

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****CONTACT:**

Danita King  
(646) 457-2156  
[dking@msanewyork.com](mailto:dking@msanewyork.com)

Kathryn Knox Soman  
212-908-8588/646-529-9769  
[somank@metroplus.org](mailto:somank@metroplus.org)

## **MetroPlusHealth Names Lesleigh Irish-Underwood New Chief Brand and External Relations Officer**



Photography: Anthony Jones, RTS Media  
Stylist: Pamela Watson Styles

(New York, NY—February 10, 2021) — MetroPlusHealth, the five-star rated health plan of choice for over 600,000 New Yorkers, today announced the appointment of **Lesleigh Irish-Underwood** as its first Chief Brand and External Relations Officer (CBERO), reporting to President & CEO, Talya Schwartz, MD. In this new role, Ms. Irish-Underwood will be responsible for the stewardship and execution of MetroPlusHealth’s brand strategy, including product marketing, strategic communications, media relations, community and government relations, member experience, special events, and data-driven marketing innovation.

“As MetroPlusHealth continues to meet the evolving needs of New York City residents, Lesleigh’s experience as a visionary leader, effective strategist, and innovative brand builder will enhance and strengthen our executive team,” said

**MetroPlusHealth President & CEO Talya Schwartz, MD.**

“Lesleigh has that rare combination of strategic thinking, creativity, and management expertise needed to lead the next stage of our brand evolution. Her talents will enable MetroPlusHealth to play an even greater role in the health and wellness of all New Yorkers.” Irish-Underwood’s arrival as CBERO follows a number of recent executive appointments, as Dr. Schwartz builds a world-class leadership team to grow and strengthen MetroPlusHealth’s market share and brand equity in the health space.

“I am so pleased to see the continued growth and development of MetroPlus Health Plan under the leadership of Chairperson Sally Hernandez-Piñero and President and CEO Dr. Talya Schwartz,” said **Lloyd Williams, President and CEO of The Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce**, and recently retired Chair of the Customer Experience & Marketing Committee, MetroPlusHealth Board of Directors. “Without question, the appointment of Lesleigh Irish-

Underwood as Chief Brand and External Relations Officer will significantly enhance the growth and effectiveness of MetroPlusHealth. She is certainly a great addition to MetroPlusHealth, and I look forward to working most effectively with her.”

Ms. Irish-Underwood joins MetroPlusHealth from United Way of New York City (UWNYC), where she served as SVP and Chief Marketing Officer, and was responsible for innovating growth-driving marketing solutions, accelerating company-wide digital capabilities, and building loyal donor engagement. Throughout her tenure, she oversaw UWNYC’s B2B and B2C brand awareness initiatives, implementing creative marketing and communication strategies that strengthened UWNYC’s internal business plan and significantly increased annual revenue.

“As a native New Yorker who has built her career on serving New York City’s most challenged and underserved communities, it is a privilege to bring my experience and local-market insights to the MetroPlusHealth team in support of the plan’s mission of inclusive, customer-centered, quality-driven care,” said **Ms. Irish-Underwood**. “I am thrilled to be working with Dr. Schwartz, and an outstanding leadership team, to build even stronger connections with our members, providers, and communities.”

Prior to her transition to the nonprofit sector, Ms. Irish-Underwood was a 25-year veteran of the consumer publishing industry, where she held leadership roles at the Knopf Publishing Group of Random House, Pearson, and Kensington Publishing. She is a member of the CMO Council’s North American Advisory Board—comprised of prominent marketing executives and thought leaders from a diverse range of industries—the Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation Board, and Brooklyn Community Board 5. A graduate of Stony Brook University, she was named one of *The Network Journal’s* 25 Most Influential Black Women in Business in 2018.

## **About MetroPlusHealth**

Since 1985, MetroPlus Health Plan has built a reputation for providing access to affordable, high-quality health coverage to residents across New York City. A wholly-owned subsidiary of NYC Health + Hospitals, the nation’s largest public health system, MetroPlusHealth is the plan of choice for over 600,000 New Yorkers and has a five-star rating based on the State’s 2020 Consumer’s Guide to Medicaid and Child Health Plus Managed Care Plans in New York City. The plan’s robust network of primary care doctors and specialists includes many independent community providers. Culturally sensitive, and fluent in more than 40 languages, MetroPlusHealth’s staff is as diverse as the great city it serves. For more information about MetroPlusHealth plans, benefits, and services, visit [www.metroplus.org](http://www.metroplus.org) and join the conversation at [facebook.com/MetroPlusHealth/](https://facebook.com/MetroPlusHealth/) and [twitter.com/ @metroplushealth](https://twitter.com/@metroplushealth).