

# **2025 Baltimore Health Equity Impact Grants**

## **Funded Projects**

### **Graduate Student – Community Grants**

#### Program Development Project

- Helping Hands: Boxing Injury Prevention and Health Promotion

### **Faculty – Community Research Grants**

#### Program Development Projects

- Beyond the Next Meal: Data Collection Protocol Implementation for InstaGiving
- Community-Driven Food Systems Change through Land Acquisition in South Baltimore
- Join the CIRCLE: Community Initiatives for Resocialization, Cancer Prevention, and Living Well for Residents in South Baltimore
- Springboard Community Services-Youth Advisory Board Training

#### Research Projects

- Co-Creating an Implementation Strategy for Greenlight Plus in Baltimore City's Early Head Start Programs
- Developing an Integrated Model of Care for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence and Opioid Misuse

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## **Graduate Student – Community Grants**

### Program Development Project

#### **Helping Hands: Boxing Injury Prevention and Health Promotion**

Graduate Student: Samalya Thenuwara, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine

Community Partner: Liesje Gantert, Executive Director, Corner Team, Inc.

This project empowers high school students in East Baltimore to become informed consumers and communicators of science. Based at Corner Team Boxing & Fitness Club, a community boxing gym

and youth development organization in the Easy Baltimore Midway neighborhood. The program will teach students how to read and interpret scientific literature, focusing on health promotion and injury prevention in boxing. Through a four-week workshop series, student scholars will develop foundational science literacy skills by engaging with research articles and credible resources. In the four weeks following the workshop, the students will co-create health communication materials—such as pamphlets and social media content—that translate key scientific findings into practical health promotion guidance for their peers. These materials will be shared through a social media campaign, distributed at local amateur boxing gyms, and presented during Corner Team's community events. By placing science literacy and public health messaging in the hands of young people from Baltimore City, this project promotes health equity while supporting young self-efficacy in science and leadership. This project hopes to strengthen university-community partnerships in East Baltimore by offering a sustainable, community-rooted model for science education and injury prevention in under-resourced neighborhoods.

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## **Faculty – Community Research Grants**

### **Program Development Projects**

#### **Beyond the Next Meal: Data Collection Protocol Implementation for InstaGiving**

Faculty Partner: Lauren Dayton, Health Behavior and Society, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Community Partner: Bryant Randall, Co-Founder and CEO, InstaGiving

InstaGiving, a nonprofit volunteer organization that services Baltimore's homeless and underserved populations, is experiencing operational inefficiencies in its attempt to scale its effective efforts. While the organization currently delivers critical supplies such as food, clothing, and hygiene products to more than 1,000 people per month, it lacks the data infrastructure required to grow sustainably and allocate resources efficiently. This project seeks funding to develop a secure, HIPAA-compliant data management system, a culturally appropriate check-in and survey process, and analytical tools embedded within. Securing operational funding for essential supplies like food and hygiene kits will enable InstaGiving to maintain existing levels of service during the implementation and evaluation of the project, without interruption to vulnerable community members. This new infrastructure will enhance efficiency of operations, offer data-driven insights to enhance programs, and place InstaGiving to secure future funding and inform comparable efforts in Baltimore.

## **Community-Driven Food Systems Change through Land Acquisition in South Baltimore**

Faculty Partner: Nicole Labruto, Program in Medicine, Science, and the Humanities, Johns Hopkins Krieger School of Arts and Sciences

Community Partner: Eric Jackson, Co-Founder and Servant Director, Black Yield Institute

Despite spatial segregation and resulting health inequities, Black Baltimoreans have been working toward land sovereignty for generations by creating community farms, coordinating networks of mutual aid, organizing to resist forced displacement, and reclaiming vacant land for food production. This proposal aims to support a Black Yield Institute (BYI) initiative to acquire and develop land for food production, processing, distribution, as well as movement organizing and advancing health equity in South Baltimore through land and food sovereignty. In the initial phase of the grant, the JHU team will assist with site development to support the transformation of BYI's Mount Clare neighborhood-based small-scale farm site into a multi-function food production/processing space and fresh food marketplace. Building off of the Mount Clare site as a model, we will continue the project to acquire and develop a second site within the Cherry Hill or Curtis Bay neighborhoods. As in Mount Clare, we plan to develop this site into a community space and hub for healthy food production and preservation. BYI will disseminate findings to encourage expansive and productive uses of land in service of Black land and food sovereignty, to inspire other movement workers to creatively use land access to nurture healthy communities.

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## **Join the CIRCLE: Community Initiatives for Resocialization, Cancer Prevention, and Living Well for Residents in South Baltimore**

Faculty Partner: Kimiko Krieger, Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Community Partner: Betty Bland-Thomas, President, Historic Sharp Leadenhall

Cancer health disparities arise from a multitude of factors, including genetics, environmental factors, and social determinants of health. Neighborhood impacts and environmental stressors, due to gentrification, resident displacement, and lack of affordable housing, healthy foods, and healthcare, are all important factors that have been linked to disparities in cancer and other disease outcomes, especially affecting marginalized communities and the aging population. The Historic Sharp Leadenhall neighborhood in South Baltimore is an example of a historically African American community impacted by redlining, displacement, and gentrification plagued with environmental stressors, lack of affordable housing, isolated residents, and decreased life expectancy, seven years lower than the national average of 78 years of age. Our project goal is to use means of horizontal development, rather than vertical development (i.e., gentrification), that focuses on the development of holistic, healthy habits that would help to reduce comorbidities associated with cancer risk in South Baltimore. Our CIRCLE program will include interactive workshops focused on healthy eating, exercising, cancer and disease prevention education, resocialization for seniors, and embracing a positive mental health wellbeing. This collaboration will provide a solid foundation for continued partnership to increase health equity for medically underserved communities in South Baltimore.

## **Springboard Community Services-Youth Advisory Board Training**

Faculty Partner: Andrea Young, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine

Community Partner: Elise Bowman, Chief Strategy and Development Officer, Springboard Community Services (formerly, Family and Children's Services)

Close to 1,600 people experience homelessness on any given night in Baltimore City, and many more experience housing instability. Youth Experiencing Homelessness (YEH) are likely to experience mental health challenges in addition to the insecurity and uncertainty created by housing instability. Low-barrier services like drop-in centers serve as a critical entry point connecting youth to immediate basic resources. Springboard Community Services (SCS) operates the Youth Resource Center (YRC), one of only three drop-in centers in Baltimore City. In addition to essential services, SCS also provides mental health care and case management. While YEH frequently access resources at the YRC, engaging them in ongoing services has proven to be a significant challenge. Through the UHI health equity grant, SCS aims to take steps to improve YEH's mental health. We will leverage trusted relationships built by the YRC staff to engage drop-in service participants and connect them to case management and mental health services in collaboration with our Youth Advisory Board. Our goal is to build a training program that equips YRC's personnel and youth in the advisory board with knowledge and skills to act as advocates and trusted messengers for drop-in YEH, and to evaluate and disseminate this model.

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## **Research Projects**

### **Co-Creating an Implementation Strategy for Greenlight Plus in Baltimore City's Early Head Start Programs**

Faculty Partner: Lucine Francis, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing

Community Partner: Faith Miller, Early Head Start Centers, Maryland Family Network

Greenlight Plus (GP) is an evidence-based, social cognitive theory-guided early childhood obesity prevention program for families who are low-income. Designed for the pediatric primary care setting, it uses digital tools to engage caregivers with low literacy and limited English proficiency. We plan to develop an implementation strategy for GP for Baltimore City's Early Head Start (EHS) programs—settings serving infants/toddlers at high obesity risk. EHS is an ideal setting due to its strong family engagement culture, its service to children at greatest risk for poor health outcomes, and its need for nutrition- and physical activity-related programming. With our strong Hopkins/childcare partnership, we aim to use human-centered design (HCD) methods to tailor the implementation of GP for EHS programs to the strengths, needs, and readiness of Baltimore City's EHS programs and their participating families. This research would provide the information and evidence needed to support future work in testing GP's implementation success and effectiveness in Baltimore's EHS programs measured by assessing outcomes at the caregiver level (i.e., nutrition literacy) and child level (i.e., weight trajectories). Rooted in community needs and shaped by EHS

leadership, the project addresses evidence gaps in obesity prevention while engaging communities disproportionately affected by childhood obesity.

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## **Developing an Integrated Model of Care for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence and Opioid Misuse**

Faculty Partner: Bushra Sabri; Johns Hopkins School of Nursing

Community Partner: Lisa Nitsch, COO, House of Ruth

Opioid overdose remains a leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the U.S., with survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) disproportionately affected due to elevated risks for opioid use disorders (OUD) and cooccurring mental health challenges. Building upon our prior work, we will adapt an integrated model of care tailored to the unique needs of IPV survivors with OUD. To inform this adaptation, we will conduct qualitative interviews with key informants—including leaders and staff experienced in IPV and OUD care—and IPV survivors with OUD themselves to assess the model's feasibility, acceptability, and perceived value. Participants will review a digital prototype of the model and provide feedback on its accessibility, content, safety features, and care navigation pathways. Grounded in co-design and transparent communication, this work will engage Baltimore stakeholders to develop a trauma-informed, survivor-centered and culturally-informed model that reflects the lived experiences and priorities of IPV survivors with OUD. By integrating community input, we aim to strengthen local capacity for equitable care and lay the foundation for future initiatives—such as provider training, referral networks, and policy advocacy—to reduce disparities in access, improve care coordination, and support better health outcomes in Baltimore neighborhoods most impacted by opioid-related harms.

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