

Advancing the Field of Forensic Pathology: Lessons Learned from Death in Custody Investigations

Meeting 8

Speaker Biographies

Zenita Wickham Hurley is a Deputy Attorney General in the Maryland Office of the Attorney General (OAG) where she oversees the Office's policy and stakeholder engagement work, with a focus on racial and social equity. Prior to being appointed to this role, Hurley served as the Chief of the Office of Equity, Policy, and Engagement and Chief Counsel for Civil Rights at OAG.

Since joining the OAG in early 2015 as Chief of Legislative Affairs, Hurley's work has focused on leading multidisciplinary teams to develop policies in the areas of criminal justice reform, social justice, and economic parity, including the Maryland Office of the Chief Medical Examiner which she oversaw from its inception 2021 to its conclusion in 2025. Other initiatives in her portfolio include the Maryland Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Policy and Funding Committee, the Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention, and the Maryland Equitable Justice Collaborative (a partnership between the Maryland Attorney General and Public Defender to reduce the incarceration rate of Black people and other marginalized groups in Maryland prisons and jails).

She also represents the Attorney General on the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission and the Maryland Procurement Improvement Council. In 2019, Hurley helped advance legislation creating the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which she currently staffs. In 2021, Hurley secured over \$800,000 in grant funding from the U.S. Department of Justice to support the Office's work combatting hate crimes. Hurley also founded the OAG Diversity Committee, which develops programming and recommends policies to promote a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Hurley graduated *magna cum laude* from the University of Maryland with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Afro-American Studies and Government and Politics. She received her Juris Doctor degree from the New York University School of Law, where she was a Root-Tilden-Kern Public Interest Scholar."

Jeff Kukucka is a professor of psychology at Towson University. He graduated *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa from Loyola College in Maryland. As an undergraduate, Kukucka became involved in research on conformity in eyewitness memory with Dr. Kerri Goodwin (Towson University) and research on child forensic interviewing and metacognition with Dr. Maggie Bruck (Johns Hopkins Medical Institute). He then graduated from the Ph.D. Program in Psychology and Law at the City University of New York Graduate Center, where he worked primarily under Dr. Saul Kassin (John Jay College of Criminal Justice).