

2021 HONORAND

Jeffrey A. Flaks
Doctor of Humane Letters



As president and chief executive officer of Hartford HealthCare, you lead and inspire some 33,000 health care professionals. You oversee a \$4.3 billion enterprise that includes seven acute-care hospitals and a network of interconnected health care providers, services, and facilities that, together, care for more than 1.7 million patients and customers.

A native of Connecticut, you grew up in a family where community service was considered essential. At age 16 you worked for a small pharmacy, driving a Chevy Chevette around New Haven, delivering medications to nursing homes, physician's offices, and community hospitals. You were struck by the empathy and care that providers showed for the people they served. In college, you interned at Yale New Haven Hospital's emergency department. With a stopwatch in hand, you conducted time and motion studies, looking for system bottlenecks and opportunities to increase efficiency.

The son of public school teachers, you earned your B.S. at Ithaca College before completing your master's in health services administration at the George Washington University. Within weeks of starting graduate school, you attended an on-campus talk by Hillary Clinton on national health care reform. Inspired, you introduced yourself to Clinton, which eventually led to your landing a volunteer internship at the White House, where you worked from 1994 to 1995 on the national health care reform initiative.

It was in 2004 that you began your tenure with Hartford HealthCare, serving in executive and operational roles at MidState Medical Center in Meriden and at Hartford Hospital, where you were named president and CEO in 2011. You became Hartford HealthCare's chief operating officer in 2013, its president in 2016, and CEO in 2019. But before your career path wound back to your home state, you held leadership roles in health systems in Detroit and New York City—including on September 11, 2001, at the hospital located closest to the World Trade Center. Your many experiences have tested you, prepared you, and helped you to become the visionary health care leader you are today.

During the past 15 months, you have provided a steady hand in navigating the unprecedented challenges of a global pandemic, including serving as co-chair of the Connecticut Governor's Health System Response Team. As *Forbes* magazine highlighted last summer, you said that when it comes to health care, after COVID-19, it should not be a matter of going back to normal. As you put it: "With careful planning, attention to data, use of technology, and the inclusive elevation of voices from our most at-risk communities, we have an opportunity to create a new normal that sets the pace for the country."

During your nearly three-decade career, you have been recognized widely within the health care industry and were appointed to the American Hospital Association's Health Systems Council. You have been honored for your leadership by the National Association of Hispanic Healthcare Executives and by *Modern Healthcare* as one of the top 12 industry leaders in the nation. You are a former member of the Board of Trustees of the George Washington University and a current member of its President's Advisory Council. Additionally, you serve as a director of the Connecticut Science Center, Connecticut Public Broadcasting Inc., Hartford Promise, and the Connecticut Hospital Association.

In recognition of your distinguished career and enormous contributions to the field of health care, I have the honor of presenting you, Jeffrey A. Flaks, for the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.