

# MI MILK COLLECTIVE

## ORGANIZATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

## Why MMC?

MMC identifies that there is a race equity problem. **We are committed to centering systems change as a catalyst to driving strategic approaches in changing the context in ways that Black Birth and Black breastfeeding families can thrive.** In doing so, we will have a deeper bench to serve more families, and we'll have a stronger advocacy voice by amplifying cis-terhood, and community-based leadership.

## About

MMC centers Black birth and breastfeeding to combat infant and maternal mortality and addresses a slate of structural inequities and indicators that lead to breastfeeding disparities. **We are a statewide collaborative that includes, but is not limited to, Black-led community organizations, coalitions, hospital systems, birth workers, and lactation professionals.** Each organization and/or person that forms part of the Mi Milk Collective is dedicated to supporting the people, organizations, and birth workers who are advancing equity and justice for Black families.

## How We Serve

Mi Milk Collective is a standing workgroup that is **dedicated to operationalizing systems-change through cis-terhood, mentorship, policy advocacy, and celebration of Black birthing and breastfeeding.** We do this, in the words of the Black Mamas Matter Alliance, by listening, trusting, and investing in Black-led organizations and leaders who are trusted and reflect in communities by which they live and serve.



Cis-terhood



Mentorship



Policy Advocacy



Celebration of  
Black Birthing And  
Breastfeeding



# Successes



## Established a leadership team of Black leaders in breastfeeding and birth justice across Michigan to lead advancement of MMC's ongoing efforts

MMC has 15 founding members from across Michigan with Shatoria Townsend serving as Chairperson of the group.



## Created steering subcommittees of Black leaders in breastfeeding and birth justice across Michigan

Two subcommittees were formed - one devoted to Community Conversation and one for Black Lactation and Birth Worker Scholarship Awards.



## Identified Black-led breastfeeding supporter groups throughout Michigan

Black, women-led organizations across Michigan have built relationships with MMC members, further strengthening sisterhood, relationship and accountability.



## Amplified, connected, and financially invested in Black-led breastfeeding supporter groups throughout Michigan

Provided three scholarships to lactation supporters and three scholarships to birth workers.

"Organizations like Mi Milk Collective that center Black birth and breastfeeding justice are so crucial because the experience of Black families has been so intentionally decentered and marginalized. These systems repeatedly cause harm, including disproportionate Black maternal and infant deaths, that leave lasting impacts on entire communities and family systems. **We must all do the work of dismantling systems that have historically and currently made it so that Black families are not safe or free to birth and breastfeed in ways that work for them.** Black-led organizations are setting the path toward true equity and justice. Michigan Breastfeeding Network is honored to serve alongside and in solidarity with the Black thought leaders, advocates, and breastfeeding supporters who are centering Black families in the reclamation of birth and breastfeeding justice."

- Shannon McKenney Shubert, MPH, CLC, MIBFN Executive Director

# Why Scholarships?

By investing in the scholarship recipients, MMC desired to build a strong network of knowledgeable and culturally-sensitive professionals who can address the unique challenges and disparities faced by Black communities in breastfeeding and birth practices. As the scholarship recipients gain expertise and experience, they will contribute to bridging the gaps in lactation support and birth services within marginalized communities, particularly those led by Black individuals.



## Connected with key Michigan and federal legislators to advance MMC's policy priorities

MMC members actively met with policymakers working to disrupt the incarceration system, along with other spaces where lactating folk are separated from their infants/children.



## Planned and promoted Black Breastfeeding Week celebration

MMC members organized and hosted several Black Breastfeeding Week events in 2021 and 2022, including YOLO launching a "Black Milk Matters" fundraiser and LactPower working with their city government on a local August Breastfeeding Month proclamation.



## Established financial resources to support MMC and the stabilization of the group and its members

By securing funding for MMC member orgs and resources, the collective can strengthen its infrastructure and expand its outreach, positively impacting lactating individuals and their families across the state.



## Worked towards establishing Medicaid reimbursement for IBCLC care

MMC member org, Southeast Michigan IBCLCs of Color, is actively working towards the crucial goal of establishing Medicaid reimbursement for lactation care services. This advocacy has highlighted the need for financial support and importance of culturally-centered lactation care to improve maternal infant health outcomes.

