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**Testimony on the Significant Impact of the Black Physicians and Healthcare Network (BPHN) and the Critical Need for Continued Funding**

My name is Robin T. Little, Program Director of the Black Physicians and Healthcare Network (BPHN) at The National Center for Children and Families (NCCF). I submit this testimony to highlight the transformative impact BPHN has had on Black residents across Montgomery County and to affirm why sustained and expanded funding is essential to advancing health equity, improving community wellness, and addressing persistent disparities that disproportionately affect Black families.

BPHN was created to dismantle long-standing barriers to healthcare and to ensure that Black residents—who face some of the county’s highest burdens of chronic disease, maternal mortality, mental health challenges, and structural barriers—receive culturally aligned, quality care from trusted providers.

Over FY25 alone, BPHN’s impact has been profound:

- Over 2,119 clients received direct, individualized navigation to medical, dental, behavioral health, specialty, and wraparound services.
- 3,647 referrals were made to trusted Black providers across Montgomery County, ensuring continuity of care and culturally responsive practice.
- Network growth to 207+ Black physicians and healthcare professionals, representing one of the largest Black provider networks in the region.
- 145,219 residents reached through education, outreach, social media, and community-based health events, strengthening preventive health awareness in neighborhoods with the highest disparities.
- 14 large-scale community health fairs, offering screenings for blood pressure, glucose, dental care, mental health, hearing, vision, and social determinant supports.
- Mobile Dental Van services provide preventive and early restorative treatment to up to 20 clients per event, helping close gaps in dental access for uninsured or underinsured families.
- Youth vision and hearing screenings include onsite provision of two pairs of glasses for children who needed them, directly reducing barriers to academic success.
- Food security programming with partners such as Kingdom Cares, Clifton Baptist, and Manna Food Center recognize that hunger and health outcomes are deeply interconnected.
- Quarterly Provider Q&A sessions and Coalition meetings, strengthening cross-sector collaboration and expanding the county’s ability to respond to emerging community health needs.

BPHN does not simply provide referrals—we provide trust, continuity, and community, three elements essential to improving outcomes in historically underserved populations.

The need for BPHN is not only ongoing—it is growing. Montgomery County’s Black community continues to experience:

- Higher rates of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, and maternal mortality
- Limited access to culturally responsive behavioral health services
- Distrust of healthcare institutions due to historical and present-day inequities
- Barriers related to insurance, immigration fears, transportation, cost, and system navigation

BPHN directly addresses these inequities by:

1. Connecting Black residents to trusted Black providers, improving care engagement, adherence, and long-term outcomes.
2. Meeting residents where they are—in schools, recreation centers, churches, food distribution sites, and community events.
3. Providing no-cost navigation services that reduce missed appointments, prevent emergency room reliance, and promote preventive care.
4. Strengthening the county’s public health infrastructure, particularly in high-need ZIP codes.
5. Advancing maternal health equity, a documented county and national priority.
6. Providing culturally rooted community education that empowers families to advocate for their own health and well-being.

BPHN prevents crisis by investing in prevention, connection, and education. Without sustained financial support:

- Thousands of Black residents may lose access to navigation and culturally competent care.
- Provider participation could decline, weakening an essential equity-driven infrastructure.
- Community trust—carefully built across hundreds of events, interactions, and partnerships—would be jeopardized.

BPHN is not duplicative; it is distinct, targeted, and essential to fulfilling Montgomery County’s equity commitment to healthcare. BPHN is a proven, high-performing model that strengthens access, builds trust, closes gaps, and advances health equity for Black residents across Montgomery County. Our work aligns directly with the county’s strategic priorities for prevention, maternal health, behavioral health, and culturally competent care. Continued funding ensures that Montgomery County remains a national leader in equitable, community-rooted healthcare—and that Black families have the resources, advocacy, and support they deserve.

I respectfully urge continued investment in the BPHN program. Our community’s health and future depend on it.