



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Health Gap Releases Health Report & Launches Black Women's Health Initiative**

CINCINNATI – Black women – more than any other group – are dying needlessly of preventable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, heart disease and diabetes. In February, the Health Gap will be launching a movement to help build a Culture of Health for Black women. The Black Women's Health Initiative with the tagline "Black Girls Rise for Health."

"We are looking to see how we can build a culture of health for Black women in Greater Cincinnati," said Renee Mahaffey Harris, incoming President & CEO of The Center for Closing the Health Gap. She added that the goal of the initiative to create a support system that multi-generation can benefit from the knowledge and wisdom from the collective, and help build a culture of health.

On Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2018, the Health Gap released a report on Black Women's Health in Greater Cincinnati. The report is the result of a series of focus groups conducted by the community-health organization asking Black women – ages 21 to 80 – about their health concerns. The women represented 25 Cincinnati neighborhoods, and Lincoln Heights, Springfield Township, Forest Park, Mason, Wyoming, and Covington, Ky. The focus groups identified five key areas of great concern for Black women. Those concerns are Chronic Illnesses and Diseases, Stress and Mental Health, Fitness and Nutrition, Relationships and Institutional Racism.

Locally, 74 percent of Black women are head of household, and at times are always putting themselves last on their list of day-to-day activities. They are always putting something or someone else first before caring for themselves, and believe they do not have a good support system to help them take care of themselves. Nationally, Black women are holding conversations asking why everyone can count on them for support, but no one can be counted to support them.

Another viewpoint of the focus groups is the ability to manage their diseases (hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol, etc) means they are healthy and able to function daily. Women, who feel they are in control of their bodies and manage their health concerns, feel they are doing what is necessary to stay or get healthy. Only when they feel they are not in control of their bodies, do they view themselves unhealthy. For some women, they feel good physically, but have a lot of stress in their daily life. Those women who have no family support, or lots of “internal stuff” rated their overall health poor.

The Health Report also noted a number of comments women made regarding their health, their stress in their lives and what they believed about the health care providers in their lives. Several participants said:

**“From where I’ve come from, I am healthy now. I am not just a cancer survivor. I am a cancer thriver!”**

**“We need to ask questions, talk to our elders – knowledge is power, especially when it comes to your family history.”**

**“We’re always expected to be and do better than our white counterparts.”**

**“Male doctors, especially white ones, can’t relate to our issues.”**

**“White doctors don’t listen to us or respect us.”**

**“We value the black family (“big mama”) but don’t value or understand a health man/women relationship and what value that bring to the family unit.”**

The goal of the Black Women’s Health Initiative is to do more than just address the racism, sexism, medical problems, and socioeconomic factors that contribute to the health disparities among Black women. The initiative is to bring multi-generations together to help celebrate the breath and depth and impact Black women have on Greater Cincinnati, but also help them become healthier and live longer.

The launch of the Black Girls Rise for Health will occur on Tuesday, February 26, 2019.

***About the Center for Closing the Health Gap in Greater Cincinnati***

*The Center for Closing the Health Gap is Cincinnati’s only grassroots community-health organization that promotes awareness about health disparities through education, training, advocacy and outreach activities for organizations and individuals in Greater Cincinnati. The Center maximizes collaborative opportunities by working with organizations, associations, health institutions and other stakeholders to promote health and disease prevention. The Center’s goal is to improve the health status of the African American, Latino and Appalachian populations.*