



## What is “Community-Based”?

The term “community-based” is used dozens of times in the Momnibus legislation and is an important concept in improving maternal health. It is a term that is used in many disciplines, from social work to public health, healthcare, the arts, design, technology, research and more. Frameworks like “reproductive-justice” and “intersectionality” are also informative and relevant to the use of “community-based” in this context.<sup>1</sup>

While there isn’t one shared definition, research has demonstrated that “people largely agree about what community is” and that an element of community-based success is making sure people are “empowered to function in ways that are meaningful to their community base.”<sup>2</sup> Doulas and midwives, especially midwives who attend people in community-birth settings, are often considered “the key” to addressing the U.S. maternal health crisis.<sup>3</sup>

**This session’s Birth Equity Bill Package is a community-based response to our maternal health crisis.**

Community-based solutions are different – that’s why they work. This bill package was not developed by a health system’s policy staff or professional association’s lobbyist. It was developed by people rooted in community and people who don’t gain from maintaining the status quo, or aren’t financially invested in the status quo.

It is inspired by and driven by direct-experience with community-birth, midwives and doulas. It is the kind of work that the Momnibus seeks to support in both form and content. **As a result the process and priorities of the bill package may be different than the status quo. This is may be disorienting or uncomfortable for people who are part of or invested in the status quo.**

But when the status-quo has demonstrated that it is ineffective<sup>4</sup> looking beyond the status quo is essential. <sup>5</sup> That is what these bills do.

<sup>1</sup> See L. Ross et. al. Eds., *Radical Reproductive Justice*, (Feminist Press 2017).

<sup>2</sup> KM MacQueen et al. "What is community? An evidence-based definition for participatory public health." *Am J Public Health*. 2001;91(12):1929-1938. doi:10.2105/ajph.91.12.1929

<sup>3</sup> See Nora Ellmann, "Community-Based Doulas and Midwives: Key to Addressing the U.S. Maternal Health Crisis," Center for American Progress, April 14, 2020. Available at: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/04/14/483114/community-based-doulas-midwives/>

<sup>4</sup> See Alison Young, "Hospitals know how to protect mothers. They just aren't doing it." *USA Today*, December 15, 2019. Available at: <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/investigations/deadly-deliveries/2018/07/26/maternal-mortality-rates-preeclampsia-postpartum-hemorrhage-safety/546889002/>

<sup>5</sup> See our other fact sheet available at <https://www.elephantcircle.net/s/Opportunity-for-a-paradigm-shift-in-maternity-care.pdf>

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