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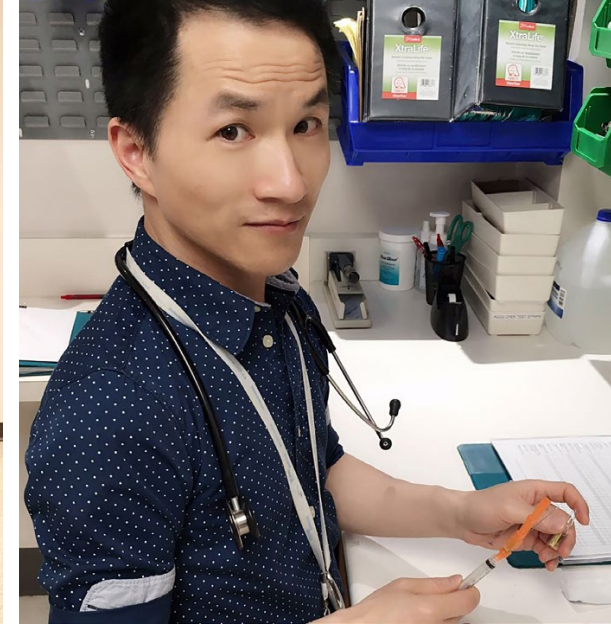
ADELINE MARKARIAN, PHARMACIST



ANNA MCRAE, DIETITIAN



CHERI STEELE, RECREATION THERAPIST



DANIEL CAI, REGISTERED PSYCHIATRIC NURSE

## LABOUR RELATIONS SERVICES

In the context of labour relations service demands arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 HSA adapted by refocusing priorities to ensure labour relations servicing was bolstered to meet members’ needs. This included shifting staff from within the organization to increase direct support to members adapting to the labour relations impacts of public health orders, surgical cancellations, and occupational health and safety concerns in the workplace. Professional staff were redeployed from other departments to provide 24/7 coverage on a COVID-19 hotline, increase supply of labour relations officers, and occupational health and safety advocacy. The union’s Information Systems staff quickly and seamlessly facilitated a transition to remote

working for professional and administrative staff, and continued development of HSA Portal – the online file management system for stewards and labour relations staff – to enhance staff and stewards’ ability to address the heightened need for service to members.

The ability to shift priorities is a testament not only to the quality of union staff and adaptability of stewards, but to HSA’s commitment to the priorities set out in Strategic Plan 2015–2020.

With the guidepost of improving labour relations service to members, HSA will continue to make improvements to facilitate the routine use of virtual platforms by staff and stewards, including Enhanced Disability Management Program (EDMP) representatives to conduct meetings, hearings, and other union business.



## EDUCATION SERVICES

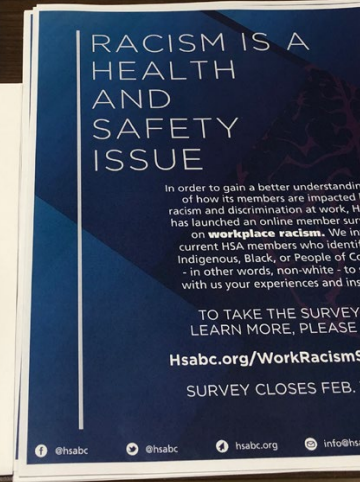
The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic demanded a radical change to the union education services delivered by HSA. In the first half of 2020, education staff were reassigned to support direct labour relations service to members and all union education programs were put on hold.

By June 2020, education staff returned to their assignment and undertook an overhaul of programming, previously primarily conducted in-person, to offer union education on a virtual platform.

In September 2020, the revamped education program was launched and HSA members responded with enthusiasm to the offerings, quickly filling up all opportunities. Resources previously dedicated to travel and accommodation costs related to in-person training were redeployed to increase education opportunities both within HSA and more broadly with the union's allies in the labour and social justice movements.

In addition to the onset of the pandemic, in early 2020 worldwide attention was turned to continuing and growing racism, and the need to examine our individual and institutional responses to it. In British Columbia, the release of the report *In Plain Sight* describing findings of widespread systemic racism against Indigenous peoples in the B.C. health care system added to the heightened awareness of the need to address these issues. And HSA's own survey and report released in June 2020, *Confronting Racism with Solidarity*, gave HSA a clearer picture of the realities facing its BIPOC members, giving the union cause to move forward together, following the leadership of HSA's BIPOC members, to find solutions. These issues have been and will continue to be a focus for HSA's internal education programs.

The labour movement has a critical role to play in realizing racial justice. Our collective strength is mighty, and together we can transform our communities and workplaces into spaces that are more equitable, accountable, and safer for Black, Indigenous, and

The image shows an "Email Sign-up sheet" form. It has a header with "Home Email" and "Consent". Below the header, there are several rows of checkboxes for consent. A black pen is visible on the left side of the form, pointing towards the checkboxes. The form is titled "Email Sign-up sheet" and has a "Consent" column. The checkboxes are for various consent options related to the survey.

Our collective strength is mighty, and together we can transform our communities and workplaces into spaces that are more equitable, accountable, and safer for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour.

People of Colour (BIPOC). We all have a role to play. For those who are white, this means listening actively to colleagues experiencing racism, taking accountability for our roles in perpetuating it, and speaking out when racism happens. We must show up for our fellow union members and the broader community.

Through the February 2020 survey of members, the priorities for education were identified as follows: retirement preparation and financial planning (43 per cent), self-care and stress management (42 per cent), leadership training (37 per cent), supervisor training (20 per cent), women in leadership (17 per cent), health and safety at work (16 per cent), truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples (13 per cent), climate change (12 per cent), bullying and harassment (12 per cent), diversity in the modern workplace (9 per cent), and roles and duties of a union steward (8 per cent).

The survey serves to help inform priorities for HSA across the bandwidth of services it provides. HSA also considers direction set by activists and other members at annual conventions, and feedback through other avenues. While internal union education will continue to focus on the union's role in representing members—for example by providing stewards with the resources to ensure members enjoy full collective agreement rights—resources are also available to support professional and personal development thanks to provisions negotiated as part of our contracts. An

example of those resources is the \$400,000 annual professional development fund achieved in health science professionals bargaining in 2019, and a \$3 million professional development fund negotiated outside of the collective agreement.

YALDA INGHAM, BIOMEDICAL ENGINEER



# ENGAGEMENT



## ENHANCE MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

A union is at its strongest when it speaks with and for its members, based on their active engagement and participation. Lack of regular member involvement, even if it reflects the relative contentment and satisfaction of members, remains a challenge for HSA. This priority asserts our belief that members will benefit if they share a better understanding and appreciation for the value of the rights and protections offered through HSA membership.

We believe that by engaging and mobilizing our members, we can develop and strengthen a shared sense of common values, direction, identity, and understanding across the diverse professions in HSA's membership. This in turn will be a crucial means to increase solidarity, mutual support, and appreciation, particularly across worksites and sectors.

The 2015-2020 strategic plan identified the need for increased member engagement in the union. At the heart of the work, member engagement is founded on

the organizing principle that workers are more powerful when they take action together to improve their workplace conditions, not when they try to go it alone.

In 2016, a group of HSA members and staff gathered to chart out a new course in member engagement within the union. The movement was born out of challenging times and was an opportunity to innovate. The success of the anti-raid task force and HSA's Workload Campaign had provided the foundation for a new approach to encouraging member activism.

HSA pulled from existing models from the Canadian Labour Congress's Go Listen Build framework, Organize BC's People Power and Change Training, and Labor Notes Secrets of a Successful Organizer internal organizing framework to develop the Core Member Engagement Program. In 2020 this included eight members recruited through an open application process and who were booked off their regular work to use organizing and engagement strategies to increase member participation in the union. Long-term, the goal is to have worksites with local leaders understand the

value in increasing union participation in their chapters and have the tools to develop strategies to communicate and organize around topics and campaigns relevant and important to local members.

HSA has seen growing member engagement through the development of member-driven activism with the formation of the Young Workers' Advisory Group, BIPOC caucus, and Climate Action Working Group. When members see themselves reflected in the priorities of their union, it is easier to identify and increase active participation in the union.

In addition, the union continues to provide members with opportunity to advance HSA's priorities and values by supporting the Constituency Liaison program in which members discuss key issues with local MLAs, and through participation in Labour Councils across the province.

Through 2020, HSA worked to make the best of challenges to traditional ways of meetings and opportunities for new approaches. HSA is committed to continuing to support and build on these expanded opportunities for increased member engagement in the union. This includes providing technology support to stewards and other activists so they can engage with members under the physical distancing restrictions required in the pandemic.

HSA believes that by further engaging and mobilizing our members, we can strengthen a shared sense of common values, direction, identity, and understanding across the diverse professions in HSA's membership. This, in turn, will be a crucial means by which to increase solidarity, mutual support and appreciation, particularly across worksites and sectors.



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# RIGHTS



## DEFEND AND STRENGTHEN THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT AND REPRESENTATIONAL RIGHTS

Unions like HSA work to provide better working conditions for their members; as stated in our constitution Article 3(b), one of our purposes is “to regulate relations between employees and employers through collective bargaining, and to establish and maintain the best possible standards of pay, benefits and other working conditions.” We use the collective power of all members to create a more equal playing field with employers. Given the current political and socio-economic environment, it has never been more important to defend and strengthen our members’ rights through hard-won collective agreements.

Four public sector collective agreements (Health Science Professional Bargaining Association, Nurses Bargaining Association, Community Bargaining Association and Community Social Services Bargaining Association) cover the vast majority of HSA members.

Those agreements expire in 2022. The Paragon Orthotics and West Coast Medical Imaging collective agreements expire in 2021 and 2024, respectively. It is necessary to focus activities in preparation for bargaining. Perpetual organizational change, whether driven by economic pressures or restructuring in our members’ workplaces, requires HSA advocacy to protect HSA members’ jobs and working conditions. In many cases, employers’ restructuring initiatives give rise to jurisdictional disputes with other unions and HSA’s stewards and staff work steadfastly to protect the integrity of HSA’s representational authority.

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HSA continues to work through the Provincial Recruitment and Retention Working Group negotiated in the 2019-2022 HSPBA collective agreement to explore and develop strategies addressing professional shortages working in cooperation with employers in the health care and social service sectors. Efforts are also focused on lobbying government to address recruitment and retention challenges in these sectors, including increasing access to training, and ensuring concrete steps are taken at the local level to ensure optimal staffing is in place to deliver necessary health care and social services to all British Columbians.

A strong start on classification improvements was made in the 2012 to 2022 HSPBA collective agreement. There remains much work to be done; the work on classifications will need to move forward in conjunction with HSA's work on recruitment and retention. These areas of activity will be supported by continued outreach to government and development of relationships between HSA and a number of ministries within the provincial government.

As the lead union in the HSPBA, and as bargaining agent for the employees of West Coast Medical Imaging and Paragon Orthotics, HSA will continue to consult with its members as we move forward to future collective bargaining. And HSA will ensure representation at all bargaining tables – including CBA, NBA, and CSSBA – continues to be drawn from members and staff experienced in those sectors.

Bargaining in the midst of a long-term pandemic will present new issues, challenges, and priorities for health care and community social services workers. Prior to the pandemic, mental health was a growing problem in the workplace. One in every four adults is dealing with mental health or substance use issues. The lasting psychological impact of working in these fields for an extended period of crisis, in addition to the impact on members' personal lives, will feature in shaping future collective agreements.

While the immediate focus is on ensuring safe worksites and manageable workloads, increased demand on the services delivered by HSA members who serve in highly-specialized and in-demand roles, and changing service delivery models will have significant impacts on bargaining priorities. Many HSA professions were already experiencing acute shortages, and increased demand will only exacerbate the fundamental challenges shortages of specialized health science professionals present to a health care system which is already under immense strain.

These priorities will be front and centre as the union prepares for the coming collective agreement bargaining cycle and beyond.

# RELATIONSHIPS



## EFFECTIVELY MANAGE OUR ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The power of collective action is at the heart of the union philosophy, and much of HSA’s recent success and stability is grounded in effective identification and management of partnerships and relationships with those who share our values and goals. This is consistent with HSA Constitution Article 3, which states that the following are among the union’s objects and purposes:

- To promote progressive legislation — particularly in the areas of health care, labour relations, labour standards and human rights — without affiliating to any political party; and
- To cooperate with professional associations on matters of common interests and concern; and
- To cooperate with unions and organizations of unions in order to promote all our other objects and purposes.

We are proud to demonstrate the HSA-wide philosophy of taking a collaborative, professional approach when possible and appropriate, while always being prepared to defend when necessary. This strategic priority underscores the importance of our efforts to communicate the value of HSA members’ work to our members, the general public, our peers, partners, and government.



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We will provide a collective voice to advance and defend our members' rights and interests in their workplaces, communities and society. Together with our partners we will challenge negative public perceptions of and attitudes toward unions. We will focus efforts on increasing respect, recognition, and influence, and we will inspire members by promoting their invaluable contributions as professional partners in health care and community social services.

As a member of the National Union of Public and General Employees, the Canadian Labour Congress, and BC Federation of Labour, HSA is a recognized and respected voice in the broader labour movement. HSA staff are regularly called upon to participate as experts in training other union members, and providing input and expertise on policies and strategic campaigns important to the trade union movement. HSA members' growing participation and contributions are valued on central labour bodies' committees, including labour councils, and in various labour functions, including conventions and campaigns.

We will continue to enhance our very successful Constituency Liaison program. This work continues to be proven effective in developing respectful relationships with government representatives and raising awareness of HSA's value with elected officials regardless of party affiliation.

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Professional associations are key partners for HSA. We share members with professional associations and have common interests and objectives for member representation and public profile and continue to meet biannually with these important partners.



# RESOURCES



## MATCH ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS WITH RESOURCES

HSA's long-term financial position is sound, with our headquarters building in New Westminster representing both a functional, well-equipped home and a substantial tangible asset that insures us against future financial instability.

This strategic priority focuses on ensuring that we have the right mix of staff, managers and governors to deliver for our members, supported by appropriate infrastructure and tools. HSA takes a continuous improvement approach to ensuring strong systems for education, financial management, information technology, health and safety, legal issues and negotiations.

Excellent communication is also central to an effective organization, and this plan commits to a continued focus on both the philosophy and infrastructure required to improve internal communication and collaboration among HSA departments so that the organization functions effectively and efficiently.

One of the most important benefits of having a comprehensive strategic plan is that the organization can link annual operational plans and budgets to multi-year priorities and goals. Board members and management alike will continue to use this strategic plan as a roadmap for a shared vision, meaningful directions, shared goals, measurable outcomes, and a strategic approach to addressing issues. Budget planning and resource deployment are guided by the priorities of this plan, supporting identified organizational goals.

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As in any organization, a key resource to support the work of the union is its staff.

To support employment equity at HSA that reflects the diversity of the HSA membership and of our province, women, visible minorities, workers of colour, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or expression (LGBTQI2S+), are encouraged to apply for positions with the HSA. In addition, HSA in 2021 will bring an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Specialist onto the management team to develop, implement and maintain an equity, diversity and inclusion strategy for the union. Key components of this role will include understanding the current HSA staff workforce demographics, identifying and addressing systemic barriers in the union, and promoting a culture of inclusion.

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Another key resource for HSA is the team of stewards supporting members in chapters province wide. In 2020, the union's finance committee began work to identify strategies to provide chapter-specific financial support for steward teams to be able to offer food to members participating in meetings. The committee's goal is to develop a fair and equitable funding structure that spreads resources broadly.

The work of the committee builds on the continuing commitment of the union to provide resources to chapters aimed at engaging more members.

In the same vein of providing resources to support stewards, HSA's information systems development staff continue to refine and add features to the HSA-created Portal. Use of this feature has allowed stewards and staff to communicate about grievance-related matters in a more efficient manner, thus reducing communication frustrations experienced by some stewards and ultimately benefitting the member when disputes are resolved in as short a time period as possible. It is important that HSA provide the tools so that all stewards can become familiar with the Portal, so as to benefit from its features. ■



## PHOTO CREDITS

THANK YOU to our members who kindly answer the call to submit photos of themselves and their fellow HSA members in the workplace for our union publications and for member professional recognitions. We appreciate you! We welcome your photos at [photos@hsabc.org](mailto:photos@hsabc.org)



VIAN CHENG

SAMANTHA CARROLL,  
ELIZABETH ROBBINS

HEATHER ANDERSON,  
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ADELINE MARKARIAN

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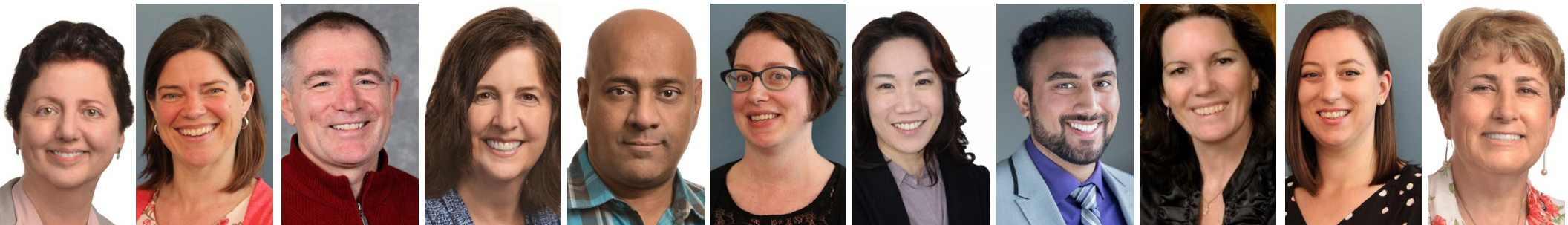
CHERI STEELE

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HEALTH SCIENCES ASSOCIATION  
The union delivering modern health care