



# Women of DISTINCTION

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## HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

*Tashara M. Leak, Ph.D.*

Tashara M. Leak, Ph.D., RDN is a nutrition scientist and registered dietitian committed to making sure that families in low-income homes and at risk of chronic diseases have the education and resources they need to live a healthy life.

Dr. Leak co-founded the Cornell University Action Research Collaborative to provide opportunities for researchers, policymakers, and community partners to collaborate on pressing issues across New York State. For example, the Field and Fork Network and Dr. Leak have acquired more than \$11 million for families in more than 33 counties with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to receive a dollar-for-dollar match on fruits and vegetables purchased via the Double Up Food Bucks New York program. Dr. Leak is also an affiliate of the NYS Council on Hunger and Food Policy and advises policymakers on how to reduce food insecurity.

Recognizing that health behaviors are often established during childhood, Dr. Leak creates opportunities for youth to improve their health and well-being. She and her team developed the Advanced Cooking Education 4-H After School Club, which provides students at Title I funded New York City middle schools with mindfulness exercises, nutrition lessons, exposure to careers in food and nutrition, and groceries to prepare culturally diverse plant-based meals at home. She and her team also created the Black Girls for Wellness program, which provides Black female adolescent patients at risk for Type 2 diabetes from Weill Cornell Medical Center and Brooklyn Methodist Hospital with dance classes, nutrition lessons, and groceries to prepare healthy meals.

In recognition for all that Dr. Leak has done to address food insecurity, nutrition, and health inequities across New York State, on January 14, 2025, Dr. Leak received the White House Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) from President Joseph R. Biden.

Dr. Leak resides in Brooklyn, New York and is an Associate Professor in the Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University and in the Division of General Internal Medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine. She is also the Associate Dean of the College of Human Ecology in New York City.

***Tashara M. Leak, Ph.D. was selected as a  
2025 Women of Distinction honoree by Senator Zellnor Y. Myrie***

