



**AABC**  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF  
BIRTH CENTERS

# Grassroots Advocacy: Bringing Birth Equity to Your State

Amber Allen

Nan Strauss

Leseliey Welch

Mary Kathryn DeLodder

Jill Alliman, Moderator

# Topics and Themes

- Babies are not a partisan issue
- Engaging elected officials
- How to lobby without feeling intimidated
- Harnessing the power of your consumers and stakeholders
- Looking for and using windows of opportunity
- Building community
- Changing and adding legislation
- Answering questions



**AABC**  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF  
BIRTH CENTERS

# Engaging Elected Officials

Amber Allen

---

# 3 Phases of Engaging Elected Officials

---

1. Recruit & Build Your Base
2. Train Your Stakeholders
3. Engage Your Electeds



# 1. Recruit & Build Your Base

---

- Identify all of the stakeholders who have something to gain or lose on the issue
- Invite other organizations that hold similar values to join you in your effort



## 2. Train Your Stakeholders

---

Dive into storytelling. Use a personal story about when you began to care about the issue:

- What was the specific challenge you faced?
- What was the specific choice you made?
- What happened as a result of my choice?
- How can the listener join you in taking action?

Personal stories can help describe the problem, reveal solutions, and make the audience become emotionally invested.

---

# Amber's Storytelling Example Outline

---

1. I found myself suffering from postpartum depression a second time, after the birth of my son. I was overwhelmed and feeling shame and frustration.
  2. I decided to get help from my midwife, and we both agreed that prescription medication would be the best choice for me.
  3. I began to feel better. I was able to cope with having a toddler and an infant, and I felt more like myself. I also learned that what I was going through is very common.
  4. All moms deserve easy access to maternal mental health care and peer support. That's why I am urging you to please support X bill, which will help more people like me.
-

# 3. Engaging Elected Officials

---

First identify which elected official(s) is the appropriate person to engage

Then, use multiple avenues to get your message across:

- Letters to the editor
  - Calls to his/her office
  - Social media
  - Rallies outside his/her office
  - Earned media events (coverage in newspaper, radio, TV, blogs, etc.)
  - In-person meetings
-



# Remember...

---

YOU are the expert. YOU are educating them in something they know very little about. Be confident.

Be calm, courteous, and polite. Even if you don't agree with their politics, when you find common ground, they can be a powerful ally for your cause.

Don't give up. It sometimes takes months or years to make progress. Persistence is key.

---

# EVERY MOTHER COUNTS

Seizing Opportunities  
during a Crisis

Nan Strauss  
OCTOBER 4, 2020



# Advocacy Trigger: Profound Disruption

- Hospital context in March 2020
- Hospital Response – Birth companions barred

**NewYork-Presbyterian** @nyphospital

#COVID19 Update: March 22, 2020

The new changes to our visitor policy will go into effect on Monday, March 23, 2020 at 7am. To learn more, please visit: [nyphosp.co/2vMkWoa](https://nyphosp.co/2vMkWoa)

"In light of the ongoing developments with the COVID-19 crisis, we continually evaluate the actions needed to help protect our staff and patients. At this time we are again modifying our visitation policy. With our focus on the best interests of our new mothers and children, we have made the decision not to permit visitors, including birthing partners and support persons, for our obstetric patients. We understand that this will be difficult for our patients and their loved ones, but we believe that this is a necessary step to promote patient safety."

NewYork-Presbyterian

4:23 PM · Mar 22, 2020

75 See the latest COVID-19 information on Twitter

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Home World U.S. Politics Economy Business Tech Markets Opinion Life & Arts Real Estate WSJ Magazine

U.S. | NEW YORK

## New York Hospital Systems Ban Partners From Delivery Room

NewYork-Presbyterian, Mount Sinai decisions spark backlash from mothers, midwives concerned about heightened risks during labor

New York Drafting Hospital Guidelines on Possible Ventilator Rationing

What happens if New York hospitals run out of ventilators? State officials are considering different options to help in that grim scenario. WSJ's Jason Bellini spoke to experts familiar with the discussions. Photo: Ronald Bon/DPA/Zuma Press

By [Laura Kusisto](#) and [Melanie Grayce West](#)  
Updated March 24, 2020 10:04 am ET

RECOMMENDED VIDEOS

1. The Risks of Rushing a Coronavirus Vaccine
2. India's Covid-19 Crisis: Record Infections Amid an Economic Downturn
3. How Much Flooding Costs the Global Economy
4. Storm Sally Leaves Trail of Destruction Across Gulf Coast
5. Microsoft Surface Duo Review: When Two Screens Are Better—and Worse



change.org Start a petition My petitions Browse Membership

Petition details Comments Updates

## Safeguard the Right of All Laboring People to Have Support During COVID-19 Crisis



**Victory**  
This petition made change with 613,559 supporters!

Andrew M. Cuomo: Safeguard the Right of All Laboring People...

Share on Facebook

Send a Facebook message

Send an email to friends

Tweet to your followers

Jessica Pournaras started this petition to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and 2 others

Advocate response - 600,000 signatures, urging Governor Andrew Cuomo to reverse the bans on birthing support.



## Governor Cuomo – Executive Orders

- **Guarantee 1 support person** during labor, delivery, and immediate postpartum period
- Temporary suspension of licensure regs allowing **midwives licensed in other states** to practice in NYS
- Expand telehealth and telephonic visits
- Identify sexual and reproductive health services as essential

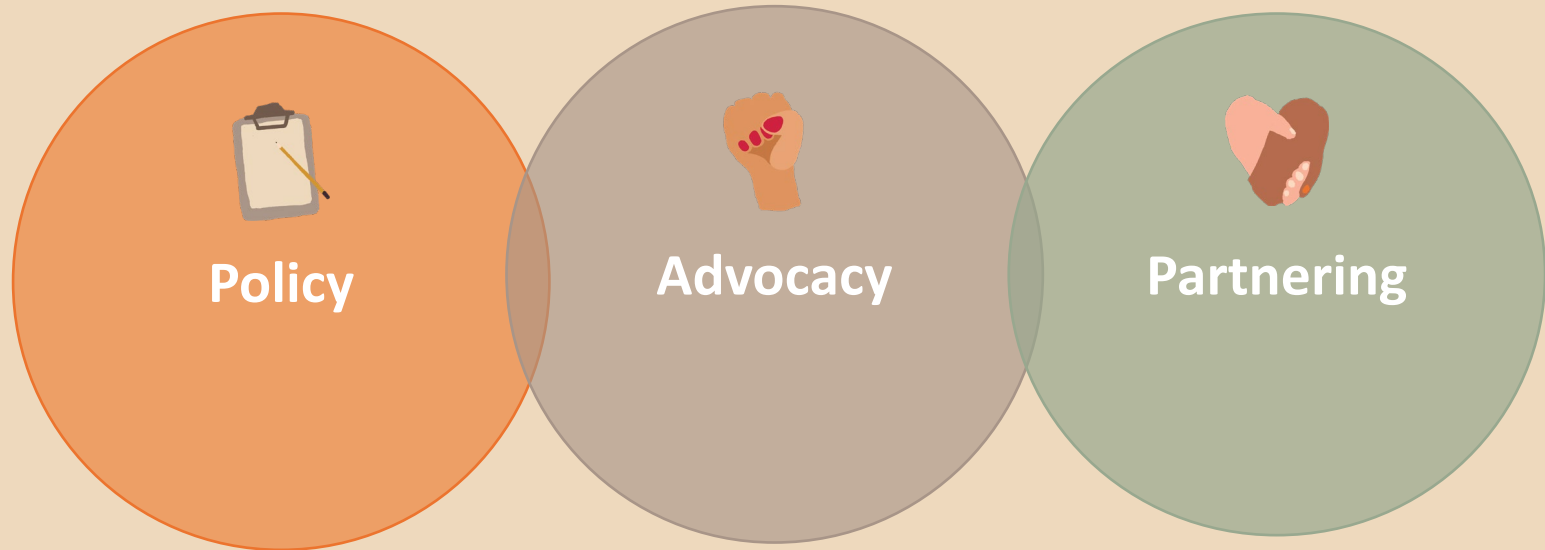
**Melissa DeRosa** @melissadderosa · Mar 28  
Women will not be forced to be alone when they are giving birth. Not in New York. Not now, not ever.

EO coming today -- will apply to public and private hospitals.

**Alyssa Katz** @alykatz · Mar 28  
Gov. Cuomo will issue an executive order to back up the Department of Health directive requiring hospitals to allow a non-sick partner in for births, says @melissadderosa. Hospitals could be harder pressed to defy that.

Show this thread

## Multi-pronged strategy for change



## EMC NYS Maternity Care + COVID-19 Policy Recommendations

- Immediately **establish Auxiliary Maternity Units** in accordance with AABC guidelines and expand access to existing birth centers
- **Mobilize midwives** to relieve pressure on the physician workforce, including temporarily supplementing with midwives from out of state and fast-tracking professional licensure processes
- **Ensure reimbursement of and access to perinatal support workers**, such as community-based doulas, lactation counselors, childbirth educators, and other peer support persons



Among others shared with policymakers at the state and federal level, including with the National Governors' Association



## Outreach to the Governor

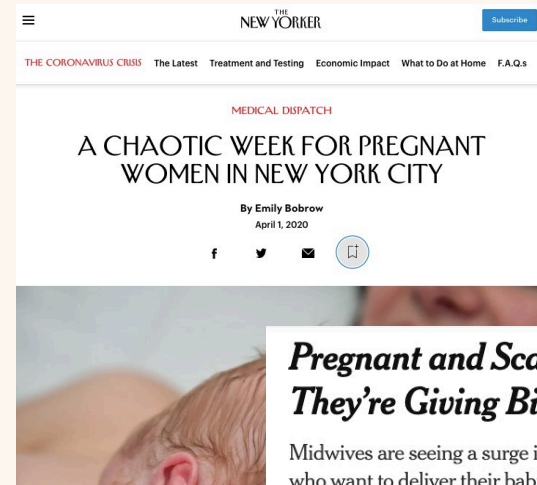
**Through existing relationships, EMC reached out to the Governor and his staff.**

- Submitted letter on the importance of perinatal care during the pandemic response
- Phone meeting to connect with the Governor's staff
- Relayed concerns of our partners on the ground (midwives, doulas, the birth center)

## Media Attention as Motivator

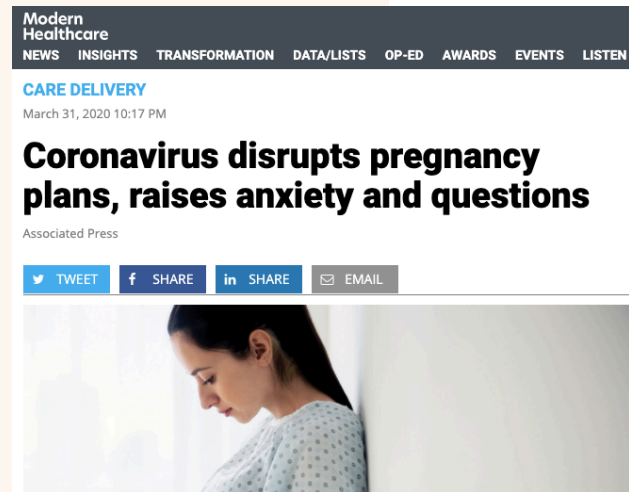
News stories sharing the fear and anxiety that childbearing people faced in giving birth in hospitals started coming out.

The demand for community birth options increased beyond capacity.



### *Pregnant and Scared of 'Covid Hospitals,' They're Giving Birth at Home*

Midwives are seeing a surge in demand from pregnant women who want to deliver their babies at home or in birthing centers.





## New York State COVID-19 Maternity Task Force



### **Purpose:**

**“Task Force to Develop Plan for New York State to Authorize & Certify Additional Birth Centers to Provide Mothers a Safe Alternative to Already Stressed Hospitals”**

“Birth centers can serve as a safe alternative for low-risk pregnancies — relieving the strain on hospitals and providing a supportive environment for mothers during an already stressful time.”

## Task Force Composition

- NY ACOG (District II)
- Healthcare and Hospital Associations
- Hospitals (Montefiore, NYP/Columbia, Maimonides)
- NYS Association of Licensed Midwives (CNM/CMs)
- NYS Association of Birth Centers
- Brooklyn Perinatal Network
- Durham's Baby Café (Community-based organization)
- Mosaic Health Center (FQHC)
- Every Mother Counts

**Who needs to be at this table?  
Whose voices are not being represented?**

## New York State COVID-19 Maternity Task Force Recommendations and Executive Order

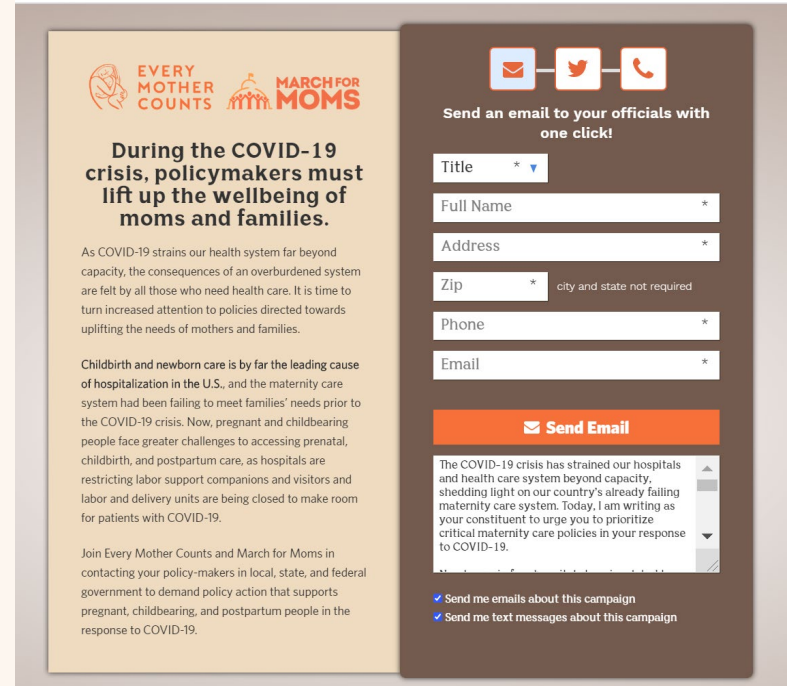
- **Expedite midwife-led birth centers and emergency birthing site licensure**
- **Doulas designated as essential support** persons
- **Provide universal COVID-19 testing** in labor
- **Community-based organization engagement** through representation and participation
- **Education campaign** on birthing options
- **Review research** on impact of COVID-19 on maternity care, especially racial disparities



## Take Action Campaign

We created a Mother's Month call to action, urging support for maternal health in COVID-19 response

Individuals could easily contact their policymakers at all levels – federal, state, and local.



The image shows a digital form for contacting officials. On the left, there is a text area with the following content:

**EVERY MOTHER COUNTS** **MARCH FOR MOMS**

**During the COVID-19 crisis, policymakers must lift up the wellbeing of moms and families.**

As COVID-19 strains our health system far beyond capacity, the consequences of an overburdened system are felt by all those who need health care. It is time to turn increased attention to policies directed towards uplifting the needs of mothers and families.

Childbirth and newborn care is by far the leading cause of hospitalization in the U.S., and the maternity care system had been failing to meet families' needs prior to the COVID-19 crisis. Now, pregnant and childbearing people face greater challenges to accessing prenatal, childbirth, and postpartum care, as hospitals are restricting labor support companions and visitors and labor and delivery units are being closed to make room for patients with COVID-19.

Join Every Mother Counts and March for Moms in contacting your policy-makers in local, state, and federal government to demand policy action that supports pregnant, childbearing, and postpartum people in the response to COVID-19.

On the right, there is a contact form with the following fields and options:

- Icons for email, Twitter, and phone.
- Text: "Send an email to your officials with one click!"
- Form fields: Title (dropdown), Full Name, Address, Zip (with "city and state not required" text), Phone, and Email.
- A red "Send Email" button.
- A text area containing a pre-written message: "The COVID-19 crisis has strained our hospitals and health care system beyond capacity, shedding light on our country's already failing maternity care system. Today, I am writing as your constituent to urge you to prioritize critical maternity care policies in your response to COVID-19."
- Two checkboxes: "Send me emails about this campaign" and "Send me text messages about this campaign", both of which are checked.

[WWW.EVERYMOTHERCOUNTS.ORG/ADVOCATE](http://WWW.EVERYMOTHERCOUNTS.ORG/ADVOCATE)



## Engaging advocates, activists, and partners on the ground

Through established partnerships, EMC seeks to create a bridge between advocates and others working on the ground and policymakers.

Partners include:

- Midwives
- Birth centers
- Doulas + doula collectives
- Community-based organizations
- Public health entities



## **Results and Continued Opportunities for Advocacy**

## Birth Center Expansion in New York City

**The Jazz Birth Center of Manhattan opened in May to expand birth settings options for childbearing people in New York City during COVID-19 and beyond.**

The Jazz Birth Center:

- the only freestanding birth center in Manhattan,
- TEMPORARY expansion of the Brooklyn Birthing Center, allowing expedited opening:
  - Continuation of existing contracts
  - Permitting immediate licensure
  - Facilitating state approvals

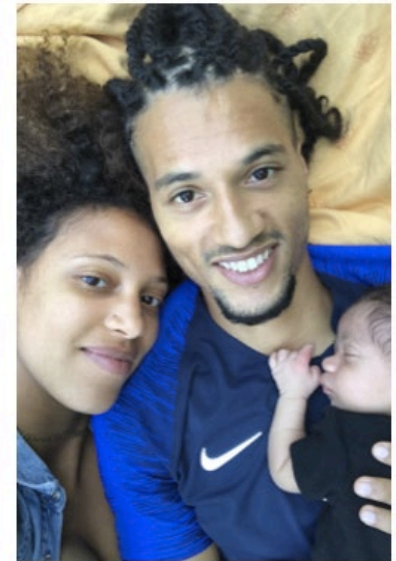
**While the opening has been timely enough to respond to the current pandemic, additional steps are needed for it to remain in operation even after the COVID-19 emergency is over.**

## Jazz Birth Center

**Awareness Raising –  
Building a base of new advocates**

Learn more about the Jazz Birth Center in this  
9-min film produced in partnership with  
*ScaryMommy*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ws7F3iRfl8c&feature=youtu.be>



The Jazz Birth Center's first birth: Mathylde and her family  
*Photo credit: Jazz Birth Center*



## Continued Advocacy Needed

### Impact Limited:

- “Without such an order it will be years before any MLBC is able to open”

### Demands include:

- Exempt Midwife-Led Birth Centers from the Certificate of Need Application Process
- Grant an Article 28 Certificate of Need to birth centers that meet CABC Freestanding Birth Center accreditation guidelines

September 14, 2020

Dear Governor Cuomo and Members of the New York State Maternity Task Force,

We are a group of midwives, birth professionals, organizations and stake-holders in support of increasing access to Midwife-Led Birth Centers (MLBCs) in locations across New York State.

As you are aware, while MLBCs were legalized in 2016 and regulations for them were passed in 2019, it wasn't until the Task Force's intervention after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic and appeal to the Governor that demanded that the Department of Health complete the licensing process for MLBCs in New York State that the Department of Health, following your deadline, released guidelines and included MLBCs under New York State's Certificate of Need (CON) process for Article 28 facilities classifying MLBCs under a new Section NYCRR Part 795.

**We urge the Task Force to call upon Governor Cuomo to use his executive authority to exempt Midwife-Led Birth Centers from this onerous Certificate of Need Application Process and instead grant an Article 28 Certificate of Need to those that meet CABC Freestanding Birth Center accreditation guidelines, thus honoring the intent of the Task Force to create safe alternatives for out-of-hospital birthing sites.**



**EVERY MOTHER COUNTS**

**THANK YOU!**

**Nan Strauss, JD**

Managing Director of Policy, Advocacy, and Grantmaking

**[nan@everymothercounts.org](mailto:nan@everymothercounts.org)**



# Building a Community Birth Center

Detroit's First Freestanding Birth Center

Leseliey Welch

Birth Detroit

Birth Center Equity Fund



Black Lives  
Matter

[birtdetroit.com](http://birtdetroit.com)

As birthing people, we hold the past, the present and the future in our wombs...The need is more urgent than ever for a strong community birthing infrastructure that provides a refuge and nurtures health, wellness, and liberatory vision.

*—The Birth Center Equity Fund*

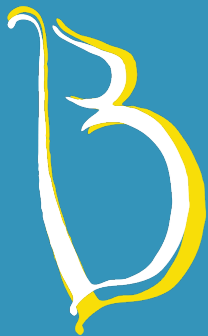


Imagine a  
New Way...

#ReimagineBirth



# A BIRTH CENTER in Detroit?



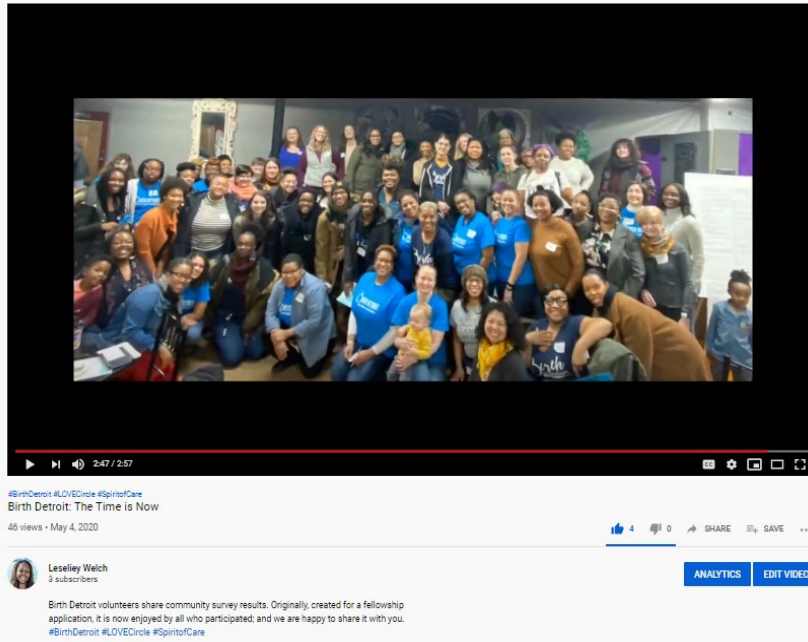
## LISTEN:

- Stakeholder Interviews
  - Discovery
  - Education
  - Shared Vision
  - Team Building
- Community Focus Groups
- Community Informed Survey



Leseliey Welch, MPH, MBA, Elon Geffrard, BS, CLC, ICCE, CD(DONA), Char'ly Snow, CNM, Nicole White, LM, CPM  
Co-Founders of Birth Detroit

98% of the nearly 400 people who took our community survey think a birth center is a good idea for their community.



Video:  
"BIRTH DETROIT:  
THE TIME IS NOW"

<https://youtu.be/JEowvqchmlo>



# COMMUNITY Birth Center?



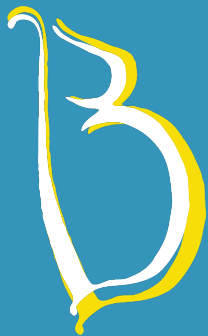
## ENGAGE:

- Community Launch and Learn
- Volunteer Work Groups
  - MIDWIFE
  - ENGAGE
  - DEVELOP
  - ADVOCATE
- Board of Directors + Advisory Council





# COMMUNITY Power?



## ACT:

- Honor Community Input
- Address Immediate Need
- Build and Nurture Relationships
- Plan *AND* Build Community Power



**TODAY is the DAY!**  
Join us for a virtual clinic tour  
facebook LIVE 2pm



PLEASE JOIN US FOR  
A VIRTUAL SIP & SEE FOR...

# BIRTH DETROIT

September 19, 2020 | 2:00 PM  
Zoom Webinar ID: 99818274945  
Passcode: 094102

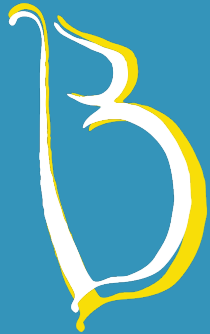
For more info, visit us at [www.birthdetroit.com](http://www.birthdetroit.com)



Video:  
"BIRTH DETROIT  
CARE TOUR"

<https://youtu.be/NfmP4KLEofo>

**LISTEN  
ENGAGE  
ACT...**



**2020**

**EASY ACCESS  
CLINIC™**

**PARTNER** with  
Brilliant Detroit to  
open first Easy  
Access Clinic™.

**-**

**PLANNING &  
FUNDRAISING**

**ENGAGE**  
community,  
providers and  
payors in birth  
center planning  
and development.

**2021**

**BIRTH CENTER**

**OPEN** Detroit's  
first freestanding  
community birth  
center!

**EARLY FUNDING**

W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Michigan Health Endowment Fund, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation,  
Max and Marjorie Fisher Foundation Executive Director Discretionary Fund,  
Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan Donor Advised Funds  
+ Hundreds of individual donors

BIRTH DETROIT  
*is a leader in the*



BIRTH  
CENTER  
EQUITY FUND

# COMMUNITY + NETWORK POWER

REWIRED NEWS

SECTION: MATERNITY AND BIRTHS

SEARCH

SUBSCRIBE DONATE

YOUR READING LIST

- Birth Centers Are Crucial for Communities of Color, Especially in a Pandemic
- The GOP's Abortion Obsession Submerged Pennsylvania's COVID-19 Response
- How to Fulfill Your Need for Sex, Touch, and Intimacy When You're Self-Isolating

## Birth Centers Are Crucial for Communities of Color, Especially in a Pandemic

Apr 15, 2020, 1:14pm Lesley Welch & Nashra Bari

We must act quickly to fortify established birth centers, and make birth centers a real option for birthing people in every city.



During **Black Maternal Health Week**, Rewire.News is joining the national conversation on Black maternal health and sharing stories from the frontlines of the reproductive justice movement.

"Is your birth center open?" the worried voice said on the phone.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have received a growing number of calls like this. These callers, often people far along in their pregnancy, want a safe place to give birth, somewhere that is not a hospital overwhelmed with COVID-19.



[birthcenterequityfund.org](https://birthcenterequityfund.org)

BCEF was created to grow and sustain birth centers led by people of color in COVID-19 and beyond.



BIRTH CENTER EQUITY FUND

## NETWORK ORIENTATION

JUNE 26, 2020 • 2:00-3:30pm ET  
Zoom ID: 391 037 0928, Password: birth

We've been working hard to build a foundation for our collective abundance and liberation & have exciting updates! Join us to hear survey results, talk about what's next and get oriented to our fund development strategy & tools. RSVP to [info@birthcenterequityfund.org](mailto:info@birthcenterequityfund.org).

**LISTEN  
ENGAGE  
ACT.**



## FUND

**\$100,000,000**

Campaign to grow & sustain more than 25 BIPOC birth centers.

## NETWORK

**25+ birth centers**

Relationship and capacity building for dynamic BIPOC birth center network.

## NARRATIVE

**liberation**

Transform the culture of birth in our communities for generations to come.

### Early Funding Partners

Tara Health Foundation, Collaborative for Gender and Reproductive Equity, Foundation for the Advancement of Midwifery, Grove Foundation, Yellow Chair Foundation



**AABC**  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF  
BIRTH CENTERS

# Adding CPM Licensure and Removing CON requirement for Birth Centers- Kentucky

Mary Kathryn DeLodder

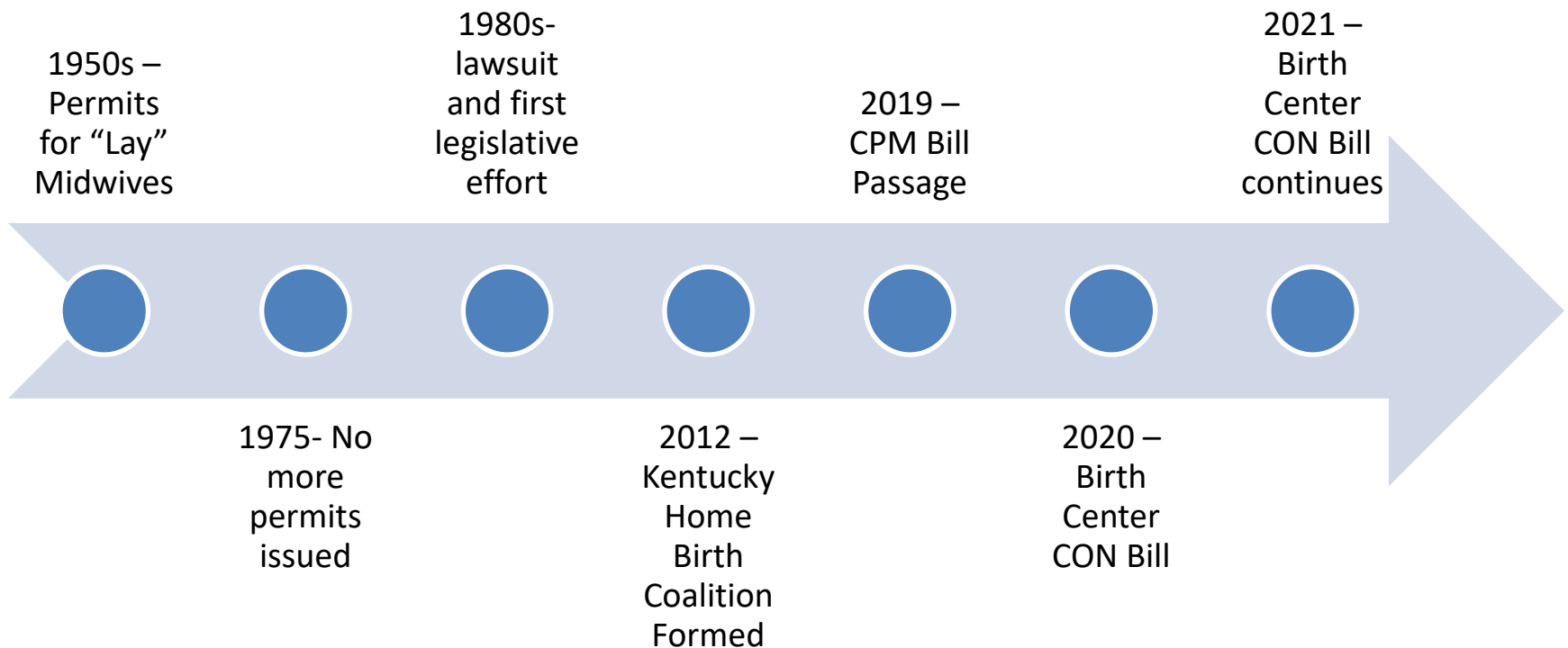
Kentucky Birth Coalition







# Midwifery in Kentucky



# Social Media: The Game Changer



# Working With a Lobbyist

- How do you find a lobbyist?
- What can a lobbyist do for you?
  - Our “legislative doula”
- Cost
- Fundraising
  - Online auctions
  - Online days of giving
  - Individual donors
  - Business sponsors



# Grassroots Organizing & Citizen Lobbying

- Communication – social media
- Make it easy – step by step instructions
  - How to find your legislators & contact them, email & letter templates
- Lobby Days
  - Pick a date early
  - Have people sign up online
  - We schedule all the meetings
  - Meeting leaders
  - Lots of babies & kids!





# KHBC ACTION ITEM

*Call the legislative message line  
with this message:*

**“I’d like to leave a message for  
my Senator and Representative,  
as well as all members of the  
Senate Licensing and Occupations  
Committee: Please  
support SB84.”**

#ky4midwives  
#sb84 #kyga19

**1 (800) 372-7181**





# Charging Forward: Birth Centers

- Keeping the momentum
- New allies & supporters
- New talking points
- Same overall strategy





# Questions?



## Contact Information:

Jill Alliman

Government Affairs Committee

[jkalliman86@gmail.com](mailto:jkalliman86@gmail.com)