

**Rachel Royce, PhD, MPH, is being recognized as the 2025 Carl Durham Public Health Advocate Award winner** based on her ongoing efforts to connect community members in Orange County to Medicaid coverage in the wake of Medicaid expansion.

Dr. Royce currently serves as an At-Large member of the Orange County Board of Health. Since North Carolina Medicaid expansion was announced in late 2023, Dr. Royce has worked tirelessly to promote Medicaid enrollment among newly eligible community members.

As a trained epidemiologist, Dr. Royce has applied her skills to help the Board of Health monitor Medicaid enrollment trends, has drafted logic models related to tracking and improving Medicaid enrollment, and has repeatedly advocated for the provision of "denominator data" — that is, the data that the Department of Health and Human Services used to generate their estimate of the newly eligible population — to better tailor outreach efforts and help connect with newly eligible community members where they are.

In volunteering with Legal Aid, Dr. Royce has spent time canvassing door-to-door in low-income neighborhoods and has helped host tables at local community events to raise awareness of Medicaid expansion. Dr. Royce has repeatedly expressed concern for community members accruing undue medical debt. For her relentless support of community members who are newly eligible for Medicaid and for her efforts to connect them to information and support around Medicaid, Dr. Royce receives the 2025 Carl Durham Award from the Association of North Carolina Boards of Health.