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**Five Bay Area Counties Join Forces to Launch #DeliverBirthJustice Campaign to Push for Equity
in Black Maternal Health and Infant Health**

July 22, 2021 — Today, five Bay Area counties -- Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Solano -- announced #DeliverBirthJustice ([DeliverBirthJustice.org](https://www.deliverbirthjustice.org)), a regional public awareness campaign that puts birth justice for Black families front and center in the fight for racial justice in the Bay Area. The regional campaign highlights racism as a crisis that results in the deaths of Black women and infants at a disproportionate rate than other racial groups.

“Racism is stressful, and the research shows that racialized stress is taking an undue toll on Black births,” said Dr. Zea Malawa, Perinatal Equity Medical Director, San Francisco Department of Public Health and Physician Director of Expecting Justice. “Every single time we dismantle structural racism, we're saving a Black mother's life and we are saving a Black baby's life. Our lives matter, so this work is something that we all need to take on right away.”

The campaign is part of the Perinatal Equity Initiative, a statewide effort by the California Department of Public Health that identifies best practices to address the causes of persistent inequity and health disparities that threaten Black infant and maternal health.

#DeliverBirthJustice aims to mobilize all corners of the Bay Area, from health professionals to policy makers to community members, to take action against social and environmental risk factors that harm Black families.

“We deserve to have healthy births, for our babies to be taken care of, and to not be overlooked and treated as a statistic,” said musician and activist Goapele, who served as a campaign spokesperson. “See us, hear us, know our stories and help uplift us.”

Research shows that Black babies in the Bay Area are two to three times more likely to be born too soon or too small, or to die before their first birthday. Black moms are three to four times more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth. These disparities persist despite the level of education Black mothers have, their income, where they live, or their health habits. The structural and social racism Black people experience throughout their lives, and the bias they encounter from health professionals during their birthing experience, are the root causes. For example, Black women and birthing people in the Bay Area are twice as likely to live in poverty than other county residents and to report experiencing more hardships during pregnancy, such as homelessness, loss of a loved one or food insecurity. Almost half of African Americans in California report that they have experienced unfair treatment getting medical care due to their race.

The campaign is informed by the testimonies of Black families from throughout the five counties, who shared harmful experiences with healthcare and other systems. Through the campaign, county leaders will provide in person and online opportunities for Black mothers and families to share stories related to birth justice.

“The serious challenges that Black moms are facing in regards to health and their community is because of racism,” said Sharayah Alexander, a Black mother in Alameda County, whose experiences helped shape the campaign. “When we start listening to Black mothers, that's when we're going to start seeing health issues decline. When people start listening to us, that's when we're going to start seeing more beautiful births and more Black mothers and babies actually surviving.”

Birth justice is even more pivotal during the COVID-19 pandemic which disproportionately affected Black and Brown communities nationwide. The campaign will work with policy makers to highlight policies that disrupt structural racism and help Black families have healthy births, such as improving access to safe and quality housing, nutritious food, and reliable and safe public transportation, as well as expanding health protections such as sick leave and family leave. Recommendations for health professionals include anti-racist and implicit bias training, partnering with doulas and midwives in hospitals, and implementing systems for reporting and addressing incidents of racism in health institutions.

“We must take action now to root out racism and bias and repair the harm it inflicts on the health and lives of Black mothers, families and babies,” said Senator Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley). “From policy makers to health providers, everyone in the Bay Area has a role to play in dismantling the unjust systems and practices that are robbing Black mothers and babies of their futures. I’m gratified that essential funding for my SB 65, the California Momnibus Act, aimed at improving Black maternal and infant health outcomes, was included in this year’s state budget. We can all make sure Black families have access to the opportunities they need -- education, housing, healthcare -- so they can thrive.”

For more information about the campaign, visit deliverbirthjustice.org.

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About California Perinatal Equity Initiative (PEI)

PEI was established in 2018 within the California Department of Public Health to improve birth outcomes and reduce mortality for Black infants in California. The Perinatal Equity Initiative supports Black mothers and their families through strategic interventions designed to reduce racial disparities in birth outcomes due to chronic stress caused by racism. The initiative complements California's Black Infant Health program by promoting specific interventions that improve outcomes for Black mothers and their families. [Learn more about PEI.](#)