

2024 COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER
DR. DARA KASS
BIO



Dara Kass, M.D., is a distinguished emergency medicine physician and, most recently, was a Biden Administration appointee as Region II Regional Director in the United States Department of Health & Human Services. Prior to that she was an Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at Columbia University Medical Center.

A proud Brooklyn native, Dr. Kass's journey into medicine was influenced by her mother, an emergency medicine nurse. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in neurobiology and physiology from the University of Maryland, College Park, before completing her Doctor of Medicine degree at SUNY Downstate's College of Medicine.

Following her residency at SUNY Downstate and Kings County Hospital, Dr. Kass became an attending physician at Staten Island University Hospital where she helped start their emergency medicine residency program. She joined NYU Langone Medical Center in 2012, as the Director of Undergraduate Medical Education, directing medical school programs in the emergency department. In 2018, Dr. Kass moved uptown to Columbia University Medical Center as an Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine and the inaugural Director of Equity and Inclusion in their Emergency Department.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Kass contracted the virus, which led her to advocate for frontline healthcare workers' access to personal protective equipment and effective disease control measures and lead on effective communication in an uncertain time. She continued to raise awareness of the pandemic's severity and its impact on healthcare workers' well-being, embracing telemedicine to consult with patients during her recovery.

A strategic consultant and healthcare communicator, Dr. Kass is also the founder of FemInEM, a platform dedicated to promoting gender equity in emergency medicine. FemInEM provided professional development, resources, and support for women in the field- growing from a blog created to share resources to a multimedia organization hosting multiple in person conferences, a job board, a speakers bureau and asynchronous resources for gender equity education.

A mother of three, Dr. Kass's journey took an unexpected turn when her youngest son, Sammy, was diagnosed with alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, causing liver failure and requiring a liver transplant on his second birthday. Dr. Kass served as Sammy's living donor and sparked her advocacy for reforming organ donation policies to increase access to life-saving transplants. Dr. Kass's leadership extends to her involvement in nonprofit organizations working to address public health issues like gun violence, organ donation and access to reproductive health care. When not working in the ED, she is currently focused on expanding reproductive health care access for patients through philanthropy, policy and public health programs.

Dr. Kass has received numerous awards in her specialty and has been recognized internationally for her work advancing women in emergency medicine.

As Dr. Kass prepares to address the graduating class, her remarkable journey as a physician, advocate, and leader serves as an inspiration to all, embodying the resilience and commitment needed to effect meaningful change in healthcare and beyond.