

'Racism is Still a Public Health Crisis'- Black History Month Fair Ignites Action in Portland, ME

Cross Cultural Community Services (CCCS) Hosts Community Wellness Fair on Health Equity and Racial Justice

PORTLAND, ME, UNITED STATES, April 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Cross Cultural Community Services (CCCS) proudly hosted its 5th Annual Black History Month Community Wellness Fair on February 26–27, 2025, with a powerful and timely theme: “Racism is a Public Health Issue.” Held at the University of Southern Maine and the Equality Community Center, the two-day event brought together over 100 healthcare providers, advocates, and local leaders to examine how systems of inequity impact individual and community health, as well as explore strategies for dismantling them.



Melissa Hue: “We Are Tired of Trauma Being Reduced to Stats.”

Keynote speaker Melissa Hue, Director of Economic Opportunity for the City of Portland, delivered a moving address tying historical injustices—from the legacy of medical experimentation on Black bodies to today’s maternal mortality crisis—to present-day disparities, invoking both personal experience and community resilience.”

Panel discussions throughout the two-day event addressed access challenges from multiple lenses:

1. The "Barriers to Care" panel highlighted the credentialing obstacles that foreign-trained professionals face, the importance of health literacy, and the ongoing need for culturally affirming environments in healthcare.
2. The "Reproductive Justice" panel spotlighted the work of doulas, community health educators, and advocates pushing for safer birthing experiences, especially for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ individuals.



This year's event reminded us that real health equity starts with how we show up and stand up for one another in our community. CCCS is here to lead, listen, and show up for everyone."

*Warren Edgar, CCCS Director
of Marketing &
Communications*

3. The "Policy & Executive Orders" panel underscored how recent and proposed legislative actions—particularly those impacting immigration, gender expression, and bodily autonomy—have chilling effects on healthcare access. Panelists emphasized the vital role of legal advocacy and community education in countering fear and misinformation.

Though the discussion avoided partisan rhetoric, it conveyed how vulnerable communities are disproportionately affected by shifting legal landscapes. As panelist Susan Roche of the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project noted, "Policy changes may seem abstract, but they

shape who feels safe walking into a doctor's office—or applying for public services. We must ensure our laws reflect our values of equity and inclusion."

Small group conversations, moderated by CCCS Co-Founder Dr. Regina Phillips, encouraged attendees to reflect on their personal and collective responses to these challenges. Participants shared ideas ranging from cultural competence training and the development of multilingual resources to inter-organizational advocacy networks.

This impactful event was made possible through the generous support of MaineHealth, the Frannie Peabody Center, Maine Family Planning, the City of Portland, and many other organizations. CCCS extends deep gratitude to the dedicated planning team, community volunteers, and organizations who partnered to bring this vision to life.

The Black History Month Community Wellness Fair, originally launched in 2020 during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, has evolved into a cornerstone of advocacy and collaboration across Southern Maine. This year, participants dug into urgent issues surrounding racial health disparities, healthcare access, culturally responsive care, and community-based solutions.

For a complete list of panelists, topics, and access to a downloadable event toolkit, visit crossculturalcommunityservices.org/blackhistorymonth

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