

# Opening Remarks

## UCEDD Directors Meeting

We're taking these opening moments to acknowledge that people joining this meeting may have had personal experiences with COVID, have been on the front-lines providing care or support to people with COVID, have witnessed suffering unparalleled in recent times through service in our hospitals or connection with a front-line worker. We know that our frontline workers are people who are at every socioeconomic level who are not always remembered or acknowledged.

We know that people in today's meeting may have experienced the loss of a loved one during this epidemic. We can and should make time to take a moment to reflect on the fact that we ourselves, and each of the people in our work and community lives, may be struggling with something related to the pandemic that we, as Directors and senior staff in other places, may never know.

There is increasing importance and necessity of self-care; rituals long practiced or newly adopted. There is similarly increased importance in talking about and practicing acknowledgement, kindness, and patience. We are all being called upon to better understand how to identify and disseminate or build wellness and resilience supportive tools and resources into our work environments so that the idea and practices of self-care are not only more widely accepted, but also encouraged and easily adopted as a practice going forward.

We can close this moment with being thankful, as university leaders and community partners, that vaccines are becoming available, that good information is increasingly flowing, and that we have the capacity and desire to help in whatever ways we can to ensure not one more person falls prey to COVID if we, in our various roles, can help prevent it.

\*\* Thank you to Valerie Williams (OK) for penning such a thoughtful message for this event's opening remarks.