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Los Angeles Effort to Tackle Gaps in Black Maternal and Infant Health Passes Two-Year Mark as White House Issues Call to Action on Issue

LOS ANGELES (Dec. 16, 2021) — Communities Lifting Communities (CLC), the Public Health Alliance of Southern California (Alliance), and the Hospital Association of Southern California (HASC), recently marked the end of its first, two-year cohort of ***Cherished Futures for Black Moms & Babies***, a collaborative effort to reduce Black maternal and infant health inequities in Los Angeles County.

The Cherished Futures landmark took place just prior to a Dec. 7 White House statement that identified reducing maternal mortality and morbidity as a strategic objective of the Biden-Harris Administration. The statement followed a presidential proclamation released during April's Black Maternal Health Week, when Vice President Kamala Harris presided over a roundtable on the issue.

"Black women in our country are facing a maternal health crisis," Harris said at the time. "We know the primary reasons why: systemic racial inequities and implicit bias,"

At a Cherished Futures November event, speaker Zea Malawa shared a fine-grained analysis of the toll racism exacts on Black women's bodies.

"So often people want to jump immediately to (the conclusion that Black women) are drinking more and smoking more," Malawa told attendees on Nov. 17. "But when you actually look at the research, what you find is that it's racism at the root cause, and the cumulative impact of that racism (and accompanying toxic stress) is what is driving these disparities."

Malawa, a pediatrician, serves as physician director of the group Expecting Justice and as a program director with the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

The Cherished Futures collaborative launched in January 2020 against the national backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and rallying calls for racial justice. As part of the two year-long cohort experience, the participating hospitals, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, and Black women community advisors developed and implemented strategies to address inequities for Black birthing families and babies.

The participating hospitals included **California Hospital Medical Center, Cedars-Sinai, and Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center Torrance.**

“While we’re celebrating today and acknowledging the work that has been done, we’re certainly not finished – there is still much work to do,” said Dana Sherrod, birth equity and racial justice manager for the Alliance, and project lead for Cherished Futures. “Now more than ever, we need institutions to act with courage to support those who are being most impacted.”

This year, the inaugural cohort partnered in developing and implementing quality-improvement plans centered on improving the Black patient experience and clinical care within the hospital walls.

“Cherished Futures has become a promising model to address these long-standing inequities and build accountability,” said Susan Harrington, president, Communities Lifting Communities.

Recruitment is now underway for the second cohort of four-to-six hospitals to participate in the Cherished Futures collaborative’s next phase, which kicks off in January 2022. **Antelope Valley Hospital, MemorialCare Miller Children’s & Women’s Hospital Long Beach, St. Francis Medical Center, and Torrance Memorial Medical Center** are already committed to this second cohort.

“It’s been a pleasure to be a part of this journey and I look forward to it continuing” said Yolonda Rogers-Jones, Los Angeles County Black Infant Health Program Coordinator.

Cherished Futures is funded by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, First 5 LA, Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan, California Health Care Foundation, Centene Foundation for Quality Healthcare, and Health Net.

Cherished Futures is a joint initiative of Communities Lifting Communities (CLC), the Public Health Alliance of Southern California (Alliance) and the Hospital Association of Southern California (HASC).

For more information about Cherished Futures, visit www.cherishedfutures.org.

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About Communities Lifting Communities

Communities Lifting Communities (CLC) is a regional community health improvement initiative led by the Hospital Association of Southern California (HASC) to reduce health disparities and improve community health in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties.

About HASC

The Hospital Association of Southern California (HASC) is dedicated to effectively advancing the interests of hospitals in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. It is composed of close to 180 member hospitals and 35 health systems, plus numerous related professional associations and associate members, all with a common goal: to improve the operating environment for hospitals and the health status of the communities they serve.

About the Public Health Alliance of Southern California

The Public Health Alliance of Southern California (Alliance) is a coalition of the executive leadership of eight local health departments in Southern California. Collectively, Alliance members have statutory responsibility for the health of 50 percent of California's population. The Alliance advances multi-sector policy, systems and environmental change to improve upstream population health and equity.