



Lauren Underwood graduated from the WeLead Training Program in 2012 and was elected to Congress in 2018 to represent her hometown, Naperville, in Illinois's 14th District. In an historic win, Representative Underwood was able to flip the district, unseating a four-term Republican incumbent. She is the first woman and first African-American to represent the district, and the youngest black woman to serve in Congress. Underwood was endorsed by former President Barack Obama.

Representative Underwood felt called to run after incumbent Representative Randy Hultgren voted to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Less than a month before the vote, Rep. Hultgren promised he would not support a plan without guaranteed pre-existing condition protections. When his vote contradicted that promise, Underwood saw an opportunity. Having worked as a nurse and suffering from a pre-existing heart condition since she was 8 years old, Underwood readily adopted healthcare as her key campaign issue. She also credits WeLead with providing her with the tools, leadership training, and confidence to run for office.

Before being elected to Congress, Underwood served as a Senior Advisor at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the Obama administration, where she worked on responses to the Zika and Ebola viruses. Underwood was in this position as a WeLead student. Growing up with a heart condition exposed Underwood to the health field and ultimately drove her to become a Registered Nurse. While in school she discovered the intersection of policy and healthcare, coming full circle now as a legislator focused on healthcare.

In addition to ensuring affordable and high-quality healthcare, Representative Underwood plans to focus on job creation, public education, and prioritizing affordable childcare, paid family leave, and equal pay.

Winning a seat in Congress is obviously a big accomplishment for Underwood. Also noteworthy is the "Take Back Congress" ice cream flavor named for her by campaign backers Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield aka Ben & Jerry.