



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Towards Employment Names Tania Menesse New President and CEO  
as Organization Enters 50th Year of Advancing Economic Mobility**

**CLEVELAND, OH — July 20, 2026** —Towards Employment’s Board of Directors announced that Tania Menesse has been named the organization’s new president and chief executive officer. Menesse will begin her role on Sept. 21, 2026, succeeding longtime President and CEO Jill Rizika, who will retire Oct. 1 after 23 years of leadership.

The leadership transition comes as Towards Employment celebrates 50 years of connecting Greater Cleveland residents to rewarding careers while partnering with employers and community leaders to strengthen pathways to economic opportunity.

“Tania brings the strategic leadership, community relationships, and commitment to economic opportunity needed to guide Towards Employment into its next chapter,” said Dr. Shenise Johnson-Thomas, Chair of the Towards Employment Board of Directors. “Her experience building partnerships and advancing systems change will strengthen TE’s work with job seekers, employers, and the broader community.”

Tania Menesse brings more than 15 years of executive leadership experience across economic development, neighborhood revitalization, public policy, and organizational transformation. Her leadership roles with Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, the City of Cleveland, and the City of Shaker Heights reflect a career focused on building coalitions and advancing inclusive growth across Northeast Ohio.

“For 50 years, Towards Employment has demonstrated the power of connecting talent, opportunity, and community,” said Menesse. “I am honored to join this extraordinary organization and build on its strong foundation as we work together to expand pathways to economic mobility.”

Since 2003, Rizika has led Towards Employment’s growth into a nationally recognized workforce development organization. During her tenure the organization introduced and expanded WorkAdvance, its evidence-based career pathway model that integrates career coaching, skill development, supportive services, employer partnerships, and policy advocacy.

“Towards Employment has always believed in the potential of every person and the importance of creating systems that open doors to opportunity,” said Rizika. “It has been an honor to lead this organization, and I am excited for Tania to carry this mission forward.”

As part of its anniversary year and continued leadership in workforce innovation, Towards Employment will host “Dignity of Work: Building Opportunity in a Changing Economy” at **The City Club of Cleveland on Friday, July 31**. The forum will bring together workers, employers, civic, philanthropic, and workforce leaders to discuss how Greater Cleveland can build a stronger economy while affirming the dignity and potential of every worker.

The conversation will feature Rizika and Earl Buford, President of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and will serve as an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of workforce development and the future of opportunity in Northeast Ohio.

Towards Employment will continue its 50th anniversary celebration on Oct. 2, 2026, at its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala, honoring five decades of impact, recognizing Jill’s extraordinary leadership, and celebrating the organization’s future under Tania’s leadership.

### **About Towards Employment**

Founded in 1976, Towards Employment (TE) champions the potential of every person to succeed in a rewarding career and strengthens policies that provide pathways to opportunity for all workers. Through career coaching, skill development, supportive services, employer partnerships, and advocacy, TE helps people build careers while supporting a stronger and more inclusive regional workforce.

-----

Contact:

Adaora Schmiedl

[aschmiedl@towardsemployment.org](mailto:aschmiedl@towardsemployment.org) | (216) 696-7310