

BIRTH EQUITY AND SUPPORT THROUGH THE INCLUSION OF DOULA EXPERTISE

Supporting Black Birthing People by Offering Doula Services
During and After Pregnancy

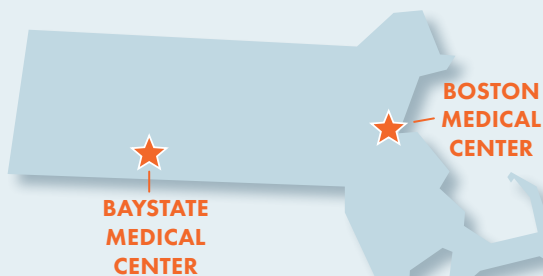
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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In 2021, the Health Policy Commission launched the Birth Equity and Support through the Inclusion of Doula Expertise (BESIDE) Investment Program. The BESIDE Investment Program aims to address inequities in maternal health care and improve the care and patient experience of Black birthing people by increasing access to and use of doula services. Awardee hospitals offer doula services to patients through pregnancy, labor and delivery, and the postpartum period to support patients' social and emotional needs. In addition to the provision of culturally concordant doula services for Black birthing people, BESIDE awardees engage in activities to embed a racial equity lens in their clinics and support a culture of understanding and mutual respect between doulas and other clinical or administrative staff.

The BESIDE Investment Program was developed by the HPC in response to a legislative mandate in Chapter 41 of the Acts of 2019. The Legislature allocated a total of \$500,000 for a pilot program aimed at reducing pregnancy-related deaths and improving pregnancy outcomes in the Commonwealth. Funds that are not directed specifically to awardees through the BESIDE investment program will be used to support other related activities that advance those goals.

TOTAL HPC FUNDS AWARDED: \$500K



“A doula can reduce stress, create a calm and welcoming environment for Black families...By holding the space and witnessing the experience of the birth, we can create a sense of safety.”

—BESIDE STAFF MEMBER

BESIDE INVESTMENT PROGRAM GOALS

- Increase the number of Black birthing people who are informed about the benefits of doula care and offered the opportunity to work with doulas, particularly doulas who are from the communities (e.g., geographic, cultural) of or share lived experience of inequities with Black birthing people.
- Improve the quality of prenatal, labor and delivery, and postpartum care of Black birthing people through the support of doulas.
- Support the development of a culture of understanding and mutual respect between doulas and clinical and administrative staff within Massachusetts birthing hospitals and birth centers.
- Embed principles of racial equity and cultural humility in the design and implementation of programs offering doula services.

