



## **Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH** **Secretary of Health, Washington**

Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, was appointed Secretary of Health for the great State of Washington by Governor Jay Inslee in December 2020. He is the first Asian-American physician of South Asian descent to serve in this leadership role in the history of Washington, home to over 7.6 million people.

His appointment came at a difficult time amid the severe winter wave of COVID-19 and only a few days after arrival of vaccines into the state. In assuming this leadership position at the nationally respected Washington State Department of Health, Dr. Shah made the transition from fighting the pandemic on the front lines of response in Texas as Executive Director and Local Health Authority for Harris County Public Health (HCPH) – serving the nation’s 3rd largest county with nearly five million people.

Dr. Shah earned his BA (philosophy) from Vanderbilt University; his MD from the University of Toledo Health Science Center; and completed an Internal Medicine Residency, Primary Care/General Medicine Fellowship, & MPH (management), at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston. He also completed a global health policy internship at World Health Organization headquarters in Switzerland.

Upon completing training, Dr. Shah began a distinguished twenty-year career as an emergency department physician at Houston’s Michael DeBakey VA Medical Center. Following his passion, he started his formal public health journey in 2003 as Chief Medical Officer at Galveston County’s Health District before joining HCPH to oversee its clinical health system and infectious disease portfolio. Under his leadership, the agency won numerous national awards including *Local Health Department of the Year* from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), representing the nation’s 3,000 local health departments.

Dr. Shah has held several leadership positions with respected entities like the Association for State and Territorial Health Officials; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention; American Public Health Association (APHA); Trust for America’s Health; Network for Public Health Law; Texas Medical Association; and served as president of NACCHO (and its Texas affiliate). He has testified before the U.S. Congress, the state legislatures of both Texas and Washington, and responded to a multitude of large-scale emergencies both domestically and globally.

For his work, he has received numerous awards including the distinguished Milton and Ruth Roemer Prize for creativity in public health; APHA’s Public Service Award for Outstanding Service in Emergency Health; and the NACDS Foundation’s Excellence in Patient Care Award. One of his more lighthearted recognitions was being named *‘Ten Real Houstonians We’ll Need the Most in the Zombie Apocalypse’*.

Over his career, Dr. Shah has been a clinician, innovator, educator, and leader in health. He has been a champion for underserved communities, at the intersection of health and healthcare, while charting a fresh course in health by centering on the cornerstone values of equity, innovation, and engagement.