



New Orleans

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH COALITION

Why We Need More Black Doctors in New Orleans: A Statement on Dr. Princess Dennar and the Tulane University School of Medicine

The [New Orleans Maternal and Child Health \(NOLA MCH\) Coalition](#) is deeply troubled by Tulane University's treatment and removal of Dr. Princess Dennar, former director of the Internal Medicine-Pediatrics residency program at Tulane's School of Medicine. Dr. Dennar was the first Black woman to direct a residency program at Tulane's medical school. While her suspension, following a lawsuit she filed claiming discrimination and retaliation, has brought attention to the potential workings of racism within the school, she is [by no means the only doctor of color](#) to experience overt and implicit discrimination at Tulane University or, to be sure, at other medical schools in this city. Research has recently shown that racial concordance (i.e. when the race of the medical provider matches that of the patient) [results in better outcomes](#) for Black infants. Medical schools and healthcare institutions in New Orleans, a diverse city with rampant health disparities, should be doing everything they can to recruit and retain a diverse healthcare workforce.

The NOLA MCH Coalition is dedicated to improving birth outcomes and maternal and infant mortality rates in New Orleans. With a specific concern for the stark racial disparities in these outcomes, we do our work by centering the experiences of Black birthing people. As an independent organization that has strong ties to Tulane University, we feel we must speak publicly on this issue. It is crucial that Black healthcare providers are able to perform their jobs without also being confronted by racism within the workplace.

Rates of [maternal mortality](#), [infant mortality](#), [low birthweight](#), and [premature birth](#) are unconscionably and consistently high in Louisiana. As a result of structural racism within our communities and interpersonal racism within the medical establishment, these rates are [far worse for Black birthing people and their infants](#). We desperately need more Black healthcare providers as part of the solution to these inequities.

Most ([59.5%](#)) of New Orleans' residents are Black. In this city, we cannot afford to lose our Black doctors, let alone deter them from even coming here in the first place. We have no doubt that as prospective Black medical students and residents consider their options, many will be dissuaded from coming to Tulane as a result of Dr. Dennar's experiences and the response, not wanting to spend formative years of their careers potentially being subjected to unfair treatment and marginalization.

As a coalition, we are committed to supporting efforts that will increase the number of Black medical providers and birth workers in New Orleans, including, but not limited to 1) supporting antiracist work within Tulane University's medical school, as well as other



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medical schools and hospital systems in New Orleans and the state of Louisiana, 2) advocating for policies that increase the diversity of the perinatal workforce (such as [eliminating the collaborative practice agreement](#) for certified nurse midwives and nurse practitioners [[HB495](#)], and instating publicly funded training and [compensation for doulas](#) [[HB190](#)] and lactation consultants).

Echoing the [open letter](#) written by Tulane University School of Medicine alumni, we urge Tulane University to take actions that will place it on the forefront of creating inclusive, equitable, and welcoming educational and work environments for all medical students and doctors. As a coalition, we would offer to be involved in these efforts by providing perspectives from multiple stakeholders and creating recommendations about recruitment and retention of Black physicians. This is a critically important step toward improving and protecting the health and well-being of every person in the City of New Orleans and all of Louisiana.