

Alameda Health System and Alameda County Public Health Department's BElovedBIRTH Black Centering Announces the Oakland Premiere of *On the Pulse of Life*.

Oakland, CA – April 5, 2022 – Alameda Health System and Alameda County Public Health Department's BElovedBIRTH Black Centering program will celebrate Black Maternal Health Week with a local, public screening of *On the Pulse of Life*, a documentary by local filmmaker Jessica Jones. The film explores the Black birthing experience through the lens of the birth justice movement.

According to the California Department of Public Health, Black moms in the Bay Area are three to four times as likely to die from childbirth than their white counterparts, and Black babies are two to three times more likely to be born too soon or too small, or to die before their first birthday.

On the Pulse of Life dreams of a future where the first breaths of every baby are equally precious and protected. It features original footage of mothers and babies, women who are about to give birth or have just given birth, and an interview with BElovedBIRTH Program Director Jyeshia Wren. The film premiered at the Smithsonian Arts + Industries Museum last Fall as a part of the [*Futures We Dream*](#) exhibit and will remain on display there through Fall 2022.

“I conceptualized this film when I was seven months pregnant,” said Jones. “I wanted to work through the feelings I had about bringing a child into this world. Feelings of elation, joy, but also a kind of responsibility that I had never experienced before, which is to keep this child of mine safe and create a space for her to flourish. I felt bombarded by the inequities for Black mothers in the birthing space. I wanted to create a film that humanized this experience, talked about these issues, and celebrated Black mothers.”

Jones produced *On the Pulse of Life* in collaboration with BElovedBIRTH Black Centering, a prenatal and postpartum care program by, for, and with Black people developed in partnership with Alameda Health System and the Alameda County Public Health Department. As a co-leader and program implementer of BElovedBIRTH, the Alameda County Public Health Department supports raising greater awareness of the prenatal and postpartum health program and Black maternal health.

“This film addresses the unacceptably high rates of black infant and maternal deaths. Our partnership with Alameda Health System will help to facilitate healthy births for Black families in Alameda County,” said Daphina Melbourne, Perinatal Equity Initiative Coordinator, Alameda County Public Health Department.

“BElovedBIRTH Black Centering is redefining perinatal care in the Black community,” said Wren. “We're all about providing a table for Black women and birthing people to put our heads together to address the crisis of racism-based birth disparities. Together, we're creating and implementing a model of perinatal care that can honor and celebrate Black women. Working with Jessica Jones has been a joy and privilege. We're grateful to have had this storytelling opportunity with such a talented filmmaker.”

“In essence, BElovedBIRTH is a wraparound service for pregnant Black women and birthing people within an intentional Black-centric community context. So far, it has evolved as

anticipated—reproductive-age Black women and birthing people electing and participating in a continuum of care rooted in a community-based birth justice framework,” said Dana Cruz Santana, EmbraceHer Program Manager.

The documentary screening and dinner will take place on April 11, 2022, at 6:30 pm at [7th West](#) in Oakland, a family and child-friendly venue with arcade games and outdoor space. It will be followed by a panel discussion with Jessica Jones, Jyasha Wren, and the three BElovedBIRTH moms featured in the film. The event will also feature a Birth Justice Coloring Campaign and mini marketplace of Black mama makers.

This free event is open to the public. AHS and ACPHD employees are especially welcome. Attendees will include BElovedBIRTH community members and their families, birth workers and healthcare providers, advocates, policymakers, funders and artists. Register [online](#).

BElovedBIRTH is the prenatal service period within Alameda County Public Health Department’s EmbraceHer program. After the postpartum phase, participants are offered additional groups focused on early child development, social support, and trauma recovery. Learn more about [here](#).

Alameda County Health Care Services Agency (HCSA) is the local health jurisdiction (LHJ) for the County, holding responsibility for various state and federal health mandates. HCSA employs over 1,600 staff across four departments, each of which operates multiple divisions, units, and programs: Office of the Agency Director, Public Health, Behavioral Health, and Environmental Health. HCSA manages a broad range of services and programs that promote the health and wellbeing of Alameda County residents. The Agency centers equity in its work and is committed to reducing health disparities and improving outcomes for under-resourced communities.

ALAMEDA HEALTH SYSTEM (AHS) is a leading public health care provider and medical training institution recognized for its world class patient and family-centered system of care. The heart of its mission is to promote wellness and eliminate disparities within the diverse communities of Alameda County, California. As a regional and national leader in health care excellence and safety, AHS upholds a steadfast commitment to provide services to all in need of health care. As one of Alameda County’s 15 largest employers, AHS is a major economic power providing more than 4,500 jobs and contributing nearly \$560 million annually in salaries, wages and benefits. AHS is also home to more than 1,100 physicians across the nine facilities within the health system.

Media Contact

Eleanor Ajala, Manager, Media and Communications
Alameda Health System
ejala@alamedahealthsystem.org
510-421-9222

Neetu Balram, Public Information Manager
Alameda County Public Health Department
eoc-pio@acgov.org