



National Minority Health Month

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

BLACK IN AMERICA: National Minority Health Month

Scholars have long held that modern racial health disparities are rooted in centuries-old systemic racism in America's policies and practices. As a result, medical and nonmedical inequities emerged and persist to this day. Now, more than ever, racial health disparities need to be addressed.

Despite recently released [data from the CDC](#) that life expectancy has improved overall, the story remains dire for Black Americans throughout the country. Whether it's maternal health, heart disease, cancer, nephritis or stroke, Black Americans are dying prematurely and at higher rates than white people and other minority groups.

April is [National Minority Health Month](#), a program of the NIH's [National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities](#). The 2024 theme is "Be the Source for Better Health: Improving Health Outcomes Through Our Cultures, Communities and Connections."

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators unequivocally supports the efforts of the NIH. As state legislators, NBCSL members are in prime position to not only raise awareness and address health disparities but to also take steps to improve the health of Black Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities we represent in our respective districts.

Since 1977, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators has consistently focused on health and human services policies and resolutions. Our [2024 resolutions](#) were no different. This National Minority Health Month, NBCSL created a toolkit to help all members be their community's source for better health. In the toolkit, members will find supporting communications to add to your efforts to spread the word, share on social, post and distribute, and create and share.

Through our collected efforts, we can all take critical steps to eliminate racial health disparities. Together, we can do better.



National Minority Health Month Toolkit 2024

[Download Here](#)



THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER *Representative Laura Hall (AL)*

Welcome to another edition of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators newsletter as we recognize National Minority Health Month. This observance underscores the vital need to tackle healthcare disparities among minority communities, urging reflection on our progress and the challenges ahead in our quest for health equity.

Recently, I had the honor of participating in the "Pushing Policy: Women Uniting for Legislative Change" webinar, where my fellow QUAD Caucus leaders and I discussed critical issues disproportionately affecting minority women, including Black maternal health. This historic conversation sheds light on the urgency of our mission. I invite you to delve into this and all other stories in our newsletter.

Thank you for your commitment, and I trust you'll find this newsletter enriching.

LaKimba DeSadier Takes Helm as CEO of NBCSL



LaKimba DeSadier, NBCSL CEO

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) is thrilled to announce the official hiring of LaKimba DeSadier as its new Chief Executive Officer. With over two decades of dedicated service in non-profit government and advocacy, LaKimba brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to public policy.

LaKimba's journey with NBCSL began in 2003 when she assumed the role of executive director, a position she held until 2015. In August 2023, DeSadier returned to support NBCSL's reorganization. During her tenure as Interim CEO, she demonstrated exceptional leadership, strategic vision, and a dedication to fostering collaboration among state legislators, community leaders, and stakeholders.

"I am deeply honored to officially be named the CEO of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators," said LaKimba DeSadier. "I believe in the power of collective action and am committed to working tirelessly alongside our dedicated members to address the pressing challenges facing our communities. I am excited to lead NBCSL in its mission to advocate for policies that uplift marginalized voices and promote inclusive prosperity."

Additionally, NBCSL is pleased to welcome Nancy Beams as the new Chief Financial Officer. As the owner of Beams Management Group, LLC, Nancy previously served as a consultant with NBCSL from 2004-2014. With a proven track record in financial management and strategic planning, Nancy's expertise will be invaluable as NBCSL continues its mission to positively impact, through legislation and public policy, African American communities across the country.

The Texas Legislative Black Caucus Welcomes NBCSL as they host its Region X and Quarterly Spring Meeting in Houston, Texas [\(Photo Gallery\)](#)

On April 4-6, NBCSL legislators and corporate round table members gathered in Houston, Texas, for their respective business meetings, graciously hosted by Senator Borris Miles (TX), Chair of NBCSL Region X. The 3-day gathering highlighted the state of the organization and emphasized a renewed focus on collaboration and the work ahead. In addition to addressing organizational matters, the event featured crucial discussions on healthcare. Two pivotal panel discussions highlighted key issues surrounding health equity.

The first panel, "*Prescription Drug Affordability Boards (PDABs) and Health Equity*," moderated by Senator London Lamar (TN), featured Dr. Maisha Standifer, Director of Health Policy, Satcher Health Leadership Institute, Morehouse School of Medicine; Melissa Gong, Executive Director of the Global Coalition on Aging; and Maimah Karmo, Founder, Tigerlily Foundation. They delved into the evolving landscape of PDABs and their impact on prescription drug accessibility. Noteworthy questions from legislators, including Representative LaKeshia Myers (WI), sparked discussions on improving healthcare representation and diversity within PDABs.

The second panel, "*Immunizations and Health Equity*," moderated by Representative Rhetta Bowers (TX), featured Senator Raumesh Akbari (TN), Vice President, NBCSL; Dr. Candice Robinson, Director of Scientific Affairs and Public Health, GSK Vaccines; Dr. Frank North, Assistant Professor, Irma Lerma Rangel School of Pharmacy, Texas A&M University; and Terri Burke, Executive Director, Immunization Partnership. Discussions ranged from the importance of vaccines in eradicating diseases like Measles to innovative strategies for equitable vaccine access. The panelists addressed challenges such as vaccine misinformation and politicization, emphasizing the role of legislation and accurate messaging in promoting vaccination.

The event concluded with engaging Q&A sessions, highlighting the need for proactive measures to combat misinformation and advocate for vaccine distribution. Representative Bowers led insightful discussions on overcoming challenges posed by social media and politics in immunization efforts, emphasizing the importance of engaging constituents and providing factual information.

Moreover, both legislators and corporate round table members engaged in a set of surveys, providing valuable insights into the organization's performance and opportunities for improvement. The surveys also explored our members' relationships with media and social media platforms. We invite all members and Corporate Roundtable participants to share their valuable feedback by participating in our surveys.



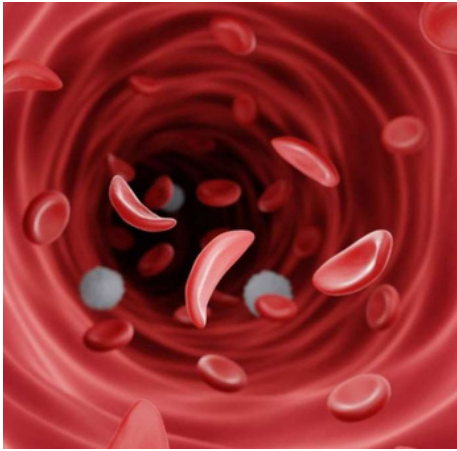
Senator Borris Miles (TX), District 13
Chair, NBCSL Region X

NBCSL Member Survey <https://form.jotform.com/240944669987075>

Corporate Round Table Member Survey <https://form.jotform.com/240948850163158>

Resolution and Model Legislation Submission Opens April 15

Mark your calendars! April 15th marks the opening of the resolution submission period. Don't miss out on this opportunity to enact meaningful change. Click the [resolution](#) and [model legislation](#) hyperlinks to submit.



LEGISLATION IN PROGRESS

Expanding Specialized Treatment for Sickle Cell Disease

In a groundbreaking development, Florida has allocated a staggering \$10 million toward expanding treatment options for sickle cell disease. This significant investment marks a pivotal moment in healthcare, offering hope and relief to countless individuals affected by this debilitating condition.

With this funding, specialized treatment centers across the state are set to receive substantial resources, empowering them to enhance care, research and outreach efforts. From cutting-edge therapies to improved patient support programs, the impact of this initiative promises to be far-reaching.

As highlighted in [NBCSL resolution HHS-23-27](#), NBCSL represents communities and states across the country most affected by sickle cell disease and believes that institutions should provide high quality, evidence-based care for individuals living with sickle cell disease as well as potential opportunities to improve care, outcomes, and cost-effectiveness of care. We support expanded funding that would provide access to all medications and forms of treatment for sickle cell disease, and services for enrollees with a diagnosis of sickle cell disease that are eligible for coverage under Medicare and Medicaid programs.

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FEATURE STORY

Maternal Mortality: Black Mothers Are Under Attack

America's maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the developed world, and the rates are especially high among Black mothers who are unjustly and unfairly dying at crisis proportions.

Since at least 2014, Black women have had the highest maternal mortality rate of any racial or ethnic group, per [USA Facts.org](#). According to the [CDC](#), Black women die from complications related to pregnancy at roughly two to three times the rate of white, Hispanic, Asian American and Pacific Islander women—regardless of their income or education levels.

Now, more than ever, America needs to make Black maternal health a national priority. [Black Maternal Health Week](#) began in 2017 as an effort by the [Black Mammals Matter Alliance \(BMMA\)](#), to raise awareness about Black and minority health issues. In 2021, President Biden signed the [first-ever proclamation](#) marking Black Maternal Health Week (April 11-17) and bringing critical attention to the country's escalating maternal mortality rate.

While the Biden-Harris administration has made [considerably more effort](#) than any other previous administration in addressing the maternal health crisis by [investing hundreds of millions of dollars](#) and directing government agencies to come up with [deliberate and actionable plans](#), there is still much more work to be done. After all, maternal mortality is not just a medical issue; rather, it stems from [deep-rooted racism](#) that has medical and non-medical implications.

The [Commonwealth Fund reports](#) that “states are exploring and implementing policies that affect postpartum care, midwives, doulas and freestanding birth centers. Individual policies can support evidence-based practices, but such

policies are not a checklist for advancing birth and perinatal health equity. These individual policies are single elements needed to support systemwide transformation.”

“Caring for the health and well-being of Black mothers is not just a matter of policy; it is a moral imperative,” says Senator London Lamar, Chair of NBCSL's Health and Human Services Committee. “We cannot rest until every Black mother receives the care and support she deserves, free from the burden of racism and inequality. Together, we must advocate for systemic change and invest in initiatives that prioritize the health and safety of Black mothers and their babies.”

NBCSL [remains committed](#) to doing its part to transform the system by ensuring equitable health outcomes ([HHS-24-36](#)) and encourages members to [review state-by-state comparisons of perinatal policy](#), and work with local governments to create structural policy changes and community-led solutions to help address the underlying causes and address the plight of America's Black mothers.

ON THE ISSUE ...

FACEBOOK
LIVE

Tuesday,
April 16
@ 3 p.m. EDT

Senator London Lamar (TN)
Chair, NBCSL Health and Human
Services Committee





Source: Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images

FEATURE STORY

Stop Book Bans: Combating Censorship in Schools and Public Libraries

Since 1985, the [American Association of School Librarians](#) has recognized [School Library Month](#) in April. Meant to be a time for school librarians to celebrate the essential role that strong school libraries play in transforming learning, they are instead on the front lines alongside public librarians and educators fighting hard against book bans that are sweeping across the nation.

The [American Library Association \(ALA\)](#) recently [released new data](#) showing a record 4,240 unique book titles were targeted for censorship in 2023, a 65% increase over the 2,571 unique titles targeted in 2022 and a staggering 128% increase over 2021 numbers.

“Their aim is to suppress the voices of those traditionally excluded from our nation’s conversations, such as people in the LGBTQIA+ community or people of color,” [said Deborah Caldwell-Stone](#), director of [ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom](#). “Each attempt to ban a book by one of these groups represents a direct attack on every person’s constitutionally protected right to freely choose what books to read and what ideas to explore.”

[PEN America](#), a nonprofit organization that tracks all [book bans](#) in libraries and classrooms across the U.S., reports 37% of banned books include characters of color or discuss race and racism since July 2021. In addition, authors whose books are

targeted are most frequently female, people of color and/or LGBTQ+ individuals.

According to PEN America, more than half of America’s states banned books during the 2022-2023 school year. While more than 40% of all book bans occurred in Florida, there were 625 bans in Texas, 333 bans in Missouri, 281 bans in Utah and 186 bans in Pennsylvania. In addition, ALA reports that more than 100 titles were challenged in 17 different states in 2023.

“These numbers are astounding, and as members of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, we should all be alarmed by the efforts to erase our history and our voices,” [said Alabama State Representative and NBCSL President Laura Hall](#). “We must do everything we can to ensure our students’ right to choose and read books in schools, classrooms and public libraries is preserved in perpetuity.”

A [2023 Ipsos poll](#) found that most Americans, regardless of party affiliation, say they support teaching about the history of slavery, racism and segregation in public schools. As such, NBCSL urges you to encourage your constituents to contact you and report a book challenge or attempted ban, or upcoming library or school board meetings. State legislators can find more tools at [UniteAgainstBookBans.org/toolkit/](#).



LEGISLATOR SPOTLIGHT Rep. Sandra Hollins (UT)

Sandra Hollins holds the distinction of being the first Black American woman elected to the Utah State Legislature. She currently serves as the Assistant Minority Whip and also assumes the role of Vice Chair on the Executive Office and Criminal Justice Appropriation Committee.

Her noteworthy legislative accomplishments include successfully championing legislation aimed at banning the use of knee-on-the-neck restraints by law enforcement, implementing cultural training requirements for school resource officers, expanding job opportunities for individuals with prior incarceration experiences, eliminating provisions that allowed for slavery within the Utah state constitution, and officially recognizing Juneteenth as a state holiday.

We salute you Rep. Sandra Hollins.

IN FOCUS

President Hall and members of the QUAD Caucus Meet with Voting Rights Activist Stacey Abrams to discuss diversity, equity and inclusion

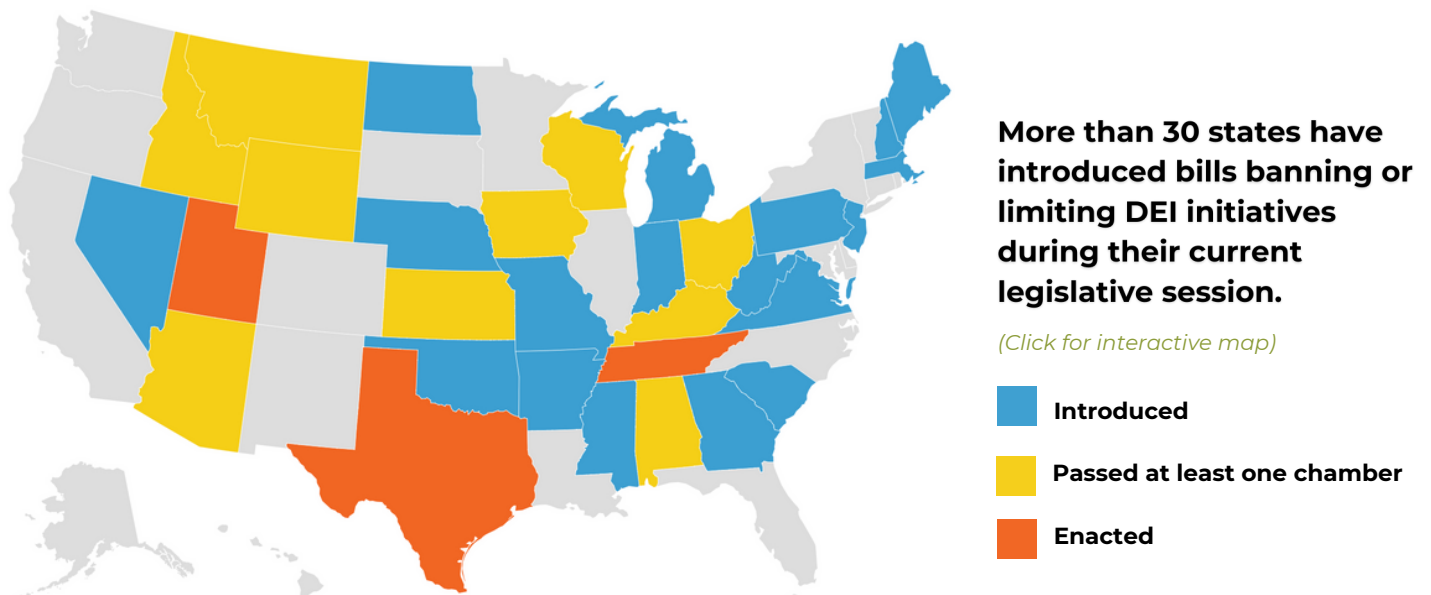


From left to right: Representative Laura Hall (AL), President, National Black Caucus of State Legislators President; Senator Mary Kunesh (MN), President, National Caucus of Native American State Legislators (NCNASL), Representative Angela Romero (UT), Chair, National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL); and Stacey Abrams, Voting Rights Activist and Former Minority Leader of the Georgia House of Representatives.

In an inspiring collaboration, the Quad Caucus convened with voting rights activist Stacey Abrams to pledge their unwavering support for her efforts to address the challenges faced in advancing the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) agenda. Representing the Black, Hispanic, Native, and Asian-Pacific communities, Quad Caucus leaders vowed with resolute determination to unite to combat the work ahead, which includes validating their expertise and knowledge of the problem, preparing for opposition, and pursuing legal action for change.

"The issue of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) has reached a critical juncture with far-reaching implications," says NBCSL President Laura Hall. "From disparities in access to education and employment opportunities to unequal treatment within the criminal justice system, and even in healthcare, the effects of these entrenched inequalities are keenly felt by marginalized groups." Compounding these challenges is the alarming trend of more than 30 states introducing bills aimed at banning or limiting DEI initiatives in their current legislative sessions. These legislative efforts threaten to roll back hard-fought gains in promoting diversity and fostering inclusive environments. They not only undermine efforts to address historical injustices but also hinder the advancement of equitable policies and practices essential for building a more just and inclusive society.

The members of the Quad Caucus acknowledge the challenges ahead as they confront discriminatory legislation and corporate hesitancy to endorse DEI principles. Together, they are ready to take bold and public action, shedding light on those who impede DEI progress. NBCSL will be following this closely and will share updates as the Quad Caucus progresses.



ICYMI (In Case You Missed It)

Welcome to Annapolis, Maryland!



NBCSL's President Laura Hall and CEO LaKimba DeSadier travel to Annapolis, Maryland, to meet with members of the Maryland Black Caucus of State Legislators ahead of the 48th Annual Legislative Conference, which will be held December 3-6, 2024, in Washington D.C., at the Capitol Hilton. During their visit, they were recognized on the floor of the Maryland State Legislature marking a memorable moment in time. They also had the opportunity to visit with Virginia Black Legislative Caucus Chair Senator Lamont Bagby (VA) in Richmond, Virginia.

President Hall Participates in Quad Caucus Health Equity Policy Session at NHCSL's Regional Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia



The Morehouse School of Medicine's Satcher Health Leadership Institute presented on the Health Equity Tracker and how legislators can use this data to advance health equity legislation in their respective states. The session was followed by a presentation from Prof. Daniel Dawes who in 2021, at the height of the COVID pandemic, discussed with members of the Quad Caucus the critical gaps in COVID data related to communities of color. Attendees learned new data regarding chronic diseases, HIV, behavioral health and other topics.



FROM THE CHAIR

LaKeitha Anderson, Brownstein

The moment you have all been waiting for! I am thrilled to announce the reactivation of the NBCSL policy committees.

Featuring 13 committees spanning various crucial areas such as Agriculture, Business, Financial Services, and Insurance, Education, Emergency Preparedness/Homeland Security, Energy, Transportation, and Environment, Health and Human Services, Gaming, Sports and Entertainment, Housing, International Affairs, Labor, Military, and Veteran Affairs, Law, Justice, and Ethics, Telecommunications, Science, and Technology and Youth. NBCSL offers a comprehensive platform tackling issues impacting our community.

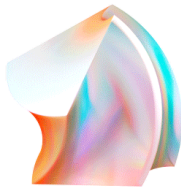
Your participation in these committees is instrumental to the effectiveness of NBCSL and the developing of important policies and discussions around best practices and pathways to better our community. We ask that you be ready to engage in high-impact discussions, collaborate on policy initiatives, and shape legislative agendas that resonate with your organization's values. Your expertise holds the key to driving meaningful change within our communities.

I invite you to join us in these important discussions. [Click here](#) to explore further details about each committee and choose one that aligns with your interests and expertise. Let's work together to make a difference.



To become a member, please call:
LaKimba DeSadier, CEO
(202) 624-5457

MEMBER PROFILE



BLOCK

Block's Evolution and Engagement with Policy and Technology

Block's journey began 14 years ago with the Square card reader enabling small businesses to accept credit card payments with a goal to empower small businesses and provide them access to the financial economy.

From Block's interest-free buy now, pay later product Afterpay, to the integration of AI in Square to advance small businesses, Block serves as a thought partner to help legislators understand trends as emerging financial technologies arise. As states like New York and Connecticut consider new regulations for these products, the Corporate Round Table offers an opportunity for members to share valuable information on financial technology issues and how policymakers can remove barriers that prohibit access to the financial economy for their constituents.

For more than five years, Block has proudly been an active participant on the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL)'s Corporate Round Table (CRT), fostering meaningful connections and advancing shared objectives.

Over the years, Block has grown to become a one stop shop for consumers, small business owners, and musicians alike. The company now includes Cash App and Afterpay, platforms providing financial services for consumers; TIDAL, a music streaming service that is empowering artists and musicians, and TBD, a business unit focused on building decentralized financial infrastructure that will enable everyone to access and participate in the global economy.

Block's purpose is economic empowerment. It is the lens through which the company creates and enhances products and services. With each policy priority, Block is focused on breaking down barriers and closing the gap on economic disparities. One issue that is at the forefront for Block is artificial intelligence (AI). During the NBCSL 47th Annual Legislative Conference, Block's State Public Policy Lead, Eastern U.S., Chelsi Bennett, participated alongside New York Assemblymember Clyde Vanel in a fireside chat to discuss the intersection of AI and the small business economy.

In October, Square launched several new AI features dedicated to helping sellers automate operations, speed up workflows, and regain time. For example, approximately 60% of new restaurant sellers indicated that they do not have or are not ready to upload their menu during onboarding. With tools like Square's Menu Generator, sellers can now create a full menu on Square in minutes, giving them valuable momentum when launching operations on Square.

As you consider any number of complex public policy issues in your statehouse in areas like financial services and technology, we urge you to please consider Block as a resource to you in your efforts.

For more information about Block, please visit www.block.com

CRT MEMBER PROFILE



As the nation's leading provider of sexual and reproductive health care and largest provider of sex education, Planned Parenthood Federation of America is consistently working to improve health outcomes in Black, Latino and Indigenous communities.

Here are just a few of the events Planned Parenthood affiliates are hosting, or involved in, to raise awareness in their communities during April as National Minority Health Month and Black Maternal Health Week coincide.

Planned Parenthood North Central States, in collaboration with several organizations, will be hosting a screening of Aftershock, a film that follows two families' journeys to activism in the fight for maternal health equity. PPNSC will also be partnering with the Wilder African American Babies Coalition and Projects for an event celebrating the legacy of Fannie Lou Hamer. Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin will be represented on a panel at The Foundation for Black Women's Wellness' Black Maternal and Child Health Summit. Planned Parenthood of Illinois, alongside community organizations, will host their first-ever statewide community baby shower with activities in Chicago, Carbondale and the Champaign area.



THE LEGISLATOR MAGAZINE Articles Due: May 3rd

The deadline to submit articles for the upcoming edition of "The Legislator" magazine is fast approaching. Don't miss your chance to share your insights and perspectives. Submit your articles by May 3rd to be considered for publication and join us in shaping the conversation.

EVENTS CALENDAR



JULY 15-18
2024 Republican National Convention/NBCSL Dinner
Milwaukee, Wisconsin



AUGUST 5-7
NBCSL Executive Committee and CRT Quarterly Meeting
@ NCSL Legislative Summit
Louisville, Kentucky



AUGUST 19-21
2024 Democratic National Convention
Chicago, Illinois



AUGUST 30-SEPTEMBER 1
NBCSL Regional Meeting
(Location TBD)



SEPTEMBER 11-15
NBCSL Executive Committee and CRT Quarterly Meeting
@ CBCF 53rd ALC
Washington, D.C.



December 2-7
48th Annual Legislative Conference
Washington, D.C.

PAST EVENT PHOTOS

- » [Region X Quarterly Spring Meeting \(Houston\)](#)
- » [47th Annual Legislative Conference](#)
- » [CBC/NBCSL/AAMA/NOBEL WOMEN Joint Meeting](#)
- » [Leadership Summit Sponsored by: Amazon](#)
- » [The Inaugural State of Black Health Summit](#)



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