

## Ballot Questionnaire: Sascha James-Contereilli, Vice Presidential Candidate

**Ballot Question 1: What makes you interested in this position? Why are you running for this office?**

I am committed to the midwifery profession and working with ACNM to achieve that goal. Throughout my midwifery career as a New York midwife, I have held several local and national leadership positions. These include: serving as an expert member for the New York State Obstetric and Neonatal Quality Collaborative (NYSONQC) the first statewide task force to reduce elective deliveries before 39 weeks, expert reviewer for Safe Motherhood Initiative with ACOG DII and New York State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Chair of the New York City March of Dimes Nurse Advisory Board, liaison to the New York State Association of Licensed Midwives, the New York Perinatal Association, as well as inaugural member of the ACNM Membership and Marketing Committee. These experiences have enhanced my abilities to work in and amongst diverse groups of people to improve perinatal care. I am immensely humbled to have been elected and serve as the president of one largest affiliates in the country. As president of the New York State Association of Licensed Midwives (NYSALM) I was extremely honored to be appointed as co-chair of Governor Mario Cuomo's Maternal Mortality and Racial Disparities Task Force. It was my privilege to work alongside my esteemed colleagues representing various areas of perinatal services including community members and service users. Together we were instrumental in passing a state law to create and fund a maternal mortality review board, of which I am a proud member. We were also successful in creating other recommendations to serve as a multi-pronged sustainable approach to eradicate maternal mortality in New York including increasing the midwifery workforce through scholarship funding for our state school programs, loan forgiveness, and parity in Medicaid reimbursement for the same services provided as physicians. I am the only midwife on an expert panel of over 30 esteemed medical colleagues from across the state charged with restructuring perinatal services statewide to better meet the needs of our statewide population. Nationally, I am honored to be the FACNM Region I Governor, Treasurer of the ACNM Midwives of Color Committee, and a member the ACNM Foundation Board. I proudly represent midwifery on the CDC Maternal Mortality Review Information Application (MMRIA) Bias Working Group. Together with a team of experts from around the country, our group is working towards the development of a tool and strategies to assist local maternal mortality review committees to identify issues of systemic racism and discrimination that may contribute our rising maternal mortality rate. I now welcome the opportunity to offer my expertise to continue the work of improving perinatal care as vice-president of ACNM on a national and global level.

**Ballot Question 2: Visit ACNM's Strategic Plan [HERE](#). What part of the strategic plan embodies your personal philosophy?**

I am committed to all aspects of the ACNM strategic plan. There is not one domain that is most important. The intersectionality of all domains described in the strategic plan is most important. If I must choose one aspect of the strategic plan to discuss, I will highlight diversity and inclusion. As a membership organization, we have an obligation to provide mechanisms for members to be heard and address concerns on a local level while elevating issues of great importance to the national level. ACNM board members are national representors of the organization, the affiliates serve as the local experts and are essential to keeping the channels of communication open locally and nationally. Support of our local affiliates promotes the advancement of midwifery on a national level. As a unified organization, we can promote and enhance midwifery on a global level. We should always continue to have a spirit of curiosity. A curiosity that leads us to seek new and innovative ways to advance our profession and increase access to midwifery care. An organization cannot exist without infrastructure. As sound infrastructure comprised of individuals of diverse education and expertise who are visionaries and innovators

**Ballot Question 3: What ideas do you have for enhancing diversity and inclusion?**

As we strive to be recognized as indispensable to improving the state of perinatal health care in this country, bridging gaps through the diversity of thought and representation of diverse members of the community is

essential. Creating local and national bi-directional connections enables us to build a strong army of allies that will ensure midwives and our clients are represented in all forums related to perinatal health care. This ultimately leads to strength and greatness. I plan to work alongside the president, with ACNM administration and our membership to ensure diversity and inclusion remains a key part of the strategic plan.

#### Ballot Question 4: What innovation or improvement would you bring to ACNM?

As a midwife of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, I offer my appreciation and respect for the past along with my passion and fervor to move forward. I would like to be a catalyst for major organizational change. I believe in making connections, building a community of scholars to strengthen and increase the midwifery workforce, and visibility. Although many midwives believe that all people and birthing families deserve an opportunity to receive care with a midwife, this goal is currently out of reach within our current national structure. Midwifery is still an unknown profession for many Americans. I would like to increase midwifery visibility nationally through increasing representation at local and national perinatal forums especially with law and policymakers.