Elizabeth Hughes is president of the Allegheny County Bar Association

The New Pittsburgh Courier has learned that Penn Hills attorney Elizabeth L. Hughes officially became the 112th President of the Allegheny County Bar Association on Wednesday, July 1. Her one-year term will end on June 30, 2021.

“To say this is an honor, would be a massive understatement,” Hughes said. “The Allegheny County Bar Association has played a major role in the development and advancement of my career. To now have the opportunity to lead the ACBA and my fellow attorneys is humbling and exciting.”

Hughes is Associate Counsel at UPMC and is part of the Corporate Legal Department’s Health Services Group. Hughes was elected President-Elect of the nearly 6,000-member ACBA in 2019 and served in that capacity for the past year. She is the ninth woman and the third African American to be elected to the role.

She replaces Lori McMaster, who completed her term on June 30. This marks the first time in the 150-year history of the ACBA that a woman president passes the gavel to another woman president.

“It would be difficult to envision a more passionate advocate for the ACBA,” said McMaster. “Elizabeth is a phenomenal attorney, a tremendous leader and perfectly equipped to lead the ACBA during these historic times. The Pittsburgh legal community is in very good hands.”

Hughes said that among her top goals as president is helping Pittsburgh-area attorneys, law firms and the ACBA navigate the substantial challenges that the profession is facing amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another of her top goals is battling systematic racism and fighting for equal access to justice and equality within the legal system and the broader community. In fact, she and the ACBA have recently formed an ad hoc committee to examine police brutality.

“I want to focus on us, as attorneys, taking action and being agents of change as we fight to eliminate racial inequalities in the judicial system and the community at large,” Hughes said.

During her presidency, Hughes also will oversee the ACBA’s ongoing project to renovate and right-size its Downtown Pittsburgh office space. Other goals include improving how lawyers use technology, spreading awareness about what lawyers “actually do” and building relationships throughout the community.

Hughes is a current resident and native of Penn Hills. She earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Clarion University in 1994 and a juris doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law in 2004.

In her position with UPMC, she is responsible for providing legal support to UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, UPMC Mercy and UPMC Children’s Community Pediatrics, among other responsibilities.

Prior to joining UPMC, Hughes was an associate attorney at Raphael, Ramsden and Behers, P.C. practicing in the areas of family law, guardianships and mental health law. Hughes previously worked as an Assistant Solicitor for Allegheny County, representing the Office of Behavioral Health and the Office of Intellectual Disabilities. She also spent several years as an adjunct professor at the Duquesne University School of Law. She began her legal career as a clerk for the Hon. Justin M. Johnson in the Superior Court of Pennsylvania.

Prior to embarking on her legal career, Hughes worked in Phoenix, Ariz. where she supervised the City of Phoenix’s youth violence prevention program.

Hughes has been heavily involved in the ACBA throughout her legal career. She is currently the Chair of the ACBA Homer S. Brown Division and has held numerous positions within the HSBD. She also currently holds or previously held positions on the bar association’s Board of Governors; Bench-Bar Conference Committee Chair; Community Outreach Ad Hoc Committee; Elder Law Committee; Family Law Section; Finance Committee; Health Law Section; Judiciary Committee; Nominating Committee; Professional Conduct Ad Hoc Committee; and Women in the Law Division. She also is involved in the Allegheny County Bar Foundation, the ACBA’s charitable affiliate, as an ACBF Fellow.

In addition to her bar association activities, Hughes is the President of the University of Pittsburgh Law Alumni Association, previously served on the board of Neighborhood Legal Services Association and is a senior hearing committee member for District IV of the Pennsylvania Disciplinary Board. She is a volunteer with the Allegheny County Family Division Pro Se Legal Clinic and a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

Hughes was born and raised in Penn Hills and still lives in that area. She credits her parents, fellow Penn Hills residents Dennis and Dianne Hughes, for being supportive, influential and “making me who I am today.”