



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation Announces \$360,000 in Grants for Perinatal Health

**BOSTON** (July 18, 2024) – The [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation](#) today announced \$360,000 in new grant funding to support 12 organizations working to improve perinatal health across the Commonwealth, including supporting access to doula care for pregnant people in communities of color.

The *Perinatal Health Initiative* grant program is part of the Foundation’s broader strategy of grantmaking and policy analysis aimed at better understanding and disrupting structural racism and eliminating racial inequities in health.

The Foundation’s grantmaking team met with over 30 community organizations and leaders working in perinatal health to inform the design of the *Perinatal Health Initiative*. Several grant partners are focused on the doula workforce, which is comprised of trained, non-medical professionals who support people during and after pregnancy. MassHealth recently began covering their services to improve maternal health and reduce health disparities affecting communities of color.

“This new grant program will expand the capacity of community organizations leading local perinatal health efforts to improve health outcomes,” said Audrey Shelto, President and CEO of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. “Over the next year, these projects will provide education and supports, further develop doula and other perinatal services in key communities, and advance statewide policy and advocacy that will make perinatal health more equitable.”

The Foundation’s Board of Directors approved one-year grants, ranging from \$20,000 to \$50,000, to each of the following nonprofit organizations and their projects:

- **Family Nurturing Center of Massachusetts**, which will support newly arrived Haitian migrant families with babies and young children living in emergency shelters in Boston, connecting them to vital resources such as well-child visits, diapers, playgroups and developmental screenings.



- **First Teacher Boston**, which will provide perinatal health education to Black and Brown families in Dorchester and Roxbury with a series of small-group workshops and a prenatal/postpartum resource toolkit.
- **Propa City Community Outreach**, which will provide its services focused on perinatal health education and peer support to Boston’s communities of color who are dealing with pregnancy loss.
- **Perinatal Wellness Support Center of the Cape & Islands**, to provide its six-week training offered in English, Spanish and Portuguese that covers childbirth education, perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, breastfeeding, nutrition and other prenatal and postpartum health issues.
- **Sacred Birthing Village**, which will expand its multilingual perinatal education program in Greater New Bedford, provided by community volunteers to individuals through their pregnancy and one year following birth.
- **Birth Equity & Justice Massachusetts**, which will continue to bring the birth equity community together and be a voice on perinatal policy and advocacy, including efforts to support recent migrants in Massachusetts.
- **Family Health Center of Worcester**, to support its “OB Advocate” program that provides an advocate, who is trained as a doula, to a patient from pregnancy to two years following birth.
- **Massachusetts PPD Fund**, which will be able to expand its perinatal mental health training series and raise awareness about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, a pregnancy complication affecting 1 in 5 new mothers.
- **Tufts University’s Center for Black Maternal Health & Reproductive Justice**, which will create a digital toolkit to assist doulas with the MassHealth enrollment process and improve access to doula services for Black and Brown pregnant people.
- **Berkshire Nursing Families**, in support of the next phase of its partnership with Springfield Family Doulas to train and mentor Black doulas and lactation counselors in Berkshire County.
- **Mass Law Reform Institute**, and the Massachusetts Doula Coalition to deepen its capacity for ongoing policy and advocacy efforts as the statewide doula provider community navigates the new MassHealth coverage benefit.
- **Neighborhood Birth Center**, which will expand its policy capacity by having staff represent the broader birth center and provider community in Greater Boston, including doulas, midwives, and nurse midwives.



“The Foundation’s commitment to funding community-based organizations working in maternal and perinatal health is invaluable,” said Jallicia Jolly, co-chair of [Birth Equity & Justice Massachusetts](#). Added BEJMA co-chair Yaminah Romulus: “We are truly appreciative of this investment in building our capacity to develop our perinatal health advocacy and coalition-building work while bringing together birth equity communities.”

The Foundation has also been collaborating with other foundations working in perinatal health, and this group of funders has agreed to host a statewide convening focused on birth equity in the future.

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The Foundation’s Board also has approved approximately \$758,000 in funding for its *Strengthening the Voice for Access* grant program, which supports statewide advocacy organizations focused on expanding access to health care, increasing collaboration and participation in public policy development, and promoting the interests of people who are marginalized. This grant program has existed since the Foundation’s inception in 2001 and plays a critical role in advancing its mission.

The following organizations received grants:

- Boston Center for Independent Living
- Disability Policy Consortium
- Health Care For All
- Health Law Advocates
- Massachusetts Association for Mental Health
- Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
- Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
- Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
- Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery
- Massachusetts Public Health Association
- Massachusetts Senior Action Council

### **About the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation**

The mission of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation is to ensure equitable access to health care for all those in the Commonwealth who are economically, racially, culturally or socially marginalized. The Foundation was established in 2001 with an initial endowment from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. It operates separately from the company and is governed by its own Board of Directors. For more information, visit [www.bluecrossmafoundation.org](http://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org).

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