

THE GENERAL COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Witness before the

Joint Committee on Public Health

MOTHER Lab

July 11, 2021

Re: H2370/S1515, Miranda/Domb An Act Effectuating Equity in COVID-19 Vaccination

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Decker, Chairwoman Comerford, Vice-Chairwoman Moran, Vice-Chairman Murray.

We are representatives and members of Maternal Outcomes for Translational Health Equity Research (M.O.T.H.E.R) Lab housed at Tufts University School of Medicine and founded by Dr. Amutah-Onukagha. It is an exceptional honor to submit a testimony for such a distinguished panel and such an important cause. On behalf of the MOTHER Lab, we want to thank the Members of this Joint Committee for the sustained support on the public health front and for having this hearing today. Additionally, we want to thank Representatives Liz Miranda of Boston and Mindy Domb of Amherst for proposing H2370/S1515, Miranda/DombRausch, An Act Effectuating Equity in COVID-19 Vaccination.

MOTHER lab's mission is to "address and eradicate inequities Black women face, through research, advocacy, and mentorship by confronting and dismantling the system that enables and perpetuates racism for Black women who give birth."^[1] Though we are maternal health focused, we also want to focus on making Massachusetts a more equitable place for all of its residents. We are writing to express clear support in a more accessible and equitable vaccine distribution plan.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected Black and brown people in various aspects. Black women in particular have been uniquely affected by the pandemic due to the deadly mixture of racism, sexism, and other systematic barriers. Health disparities that affect the most historically marginalized communities in our society, exacerbated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The vaccine rollout has continued the pattern seen throughout the pandemic of leaving Black individuals out of innovative and robust vaccine administration. This news is even more disheartening, as we face the realization that Black people account for a higher percentage of COVID-19 cases.

Massachusetts has made significant advances in reducing the spread of COVID-19 and has smoothly proceeded with vaccine efforts but it must be ensured that access to the vaccine is equitable . We are enormously grateful for the opportunity to raise awareness on this inequitable issue. We have brought light to the present issue: increasing equity in COVID-19 vaccination efforts. Massachusetts is at a critical juncture, with the opportunity to intervene and address this issue. Continued dedication to eradicating the preventable loss of infant life can and will help propel us into a more equitable and just Massachusetts.

Thank you, Chairwoman Decker, Chairwoman Comerford, Vice-Chairwoman Moran, Vice-Chairman Murray, and Members of the Committee.

Signed,

MOTHER Lab

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[1] “M.O.T.H.E.R. Lab Mission.” Maternal Outcomes for Translational Health Equity Research (M.O.T.H.E.R.) Lab, last modified in 2020, <https://motherlab.org/about-2/>

[2] American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. (2014). *Safe Prevention of the Primary Cesarean Delivery*.
<https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/obstetric-care-consensus/articles/2014/03/safe-prevention-of-the-primary-cesarean-delivery>

[3] Hodnett, E. & Osborn, R. (1989). Effects of Continuous Intrapartum Professional Support on Childbirth Outcomes. *Research in Nursing and Health*, 12(5), 289-297.

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[5] McGrath, S.K., & Kennell, J.H. (2008). A Randomized Controlled Trail of Continuous Labor Support for Middle-class Couples: Effect on Cesarean Delivery Rates. *Birth*, 35(2), 92-97.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1523-536X.2008.00221.x>