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City of Milwaukee Health Department honors National Black Maternal Health Week, April 11 – 17, 2019

Milwaukee, WI – This year marks the second annual *Black Maternal Health Week*, organized by the [Black Mamas Matter Alliance](#). This national designation serves to invest in systematic, institutional, and individual level approaches to improve health outcomes for Black families. This includes dismantling all levels of racism in government and individual level bias between providers and clients. Since Commissioner Kowalik joined the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD), she has worked diligently to bring additional resources and awareness to Milwaukee.

Last week, Commissioner Kowalik attended the Best Babies Zone annual meeting along with stellar Housing Authority and United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County staff. Best Babies Zone is a place-based infant mortality eradication initiative and predominately serves Black families in the Westlawn neighborhood; it has been active since 2018. This meeting reinforced the commitment Milwaukee is making to increase the quality of life for Black families. Many zones across the country work closely with their local Healthy Start projects and some even have their local children's hospitals or academic centers as the lead agencies while empowering staff and clients to live their best lives.

Within the last two weeks, there have been formal updates on service expansion and innovation to eradicate Black infant mortality in Milwaukee. The MHD added a Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinic, a nutritional public health program, to Ascension St. Joseph's on April 1st. This site will predominately serve Black families and provide access to a cadre of resources. On April 2nd, Mayor Tom Barrett, Alderwomen Milele Coggs, Alderman Khalif Rainey, County Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic, and Commissioner Kowalik hosted a press conference to highlight additional funding for MHD's new doula project entitled, Birth Outcomes Made Better (BOMB), specifically for 53206, another predominantly Black area. The BOMB doula program will employ a program manager, four (4) doulas, and one (1) outreach liaison. MHD will begin recruitment for these historic roles in the coming month.

Another notable investment in eradication of Black Infant Mortality is Healthy Start, a federal infant and maternal mortality initiative that has been absent in Milwaukee for years. Last month, MHD learned Children's Hospital of Wisconsin (CHW) was awarded Healthy Start for Milwaukee County. Through this award, MHD will receive \$595,208 over the next five (5) years to sustain its fatherhood initiatives.

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