**Media Advisory**

**Black Maternal Health Week Launches with Virtual Panel Event**

The LA County African American Infant and Maternal Mortality Initiative Holds Countywide Briefing, Honoring LA County Board of Supervisors’ Recognition of Black Maternal Health Week; Shines Light on Health Disparities and Emerging Solutions for Black Mothers, Families and Babies

**LOS ANGELES, Ca. –** The LA County Department of Public Health andFirst 5 LA, in partnership with the LA County African American Infant and Maternal Mortality Initiative is holding a virtual briefing to kick off Los Angeles County’s Black Maternal Health Week – which was [officially recognized](https://twitter.com/HollyJMitchell/status/1374438995396988934.) by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in March -- and elevate awareness about Black infant and maternal mortality and emerging local solutions. The goal of the week is to raise awareness about the issue, and the efforts of public health and community leaders across the County to oppose racism and discrimination at its root and support healthy and joyous births for Black families.

**WHO:** At the virtual event, attendees will hear from a panel of experts about the racism Black mothers face that leads to health disparities and work across the county being done to make a difference. Panelists include:

* Dr. Deborah Allen, Deputy Director, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
* Dr. Melissa Franklin, CEO of Growth Mindset Communications
* Raena Granberry, Perinatal Equity Initiative Coordinator, Dept. of Public Health
* Adjoa Jones, Founding Leader of African-American Infant and Maternal Mortality Community Action Team at L.A. County Department of Health Services Whole Person Care
* Michelle Sanders, AAIMM Doula Program Coordinator, Dept. of Public Health
* Brandi Sims, Health Systems Program Officer, First 5 LA
* Yolonda Roger Jones, Coordinator of Black Infant Health Program; Dept. of Public Health
* Dana Sherrod, Birth Equity & Racial Justice Manager for Cherished Futures for Black Moms and Babies, Public Health Alliance

**WHEN:** April 12, 2021 at 8:30am PT/11:30am ET

**WHERE:** <https://rescueagency.zoom.us/j/98397269194>

* Passcode: FIRST5LA

**Interview Avail:** Speakers will be available for a Q&A session during the event. Interviews can be coordinated/and are available post-event. If you have additional questions, please connect with First5LA@allisonpr.com.

**About The LA County AAIMM Prevention Initiative:** Launched in October of 2018, the LA County African American Infant and Maternal Mortality Prevention Initiative (AAIMM) is lead by a coalition of the LA County Departments of Public Health, Health Services, and Mental Health, First 5 LA, community organizations, mental and health care providers, funders, and community members. We are united in one purpose: to address the unacceptably high rates of Black infant and maternal deaths in Los Angeles County and ensure healthy and joyous births for Black families. Learn more about the initiative at [www.blackinfantsandfamilies.org](http://www.blackinfantsandfamilies.org).

**About The LA County AAIMM Prevention Initiative Steering Committee and Community Action Teams**: The AAIMM Steering Committee guides the implementation of the LA County Department of Public Health’s 5-Year Action Plan to address African American infant and maternal mortality as well as informs the development and implementation of strategies to complement the plan. The AAIMM Community Action Teams (CAT) are regionally based collaborative partnerships between the Los Angeles County Health Agencies, community-based organizations, health care providers, community residents, faith-based organizations, birth workers (doulas, midwives, etc.), allies and community businesses that consult, inform, and engage the community on all AAIMM strategies and create locally based actions.

**About Dr. Deborah Allen:**

Deborah Allen is the Deputy Director of the Health Promotion Bureau at the LA County Department of Public Health. Dr. Allen has been fighting for social justice, reproductive rights, and support for children with special healthcare needs for decades.

**About Dr. Melissa Franklin:**

Dr. Melissa Franklin is Founder and CEO of Growth Mindset Communications, and is a communications and organizational development professional with 25 years of experience. Dr. Franklin was awarded a Pritzker Fellowship on behalf of First 5 LA and through that fellowship helped launch AAIMM.

**About Raena Granberry:**

Raena Granberry is a Black Maternal Health advocate and consultant. She currently serves as the Perinatal Equity Initiative Coordinator for the Division of Maternal Child and Adolescent Health at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

**About Adjoa Jones:**

Adjoa Jones is the Associate Director of Regional Collaboration for Service Planning Area 6 with the Whole Person Care Program of the L.A. County Department of Health Services (DHS) and has worked within Department of Public Health and DHS for the past 22 years, serving in various programs to improve the health and wellness of families throughout the County.

**About Michelle Sanders:**

Michelle is a Certified Doula, Certified Lactation Educator Specialist, Certified Surgical Technologist and the Coordinator for the LA County DPH AAIMM Doula Program. Michelle caught her first baby 21 years ago and have supported many family members, friends, and clients through her private practice, Beauty for Ashes Maternal Wellness. Saving Black moms and babies is her passion and her purpose.

**About Brandi Sims:**

Brandi Sims is a community change agent serving to correct social inequities in their many forms though research, advocacy, education and philanthropy. A Los Angeles native, she began her career in education reform with a focus on closing opportunity gaps. She currently serves at First 5 LA as a Program Officer, building the capacity of communities to engage in policy and systems change, and working collaboratively to address racial birth disparities as an AAIMM leader.

**About Yolonda Rogers Jones:**

Yolonda Rogers-Jones, affectionately known as "Yo," has the distinct recognition of being the first Black Infant Health (BIH) Program Manager in LA County, and for the past 17 years she has served as the BIH County Coordinator. In her present position, she superintends the implementation of BIH with community-based organizations in South Los Angeles and the Antelope Valley. Ms. Rogers-Jones has a bachelor’s degree in Communications from Mills College and a Human Resource Certification from UCLA.

**About Dana Sherrod:**

Dana Sherrod is the Perinatal Equity Manager with the Public Health Alliance of Southern California where she leads Cherished Futures for Black Moms & Babies—a multi-sector hospital quality improvement initiative to reduce Black infant and maternal health inequities among some of Los Angeles’ most prominent delivery hospitals.

[**First 5 LA**](https://www.first5la.org/)**:**

As the state's largest funder of early childhood, First 5 LA works to strengthen systems, parents and communities so that children are ready to succeed in school and life. An independent public agency, First 5 LA's goal is to support the safe and healthy development of young children so that by 2028, all children in L.A. County will enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. Learn more at [www.first5la.org](https://first5lacounty.sharepoint.com/teams/hmgoe/Shared%20Documents/First%205%20LA%20Investments/HMG%20LA%20Partnership%20with%20LA%20Care/Press%20Release/www.first5la.org) for latest news and information, follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/first5la?lang=en), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/first5la/) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/first5la/?hl=en).