



## **CHARLA, Collective Health Advocacy for Rooted Latinas/os & Africans**

Portland February 27, 2012.

Dear Co-Chairs Rep. Jim Thompson and Rep. Mitch Greenlick  
 Dear Co-Vice Rep. Val Hoyle and Rep. Bill Kennemer,  
 Dear Members of the House Committee on Health Care,

Thank you for this opportunity to express our support for the Utilization of Doulas in the State Medical Assistance program (HB3311, 2011).

CHARLA Collective Health Advocacy for Rooted Latinas/os and Africans is a collective of six grassroots community organizations representing community members of African and Latinas/os throughout Oregon in Multnomah, Hood River, Wasco, and Marion counties.

Doula support for healthier Moms and Babies through HB 3311, 2011 is one among of several policy changes for our Health Care System that CHARLA have been advocating towards an Equity Oregon for all Oregonians. Several reports have shown the need for better health care support for pregnant women of color as well as their newborns if we want to end health disparities among our Oregonian children. Below are some of these reports:

- *Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities is reported by Multnomah County Health Department (Report Card – APRIL 2011)* as the most responsible for high rates among Africans/African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians. Chronic disease, such as cancer and diabetes, still are in charge for also high rates of death among those communities.
- *The CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report-United States 2011* “caution that health disparities between socioeconomic groups, race/ethnic groups and others will likely continue as a result of the economic downturn.

However, “models that have been used to explain racial/ethnic inequities attribute these differences to psychological stress resulting from the experience of racism or long-term exploitation and power differences. A system that favors one racial/ethnic group over others in terms of social position or access to basic resources (quality food, education, housing, health care, etc) is unlikely to offer members of all groups an equal opportunity to work towards their full potential in life and health. Unequally distributed opportunities for health are not only inherently unfair but also contribute to higher health care costs for the whole community.” (MCHD, Report Card April 2011).

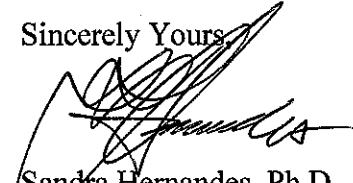
Below we provide you with an example among many others, that are compelling real stories from our CHARLA communities CHARLA members, which has been guided us on our collective work:

**A Mexican woman from the rural area of Hood River:** my nephew, a newborn with some sort of sickness, was diagnosed to die or live in 72 hours. I made the decision to go with my niece to the hospital because of the gravity of the babies' life. While waiting for the doctor, the nurse started discussing with the translator - who was from Spain and spoke a different

sort of dialect than us - about the baby's health situation, leaving my niece out of the conversation. I was helping my niece to understand what they were saying. They got upset with me, and when the doctor arrived they wanted me to leave the room. I did not, when I realized that they were not even respecting my niece's presence and the importance for the babies' life, who is her own son. **In our communities and cultures Mommy and Baby are ONE, and must be treated together, always! To separate them is not conceivable!**

We leaders of CHARLA, Collective Health Advocacy for Rooted Latinas/os & Africans would like say thank you very much for your attention with the needs of our communities.

Sincerely Yours



Sandra Hernandez, Ph.D  
THE-TREE Institute

**On behalf of CHARLA Advisory Collective Board**

- \*African Women's Coalition, Portland
- \*International Center for Traditional Childbearing, Portland
- \*Mano a Mano Family Center/Latinos Unidos Siempre, Salem
- \*Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas, Woodburn
- \*Nuestra Comunidad Sana (a program of The Next Door Inc.), Hood River
- \*THE-TREE Institute, THEatre for Transformation & Education for Evolution, Portland

**CHARLA contact:** Sandra Hernandez at (503) 901-6285 [thetreeinstitute@yahoo.com](mailto:thetreeinstitute@yahoo.com) - [www.thetreeinstitute.org](http://www.thetreeinstitute.org)

---