2023 ACS Leadership Conference and Advocacy Summit Essay

I’ve always had a passion for science and medicine, but if you ask any of my close friends or family they will refer to “Pre-Philly Paige” and “Post-Philly Paige” – an inside joke about how I found my voice and calling, ("where one’s deep gladness and the world’s hunger meet") during medical school in North Philadelphia. The most valuable lesson that the patients of North Philadelphia taught me was how naïve I was coming into medical school to assume access to care and healthcare resources were available for everyone in our modern-day healthcare system. The physicians, and particularly the surgeons, who I looked up to the most were excellent clinicians but more importantly staunch advocates in fighting healthcare disparities and advocating for our underrepresented patient populations.

My passion for healthcare disparities and learning to be a vocal advocate for my patients began in medical school, but my research and extracurricular activities during residency have confirmed that I will devote my career to researching and improving the current socioeconomic disparities in cardiac surgery. I spent 2 years as the Safra Cardiac Surgery Clinical Outcomes Research Fellow where I presented at national meetings and published over 10 peer-reviewed manuscripts highlighting the current disparities in cardiac surgery outcomes and potential root causes for intervention. Through my research I found that many national policies and the infrastructure for healthcare reimbursements have the potential to widen the disparity gap. As an individual provider, I have the power to improve individual patient outcomes, but in order to enact meaningful change we must advocate for policy-level changes. I will use the ACS Leadership Conference and Advocacy Summit as the foundation to begin building relationships with surgeons who are already advocating for important policy changes and to start learning the skills necessary to translate my clinical outcomes research into actionable legislative policies.