

# BLACK DOULA NETWORK

## THE PROBLEM - *INEQUITY*

Fresno is facing a Black maternal and child health and a healthcare infrastructure crisis. Black women in Fresno experience preterm birth at a rate of **13.5%**, whereas **this rate among white women is 9%**.

**Black women are six times more likely to die** from a preventable pregnancy related cause compared to white women. **Black babies die at more than three times the rate of white babies.**

"The doctor did not come up with a plan. That resulted in 7 days of life support, baby being delivered in an emergency room via C-section, without anesthesia, and the baby going to Valley Children's Hospital, and ultimately in 7 and 10 days later baby passing away as well."

Mother in Fresno, who lost both her daughter and grandchild to preventable pregnancy complications.

Black women in Fresno are more likely to live in unfinished neighborhoods and experience higher rates of comorbidities. Increased access to doulas may result in positive birthing experiences, more full-term pregnancies, and healthier babies.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Recently passed California legislation (SB 65 Omnibus), has the potential to be a game-changer in transforming birth outcomes for Black communities, as it provides **reimbursement of doula services for Medi-Cal patients**. Viewing its potential through the lens of Fresno's Black birthing community, the promises of SB 65 can only be maximized, if the prerequisites, namely, **a culturally concordant doula workforce, an equitable, doula/patient informed high-quality doula training, and a supportive infrastructure also exist.**

## OUR SOLUTION THE BLACK DOULA NETWORK

The **BLACK Doula Network (BDN)** is a **social enterprise** designed to address the doula provider deficit, build the missing backbone infrastructure needed to support and sustain doulas, and provide birthing persons with access to healthcare services demonstrated to decrease health disparities.

The **BLACK Doula Network is a multi-faceted approach, which includes:**

- Development of a high-quality equity-centered doula **training curriculum**
- A plan to **integrate trained doulas into the hospital and healthcare system** to ensure continuum of care,
- An **administrative backbone network**, that will function similar to an Independent Provider Association (IPA), ensuring that doulas have the legal and administrative support they need.

As a flagship initiative for race equity, the Network will lead to system changes and serve as a model for measurable outcomes and effective public policies.

The **BDN will advance racial justice and birth-equity in Fresno**. Broader impact includes creating a sustainable and scalable community-lead model that demonstrates how to center race in health equity and improve wellbeing and prosperity in Black communities.

## 1-5 YEAR RESULTS

- **BLACK Doula Network Training:** workforce development and economic mobility for Black women
- **BLACK Doula Infrastructure - Clearinghouse:** Complex administrative support for doulas and sustainable business format
- **Improved birth outcomes** for Black birthing persons and babies