

US MERA Statement of Commitment to Health Equity in Maternal and Newborn Health and to Greater Diversity in Midwifery

Health inequity is one of our country's great afflictions, and nowhere is it more palpable and heartbreaking than in the outcomes of mothers and newborns. Black families experience the highest rates of maternal mortality, preterm birth, low birth weight, and stillbirths. These facts are reprehensible and in need of greater attention and concerted action.

The US Midwifery Education, Regulation, and Association (US MERA) collaborative is deeply committed to improving the health and well-being of all mothers and babies in the US. Many organizations share this commitment, and the work of US MERA--a collaborative of the 7 US national standard-setting organizations for midwifery practice, education, and certification--is very specialized. Specifically, our work is to align the standards for midwifery education and regulation with the standards of the [International Confederation of Midwives \(ICM\)](#). ICM standards are designed to strengthen the midwifery profession to provide safe, high-quality, and culturally sensitive care to meet the essential health needs of women and newborns in low- and high-resource settings alike, with [justice and equity as central tenets](#). We have embraced ICM standards as a key to strengthening the midwifery profession to play a prominent role in the future in improving maternal and newborn health in all US communities.

In light of both our mission and these critical issues at hand, US MERA has formed an Equity Task Force to guide us on how best to apply an equity lens to our work. While all US MERA organizations include midwives of color, we share the belief that our profession should be as diverse as the communities we serve. In addition to our collaborative work through US MERA, our individual organizations are also working within our own missions on the important task of increasing midwifery diversity.

The [International Center for Traditional Childbearing \(ICTC\)](#), which has applied for membership in US MERA, is an organization which is doing important work to improve care to mothers and babies in the US. We acknowledge ICTC's commitment to diversity and equity, and interest in being part of US MERA. Currently, US MERA is evaluating how we might work with ICTC and other organizations while staying true to our central focus of aligning with ICM standards.

As a consensus-based organization, our deliberations are thoughtful and thorough, and not necessarily speedy. Our collaborative and our individual organizations are in frequent direct communication with ICTC, and we are eager to learn about ICTC's

perspectives on ICM standards and how best to utilize these standards as a means of advancing our shared goals.

Building a more just and equitable system of health care for women and newborns in the US will require new strategic approaches to collaboration and a sustained commitment from each of our organizations, consistent with our missions and spheres of influence. US MERA embraces this commitment.

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