

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

April 4, 2023

Proclaiming Black Maternal Health Week and the Day of the Black Infant in Los Angeles County, April 11 – 17, 2023

“Black Maternal Health Week” (April 11-17, 2023) was established in 2018 by the Black Mamas Matter Alliance to bring local attention to the national maternal health crisis in the Black community, and to promote education and advocacy around the experiences of Black mothers and birthing persons. The week is celebrated by centering Black mothers and birthing persons, families, and the systems of care working on their behalf toward joyous and healthy pregnancies and births. The theme for Black Maternal Health Week 2023 is “Our Bodies Belong to Us: Restoring Black Autonomy and Joy!”

In Los Angeles County (County), Black women die due to pregnancy-related complications at four times the rate of White women and Black infants die before their first birthday at more than three times the rate of White infants. High mortality rates among Black women and Black infants span across income and education levels, as well as geographical locations. The intersections of historical and structural racism, gender oppression, and inequities in the social determinants of health contribute to disproportionate stress and trauma on Black women and subsequent unequal health outcomes.

To address this social injustice, the Department of Public Health and First 5 LA created and lead the African American Infant and Maternal Mortality (AAIMM) Prevention

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Initiative. AAImm addresses birth outcome inequities and strives to improve pregnancy and birth outcomes by bringing together a unique partnership of County government with local community- and faith-based organizations, clinicians, doulas, midwives, health care plans, funders and, most importantly, the Black/African American community. Through AAImm, Black women and birthing people are able to access free doula services. Evidence shows that doula support improves birth outcomes by reducing the rate of preterm and Caesarean births, reducing the need for medical pain control in labor, and reducing the symptoms of postpartum depression, among other benefits.

Through advocacy, coalition building, data, storytelling, and resource development, AAImm works to provide exemplary perinatal services and supports, improve the health care treatment of Black persons, and raise public awareness and engagement. The response to this crisis requires all stakeholders, with Black women in leadership roles, coming together to advance change, practice anti-racism, and ensure access to high quality, comprehensive, culturally relevant reproductive and maternal health care. Joyous and healthy Black births can be achieved.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Proclaim the week of April 11 through 17, 2023 as “Black Maternal Health Week,” and April 16, 2023 as “The Day of the Black Infant” throughout Los Angeles County.
2. Direct the Director of the Department of Public Health to continue to implement efforts to activate community stakeholders and interventions known to reduce racial disparities in perinatal outcomes.
3. Encourage residents to learn about available services and supports at www.blackinfantsandfamiliesla.org, and participate in upcoming activities and events planned for Black Maternal Health Week by following African American Infant and Maternal Mortality on social media @blackinfantsandfamiliesla.

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