

## Press Release

**For Release:**  
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### ***“You have the power to save lives:” Massachusetts Council of Churches receives funds to support Black & Latinx Pastors to remove barriers to vaccination***

(Boston) The Massachusetts Council of Churches (MCC) has received [a major grant of federal funds as part of the Baker-Polito Administration Vaccine Equity initiative](#). This initiative focuses on 20 cities & towns with the greatest COVID-19 case burden, considering social determinants of health and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) ([Mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccine-equity-initiative](#)). MA COVID-19 Community Grants embrace the statewide motto, “you have the power to save lives” and are supported by [Heath Resources in Action](#) (HRiA).

[MCC Associate Director Rev. Kenneth Young](#) will lead the ongoing effort at the Massachusetts Council of Churches, focusing on supporting Black and Latinx pastors in Brockton, Fall River, Haverhill, New Bedford, Randolph, and Springfield. Rev. Young said, “We are working with BIPOC clergies in these cities because of their roles as trusted community leaders in spaces where majority white institutions historically have failed to provide sufficient and culturally appropriate resources for health, safety and communal thriving in the BIPOC community.”

“I grieve the inequity of our broken health care systems that leaves so many communities without the resources they deserve,” said MCC Executive Director Rev. Laura Everett. “And, I am so grateful that HRiA and our funding partners see that the Massachusetts Council of Churches has the networks, infrastructure, credibility, relationships, and convening power to move quickly and scale up the equity work we’ve already been doing, and recognize the incredible role pastors play in their communities. We pray for God’s healing and justice to come quickly.”

To support Black and Latinx clergies in the priority cities, MCC will continue to implement clergy-specific programming such as: leading clergy learning communities, building networks of support, convening a statewide worship safety summit, and crafting quick, sector-specific communication.

The goal of the **MA COVID-19 Community Grants Program** is to reduce COVID-19 infections, morbidity, and mortality among Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other people of color in our hardest hit cities and towns, as well as to support education and awareness of vaccination efforts in Massachusetts.

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In Massachusetts as of June 29, 2021, [67% of the eligible Massachusetts population has received at least one dose, compared to 54% of the national population.](#) Yet within BIPOC communities in Massachusetts, that vaccination rate can be up to 20% points lower than majority white communities where vaccines were more accessible and trust in health care institutions was much greater.

Recognizing that to effectively support BIPOC communities, resources need to be shared with BIPOC trusted institutions like churches, the Massachusetts Council of Churches joins a number of religious organizations receiving funding, including colleagues with the Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, Worcester Interfaith, Asociacion Ministerial Evangelica Del Area de Lawrence, Catholic Social Services of Fall River, Greater Framingham Community Church, Jewish Family Service of Metrowest, and Association of Islamic Charitable Projects.

The Massachusetts Council of Churches is the state ecumenical partnership of eighteen Orthodox and Protestant member denominations, individuals, and congregations: [www.masscouncilofchurches.org](http://www.masscouncilofchurches.org)

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