

# Advancing Equity for Birthing Families:

Building a Community-Led Coalition to Improve Social Support During Pregnancy and the Transition to Parenthood

## Public Town Hall

September 28, 2022

This project was financially supported by grant G2019-0034 from **The Boston Foundation**.



# Session Outline

- Welcome & Overview
- Maternal Health Scope & Overview
- Panel Discussion
- Reflections & Insights
- Closing Remarks



**The Boston Foundation**

**Danubia Camargos Silva**



# Featured Speakers



**Renee Boynton-Jarrett**

*Vital Village Networks*



**Dolores Cox**

*Community Champion*



**Rose Molina**

*Ariadne Labs*

**She-Tara Smith**

*The Birth Co.*





**BRIGHAM HEALTH**



BRIGHAM AND  
WOMEN'S HOSPITAL



**HARVARD T.H. CHAN**  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

We are a joint center for  
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and the Harvard T.H. Chan  
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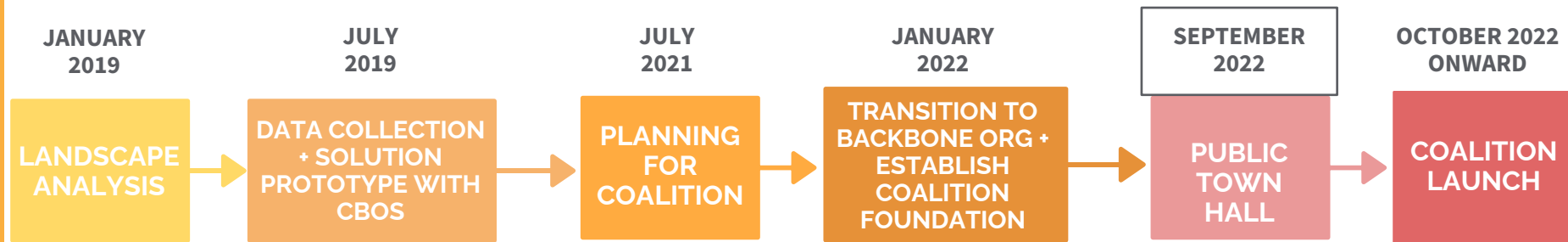


# Community-Based Social Support for Birthing Families

Less known about community-based programming for social determinants of health in Greater Boston, which we know lead to ~80% of poor health outcomes



# Project Overview



# Most Common Gaps in Social Support Services



## Housing

- 50% experienced excess demand for service
- 100% experienced challenges in connecting clients to service



## Childcare

- 80% experienced excess demand for service
- 80% experienced challenges in connecting clients to service



## Support for pregnancy and infant loss

- 60% experienced excess demand for service
- 70% experienced challenges in connecting clients to service

# Top Challenges to Accessing Social Support Services



## Structural and interpersonal racism in Greater Boston

“...Things like **redlining** where families of color were **disenfranchised** from being able to access the property ladder and thus **accumulate that sort of wealth** that many white families have always had access to...”

“It can be really, really challenging to find supports for those families that are **mixed status**. They’re **filtered out of a lot of supports**.”



## Structural and interpersonal racism in CBOs

“I think identifying the **providers who look like you**, and who have an **understanding of you**, or are coming from a perspective of **cultural competency** is a big thing...”

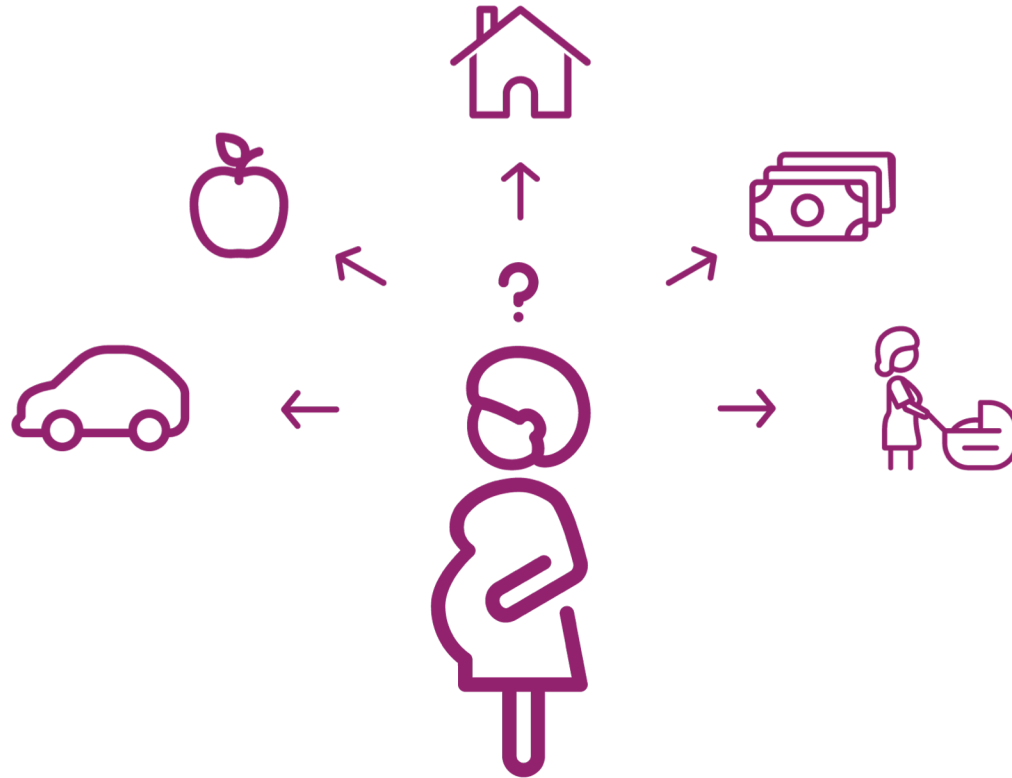


## Lack of coordination of services

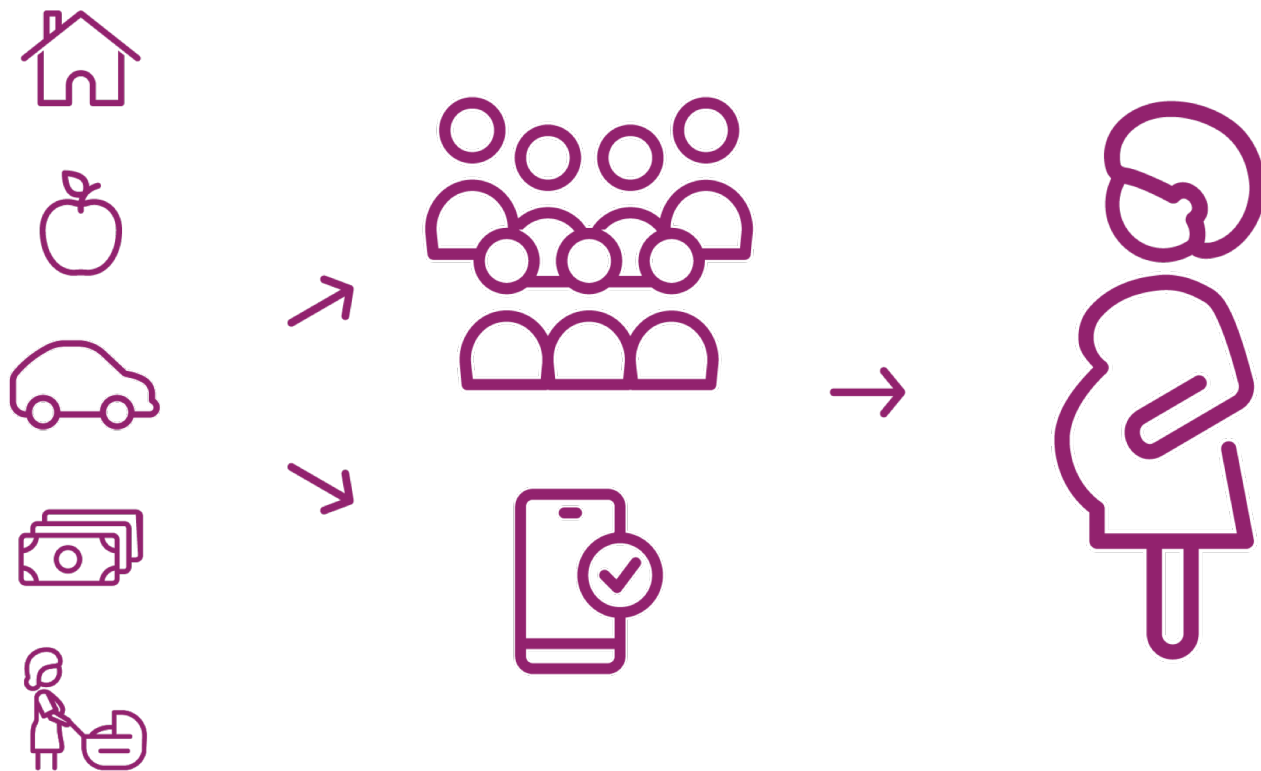
“I’m sure there are programs that exist all over Boston that I’m **unaware of that I could potentially share with some of these clients**.  
**I only know what I know.**”



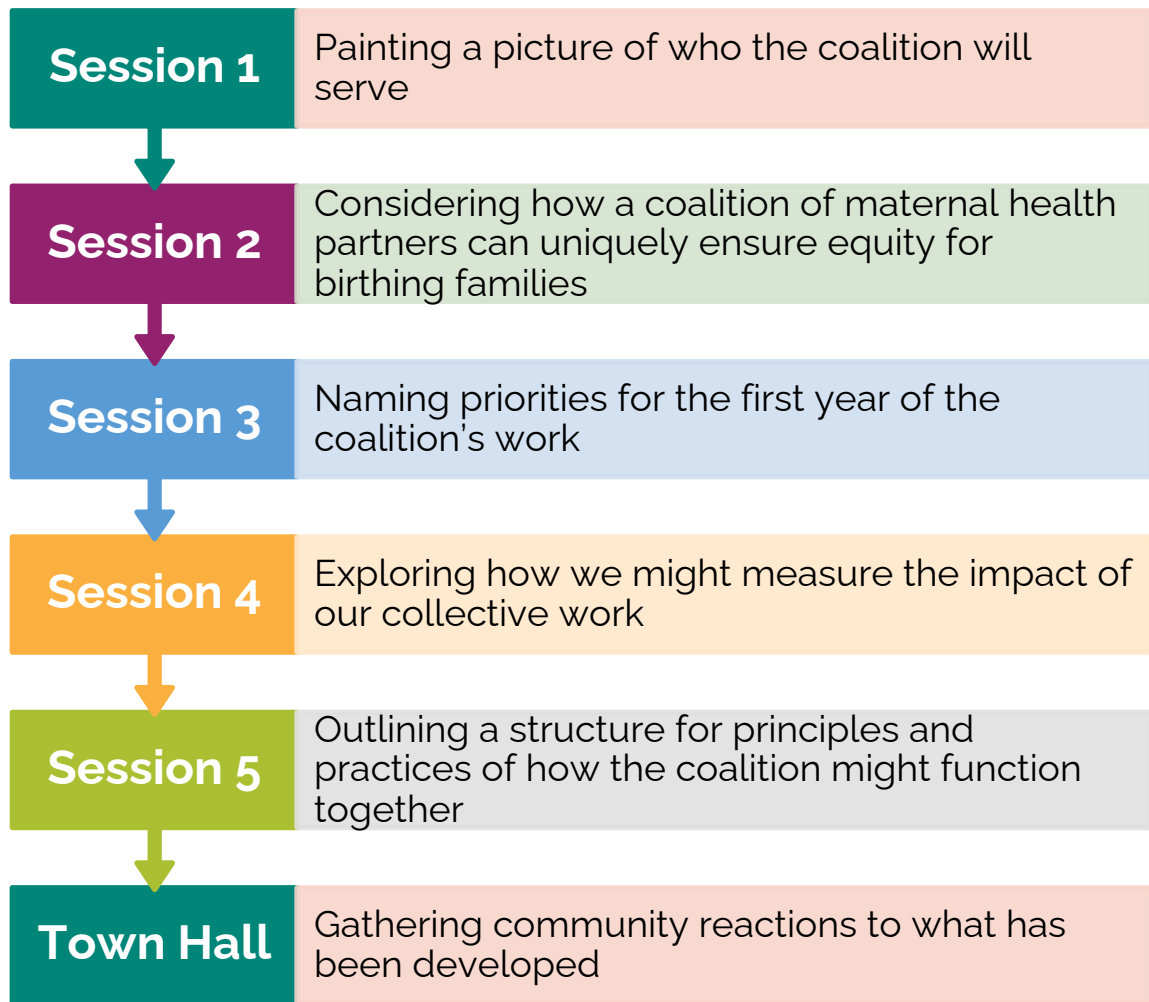
# Centering Birthing Families and Navigating Social Support



# Centering Birthing Families and Navigating Social Support



# Design Lab Outline



## IDENTIFY USER, NEEDS, HOPES + DREAMS

Participants crafted 'User, Need, Insight' statements to align on the focus of the coalition and the end user - their needs, hopes, and dreams.

Ex: "Thriving families need a way to feel empowered because they need the opportunity to be experts in determining their own care."

## ESTABLISH DOMAINS + OBJECTIVES

Participants then decided upon coalition objectives, later grouped into broader domains, and aligned on 3 domains for the coalition to focus on first:

1. Educating/Foundation
2. Support/ Empowerment
3. Human Centered

## CREATE SMART GOALS

Participants crafted 3 goals - one for each domain - that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely.

Goals centered on improving birthing families preparedness to bring children into the world through education (classes + materials), and increased access to doulas.



# “User...Need...Insight” Statements

Green = Needs

Yellow = Outcomes

[Strengths-based description of families] need a way to [what are families asking for] because [hopes and dreams].

## Group 1

- Middle-aged women need a way to **ensure that their unborn children are healthy** because they want grandchildren one day
- Birthing families (biological, adoption, surrogate) need a **way to understanding the information, options, and support** for expanding their families (adoption, infertility treatments) because they **hope** for peaceful transitions
- Teen moms need a **trusting support network** because they need to **navigate** life with additional mental, physical support due to taboo/**stigma**/societal disapproval

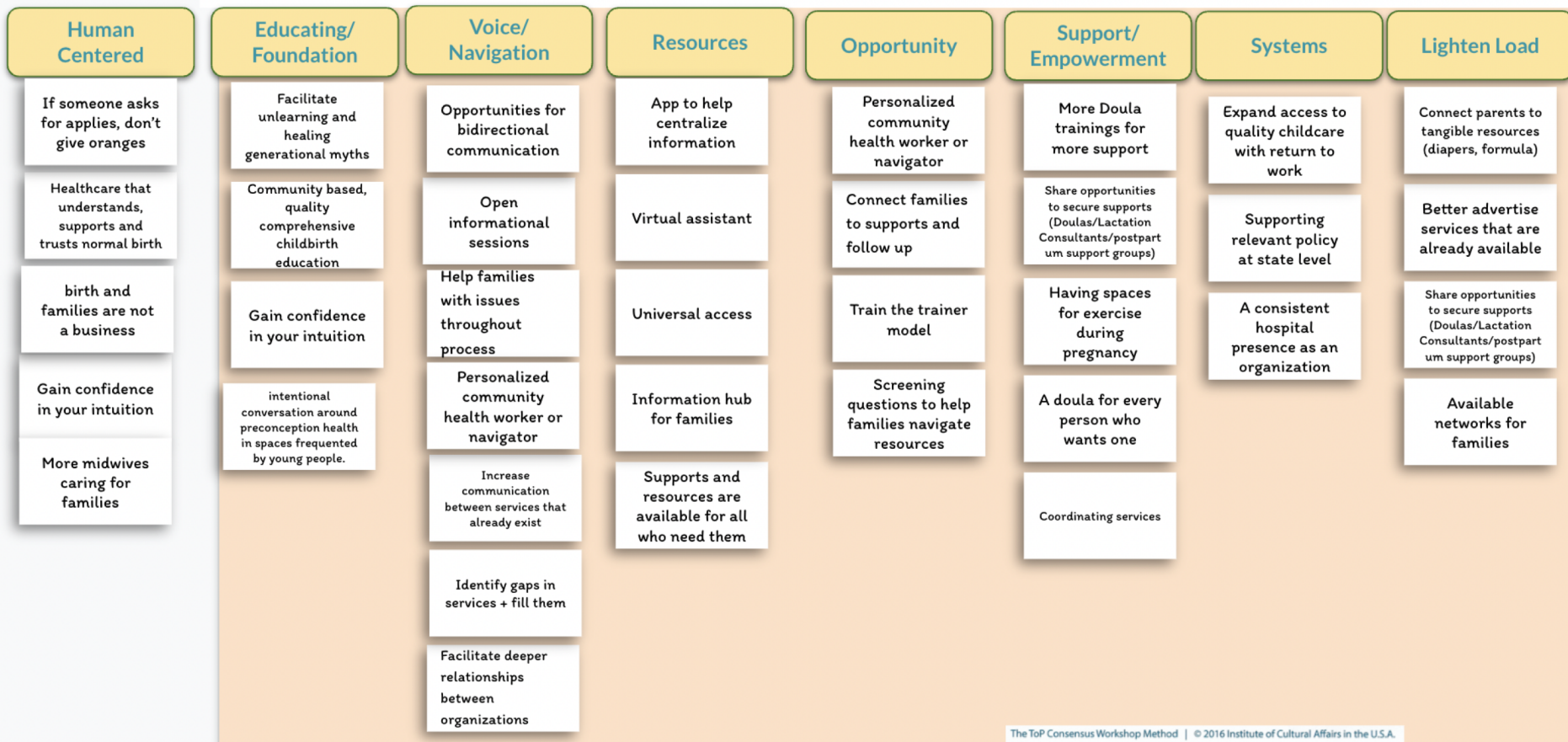
## Group 2

- Thriving families need a way to **feel empowered** because they need **the opportunity to be experts** in determining their own care.
- Advocates need **resources** for child care because their children need **access to high quality** education and development **opportunities**.
- Families need the **confidence to make decisions** for their family so that they are **successful** in whatever **they define** as **success** for themselves/their family.
- Families need **providers to listen** so that people **feel safe** coming to the hospital



The maternal health coalition helps ensure an equitable and just experience as families plan, prepare for and welcome children into their lives.

**The following domains and corresponding objectives were identified by design workshop participants:**



# SMART Goals

**S**  
**SPECIFIC:**

**M**  
**Measurable:**

**A**  
**Achievable:**

**R**  
**Realistic:**

**T**  
**Timely:**

Domain	SMART Goal
Educating/Foundation	Within 1-2 years, the coalition will improve birthing families' feeling of being prepared for/informed about childbirth (understanding of what is normal in childbirth and what potential risks/complications may occur) in 3 community health centers in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan by establishing and implementing pregnancy (including pregnancy loss) and childbirth education classes (including postpartum depression/anxiety) to at least 50% of their birthing population who identify as people of color after 28 weeks.
Support/Empowerment	Create a career pathway as a doula to increase the number of doulas in the Greater Boston area and ensure that birthing families are provided with a doula that is a good fit for them.
Human Centered	Reach out to people who have experienced birth and gauge what, in relation to their connections with social supports, worked, what didn't and how to improve what didn't and amplify what did. Turn the "what did" into educational materials to help women, their families, and their caregivers, the awareness of what they should expect in birth so they can advocate for themselves and not be left with substandard care. Pilot this information dissemination at CHCs, hospitals, and prenatal clinics.

# **Design Team Reflections**

**Dolores Cox  
She-Tara Smith**

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# Reflections and Reactions

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# What might be missing or in need of more attention?

How to maximize the many resources that do already exist, and not duplicate

Engaging partners and other family members

birthing rights

how can we engage fathers, brothers and uncles to participate in the coalition, their stories are missing, I believe they can help heal the traumas

Birthing plans

Strategies for hospitals/perinatal caregivers to raise their awareness of racial bias and discrimination and then to provide interventions for improving acceptance and inclusion.

# What might be missing or in need of more attention?

Birthing plan that is your choice

Emphasis on narrative

The coalition strategies don't really align with housing and childcare needs identified in the assessment process

How might we engage fathers? And other partners?

Stillbirth prevention - 24,000 babies are stillborn annually in the U.S. 65 babies a day! That's a school bus full of children or three kindergarten classes, every single day. It must stop.

Social, Economic and radicalized determinants of health

Allowing birthing folks to be partners in their own healthcare choices.

grief support

Social, economic and racialized (not radicalized - thank you autocorrect) determinants of health and mental health

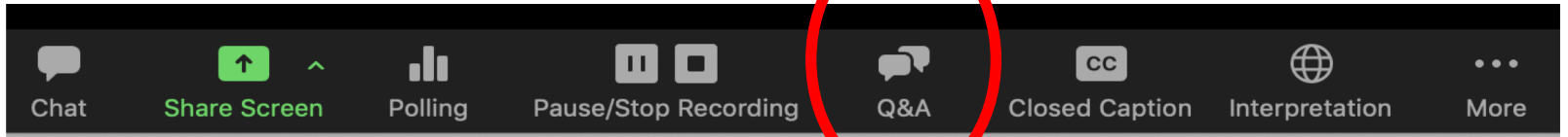


# Panel Discussion

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# Q&A

- Submit your questions by clicking on the Q&A icon at the bottom of your screen





# Taking Action Together

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## Birth Equity Town Hall

What are you hearing or feeling as the most urgent priority? +

Communication - Language matters and Proactive listening moves us forward

+ 0

Respect and dignity in healthcare

+ 1

Stillbirth prevention. There has been movement on this in other states/the federal level, but (to my knowledge) nothing has happened in MA.

+ 0

Centering the roles of midwives and doulas

+ 0

What are some specific actions you might like to take place? +

Sharing community voices and lessons learned so far with providers to sensitize providers to issues and help reflect on implicit biases.

+ 2

Birthing Equity Hotline: connecting mothers to providers and with information about breastfeeding, childcare, etc.

+ 0

Raise the voices/concerns of birthing folks in MA to those in power and govt.

+ 1

What questions are being raised for you? +

What will the coalition's specific priorities be in advancing birth equity?

+ 1

What are the first concrete steps that will be taken?

+ 0

How do we scale up community health center work to larger and more entrenched institutions like MGH?

+ 0

How will we know we've been successful? +

Measurements re: reduction of poor birth outcomes (Maternal mortality/morbidity, pregnancy loss, etc.)

+ 1

Is the agency of birthing parents improving?

+ 1

Is maternal stress decreasing?

+ 1

Is social support for birthing parents increasing?

+ 0

This will be a long-term project and narrative as well as hard data will be important. Instances of racism and disrespect in healthcare are not shared well only through data.

+ 0

# Questions for Action

Respond in “Ideaboardz”

- ▶ What are you hearing or feeling as the most urgent priority? Where are you hoping to see change happen now?
- ▶ What questions are being raised for you?
- ▶ What are some specific actions you might like to see take place?
- ▶ How will we know we've been successful?

**What comes  
next?**

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# Share the Coalition Design Report

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## Sign up to Stay in Touch!

When you sign up for our mailing list, you'll receive updates via email about ways to be involved with the coalition to support birth equity in Greater Boston.

\* Email

First Name

Last Name

Organization

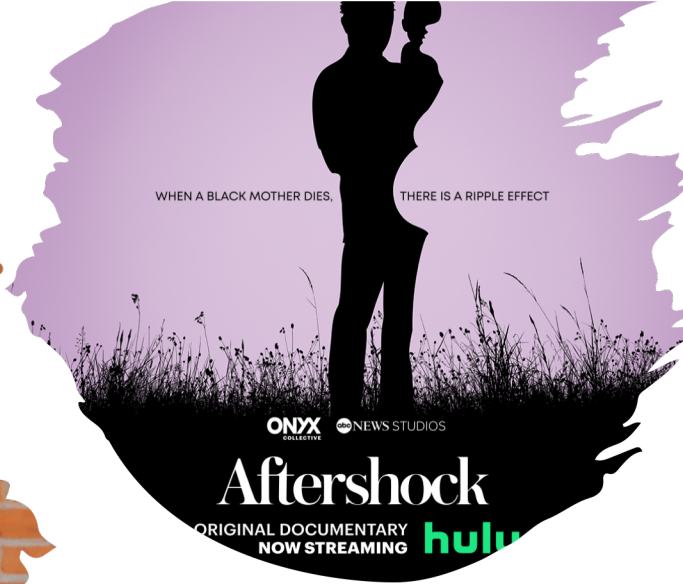
Focus/Area

Sign Up

**Join our contact list to  
be involved with  
advancing the coalition  
and informed of next  
steps**

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<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/7EZVd1D/birthequity>



**Join our**  
*National Community Leadership Summit*  
**October 18th and 19th**  
**featuring**

**Omari Maynard**  
**Jessica Roach**  
**Dorian Wingard**

# Special Thank You to Our Design Team

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