



## **Stefanie Rafes – Representative, PA House District 187**

Stefanie Rafes is a Lehigh Valley native, raised in Whitehall. From an early age, she knew her adult life would focus on public service. During her junior year of High School, she found a career path well suited for her love of science and desire to help others. She chose to become a Physician Assistant. In 1999, she entered the PA program at the Rochester Institute of Technology, graduating in 2003. Throughout her career, she has had the privilege to evaluate and treat patients of all ages, from all socioeconomic backgrounds, with varying degrees of illness. Through speaking with and treating tens of thousands of

patients over the last 20 years, she has become highly attuned to the struggles of everyday Americans.

Throughout her career as a PA, Stefanie has been fortunate to take on leadership roles, helping train a new generation of healthcare providers. She has become a mentor and preceptor to dozens of pre-PA and PA students, advising them through the prerequisite and application process, then teaching and training students during their clinical rotations. As our population ages, the shortage of healthcare workers cannot go unaddressed. Stefanie believes that healthcare is a human right and will work to expand access and lower costs for patients across the Commonwealth.

In early 2023, Stefanie became active with the Lehigh County Democratic Party. Motivated by a desire to protect quality public education in Lehigh County, she began working to support school board candidates in her home school district of East Penn. She found a new passion for community organizing, and through speaking with a variety of community members, found that most constituents want the same things: robust education throughout our public schools, inclusivity, well supported teachers, responsible use of our tax dollars, and environments that help our kids thrive.

Stefanie is a steadfast supporter of women's rights to bodily autonomy. As an experienced healthcare provider, and as a woman, she understands the complexity and nuance of reproductive healthcare. This is an area where the majority of lawmakers do not have the education, understanding or experience to make potentially life-threatening decisions for women and girls. Reproductive decisions should be made only by the person who is pregnant, in conjunction with their healthcare providers. It is a travesty that some state governments have completely overstepped, risking lives and future fertility, criminalizing reproductive care and breaching patient confidentiality.

In 2015, at the age of 33, Stefanie was diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer. Although daunting and terrifying, the experience was transformative. She learned the incredible strength and resilience of the human spirit. A cancer diagnosis tests one's mental and emotional strength to the core. During the year of treatment, she witnessed the unyielding determination and courage present within herself, as well as countless other survivors. She realized the value of self-care and ways to reclaim a sense of normalcy through the chaos. She has developed a greater appreciation for family, friends and community. Her love of nature and the outdoors has only increased in the years since completing treatment, and she will continue to advocate for protection of our rivers, lakes, mountains, forests, and all the open spaces that make Pennsylvania beautiful.