

# Community-Owned Maternal Health Solutions

Birth Equity: Scaling Black and Indigenous Community Birth Ecosystems for  
Generational Public Health Transformation



**Ruth Shaber**

Founder & President, Tara Health  
Foundation  
*Panelist*



**Indra Lusero**

Founder & Director, Elephant Circle  
& BESO  
*Panelist*





# Ruth Shaber

## *Tara Health Foundation*

Ruth Shaber, MD, is an innovator and changemaker on a mission to change the face of finance. As the founder and president of Tara Health Foundation, which promotes health, well-being, and opportunity for women and girls through innovative evidence-informed programs, the co-founder and board chair of Rhia Ventures, a group of foundations and investors that collaborate to bring new types of capital and enterprise to the field of reproductive health in the U.S., and now, as the co-author of her new book *The XX Edge: Unlocking Higher Returns and Lower Risk*, Ruth's entire career has been dedicated to pushing for change.





# Indra Lusero

## *Elephant Circle & BESO*

Indra Lusero, is a human rights attorney licensed in Colorado, and the founder of Elephant Circle and the Birth Rights Bar Association. Indra designed Colorado's ambitious Birth Equity Bill package that passed in 2021, and has been involved in legislation to eliminate the shackling of incarcerated people during pregnancy and birth to create a presumption against incarceration of pregnant and postpartum people, improve midwifery and birth center regulations, and to create more humane policies for pregnant people impacted by substance use. Indra also spearheaded the creation of "Birth Rights: A resource for everyday people to defend human rights during labor and birth," and "Mobilizing the Office for Civil Rights' Authority to Address Obstetric Violence and Obstetric Racism." As a Queer, Genderqueer, Latinx/Genízaro parent rooted in the Rocky Mountain west, Indra is attuned to the importance of people on the margins and our role in leading the dismantling of oppressive systems to build a more equitable world.



# b.e.s.o for birth centers

## Birth Equity Statewide Operations for Birth Centers

### ABOUT

Birth Equity Statewide Operations for Birth Centers (B.E.S.O!) exists to provide operational infrastructure for a network of community-based birth centers in Colorado. BESO's goal is to coordinate resource distribution, logistics, information, communications, and people, to build infrastructure for community birth and health care in Colorado. This work is rooted in improving perinatal care because status-quo outcomes are poor and inequitable.

We want to make sure people have access to the best, so we can save and improve lives, especially for communities of color who are more impacted by the current inequities. Birth centers and midwifery-led care consistently out-perform the status-quo. Midwifery-led care is the gold standard and has been optimal throughout human history, but the vast majority of people do not have access to this.

#### Midwifery-Led Birth Centers Vs. Typical Medicaid Care

26%

Less likely to be born preterm

20%

Less likely to have low birth weight

40%

Lower average cesarean rate

21%

Lower childbirth cost

Nearly  
**2X**

higher rates of vaginal birth after cesarean

### OUR WORK



BESO supports infrastructure for community birth. As of early 2023, the network includes A Mother's Choice Birth Center (AMC), Seasons Community Birth Center (SCBC), and a developing birth center in Pueblo, CO, supported by Elephant Circle, Birth Center Equity and Orchid Capital Collective. Through this network we are also cultivating a learning community, developing regional strategy to support community birth, and increasing community birth training opportunities, especially for communities of color.

BESO will be comprised of representatives from the community, staff at each birth center site, Elephant Circle, other Colorado health and reproductive justice organizations, and partners from outside Colorado. BESO consists of multiracial, LGBTQIA+, rural, and inner city community members.

### OUR NEED

We need funding to support the ramping-up of services across all sites. We also expect additional workforce will be needed to develop the leadership of people of color in an industry marked by low numbers of people of color due to built-in racism.

We have already raised over \$500,000 not including almost \$25,000 in donations from over 50 small donors. We estimate the total initial fundraising need to be \$4 million for the first stage of development. We expect these sites to be sustainable within 5 years of providing services.

**4 MILLION  
DOLLARS  
BY 2024**

