



Rep. Imani Barnes
District 86

Biography

Representative Imani Barnes, DrPH, is a public health scientist, biomedical research professional and Georgia State Representative serving House District 86, which includes a portion of DeKalb County. She was first elected to the House of Representatives in 2022.

With a Doctor of Public Health degree and a commitment to equity-driven policymaking, she brings scientific rigor, lived experience and community-centered leadership to the Georgia General Assembly. Her work is grounded in data-informed solutions that advance health equity, strengthen education systems and improve outcomes for families across Georgia.

A proud parent and lifelong DeKalb County resident, Dr. Barnes understands firsthand the challenges facing working families, small businesses and historically underserved communities. She believes that effective public policy must be measurable, inclusive and rooted in the real experiences of the people it serves. Her leadership reflects a deep respect for science, accountability and community voices.

Dr. Barnes has made improving public education, addressing health disparities and strengthening family stability central to her legislative agenda. During the legislative session and throughout the year, she remains actively engaged in her district, applying public health principles and research-driven strategies to prepare Georgia's youth for success in a rapidly changing world.

One of her signature priorities is ending childhood hunger in schools. Dr. Barnes sponsored HB 510, previously HB 60 in 2025, the Healthy Start Act, which proposed universal free breakfast and lunch for every public school student in Georgia. Although the bill did not pass, her advocacy helped secure \$6.3 million in the FY 2023, FY 2024 and FY 2025 state budgets, funding more than 17 million meals annually for over 70,000 Georgia school children.

Dr. Barnes is also leading efforts to address Georgia's mental health crisis. She introduced HB 109, the Georgia EmPATH Act, which would establish a grant program within the Department of Community Health to create EmPATH Units—evidence-based emergency psychiatric

assessment, treatment and healing spaces in hospitals that provide compassionate, patient-centered care for individuals experiencing mental health emergencies.

Her legislative work further includes sponsoring HB 74 to expand Medicaid coverage for individuals living with lymphedema, and the Healthy Mothers Now Act, HB 149, which seeks to reduce Georgia's maternal mortality rate by expanding postpartum care access, particularly in underserved and rural communities.

In recognition of her innovative, future-focused leadership, Representative Dr. Barnes was named a nationally recognized Rising Star by Future Caucus, an honor awarded to young emerging state legislators who demonstrate exceptional leadership, bipartisan collaboration and a commitment to building a more inclusive democracy.

She has also championed the role of science in public policy, successfully passing HR 69, which officially designates the third Thursday in April as Biomedical Research Day in Georgia, recognizing the contributions of biomedical researchers and scientific innovation to public health, education and economic growth.

Dr. Barnes currently serves on the Higher Education, Public & Community Health and Technology & Infrastructure Innovation committees.

Looking ahead, Dr. Barnes is focused on expanding Pre-K through 12 education funding, strengthening youth development and mental health programs, improving access to nutritious food and advancing maternal health equity across Georgia. She believes that inclusive policymaking, strategic investments and science-driven solutions are essential to building healthier, more resilient communities.

With a proven record of coalition-building, applying public health science to legislative problem-solving and centering community voices, Dr. Imani Barnes, is not only a voice for House District 86, she is a leader helping shape the future of Georgia.

Learn more about the Rising Star by Future Caucus award: <https://futurecaucus.org/future-caucus/rising-star-awards/>