



## U.S. DEPARTMENT of AGRICULTURE

### U.S. Department of Agriculture Announces Key Staff Appointments and Promotions

**WASHINGTON, July 26, 2023** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced the names of individuals who hold senior staff positions in Washington, D.C.

#### **Samuel Marquez, Deputy Chief of Staff, Rural Housing Service**

Most recently, Marquez served as Deputy Chief of Staff and Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary at the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. Previously, he worked at the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund (NALEO) as Program Manager of Constituency Services. Before that, Marquez held roles at the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation and the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. He has a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of California, Riverside.

#### **Valerie McMakin, Chief of Staff, Office of Congressional Relations**

Since 2021, McMakin has been a Legislative Advisor in USDA's Office of Congressional Relations. In this role, she has coordinated Farm Bill efforts and helped execute USDA priorities, including those related to climate change, advancing equity, creating new markets, and building resilient supply chains. Prior to her appointment, she served as a Legislative Assistant for Senator Jon Tester, providing both legislative and policy support. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science and ethics from Emory University.

#### **Hunter Henderson, Deputy White House Liaison, White House Liaison Office**

Recently, Hunter Henderson served as Special Assistant for the Farm Service Agency (FSA). In this role, he advised senior staff on confidential and sensitive political issues and served as a direct liaison between the FSA Deputy Administrator and appointed FSA State Executive Directors. Prior to this, he served as the Organizing Director for the Arizona Democratic Party and as Arizona Deputy Coalitions Director for the Biden-Harris Presidential Campaign. Henderson served in the United States Marine Corps and is the son of the Akimel O'odham people, The Salt River People of Arizona.

### **Lesley Cunningham, Special Advisor, Office of the Secretary**

Cunningham has been with the Office of the Secretary since 2021 and in this new role will function as the Director of Operations for both the Office of the Secretary and Office of the Deputy Secretary. In previous roles at USDA, she has supported and represented principals, managed correspondence, human resource matters and frequently served as a navigator and liaison between agencies, organizations, and the public. Prior to her appointment, Cunningham worked as an Advance Associate for the Warnock for Georgia Campaign, Field Organizer for the Democratic Party of Georgia, and Manager for the Fulton County Georgia Elections Precinct. Cunningham is also a former teacher and Collections Manager for GE Capital. She holds an associate degree in business administration, a bachelor's degree in management, and a master's degree in human resource management.

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