Overall Purpose
Circle Up United Methodist Women for Moms is seeking funding from both the Juanita Peterson and Action Support Grants in order to expand our capacity for advocacy and outreach on behalf of Texas women. The monies from these grants will be used on distinct yet complementary projects to educate Texans about the ongoing maternal health crisis in Texas and to expand the capacity of United Methodist Women (UMW) in the Capital District and across the state to advocate for state and local policy solutions that will improve outcomes.

Organizational Background and Infrastructure
Circle Up is a local circle of the United Methodist Women (UMW) organization at First United Methodist Church of Austin, Texas. The organization was formed in 2018 to focus specifically on the UMW priority area *Maternal and Child Health* and to advance the objectives of decreasing maternal mortality and developing a network of women's health advocates. As described in other sections of this application, we have an active roster of 20 members and a statewide network of interested community members, connected via email and social media. We have spoken with local church groups, larger networks of faith groups across Central Texas, and coalitions of Women's Healthcare Stakeholders. We have also presented our work at a statewide health conference. All of these efforts reflect our commitment to partnership and capacity building. Importantly, we have deliberately engaged grassroots organizations in order to ensure that our advocacy work is rooted in a racial equity framework.

Maternal Health in Texas
Texas has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the country, estimated at 14.6 per 100,000 live births. This is only one piece of the story, however, as the mortality rate for Black women in Texas is almost twice that at 27.8 per 100,000 live births. The racial disparities in maternal health outcomes are evidence of long-standing structural inequities embedded in our healthcare, education, and employment systems, and these structural inequities are being amplified by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic as communities of color across the U.S. and Texas bear a disproportionate burden of both the health and economic consequences of COVID-19.

<u>Juanita Peterson Proposal</u>
Project Goal: Develop and implement a video advocacy campaign to highlight the universal experience of pregnancy of birth while also revealing disparate experiences of women of color and those from rural areas of the state.
The purpose of this project is to create a video advocacy campaign to mobilize support for and action towards state and local policy solutions to improve maternal health in Texas. Videos are beneficial for maternal health advocacy because they are a simple and efficient way to convey the main points that pregnancy-related risks are not evenly distributed across the population, that 80% of pregnancy-related deaths in Texas are preventable, and that there are straightforward steps that can be taken to improve outcomes for all Texas women.

<u>Objective 1: Contract with a professional videographer and storyteller to curate the video series</u>.
The video series will feature a cross-section of up to six women from across Texas. Circle Up members will identify women and put them into contact with the videographer. The videographer will meet with the women individually and/or in small groups and record informal conversations and more

formal interviews in order to capture the authentic stories and voices of the women. The videographer will edit and format the videos for use with different audiences. The final product will include a video with an overarching story tying all of the women's stories together along with a series of shorter 2-3 minute clips that highlight specific aspects of maternity care in Texas.

Objective 2: Launch a coordinated social media campaign that centers the video campaign.
The video campaign will become a key component of Circle Up's advocacy efforts. Through our advocacy efforts thus far, we have found personal stories to be one of the most effective tools in conveying the severity of the maternal health crisis in our state, as well as inspiring and motivating others to join the fight to improve maternal health outcomes in Texas. Circle Up will work with our community partners including Black Mamas Community Collective, Texans Care for Children, and the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition to strategically deploy the videos and information on related policy priorities in targeted markets and to specific audiences. Ultimately, with these videos, Circle Up will be able to more effectively advocate for improvement in maternal health issues statewide.

Budget: $4,325 to develop and distribute this video advocacy campaign. This amount covers reimbursement for the time that women spend being interviewed by the videographer, costs associated with the social media campaign and web hosting, and the cost of 60 hours of time from the professional videographer.

Action Support Grant

Project Goal: Expand Circle Up's advocacy network by establishing formal relationships with at least six UMW groups from across Texas.

The purpose of this project is to build capacity for UMW groups within the Capital District and across Texas more broadly to use a faith lens to advocate for maternal health policies. Early in our work, we recognized the importance of capacity building and the promise of using a faith lens to advocate for maternal health policies, and we now consider community organizing and capacity building to be a cornerstone of our efforts. Additionally, we recognize that one of the unique strengths of UMW is our connectional structure, and with funding from the Action Support Grant, we will establish formal partnerships with UMW groups from across Texas.

Objective 1: Record and document Circle Up's inception and evolution.
We will contract with the same professional videographer and storyteller to record and document Circle Up's inception and evolution. The resulting short video will be a cornerstone of our work to broaden the reach of UMW within the Capital District and across Texas.

Objective 2: Up to 4 members of Circle Up will travel to at least six UMW groups in Texas.
The purpose of these visits is to share Circle Up's focus on the UMW priority area of *Maternal and Child Health* and our model of advocacy. We recognize that relationships are central to effective advocacy and outreach. Therefore, these visits also serve the purpose of deepening our connectional ties via in-person gatherings. These gatherings will be held as public health guidance allows for larger group gatherings and with all applicable COVID precautions in place. With funding from the Action Support Grant, we will expand the reach of our advocacy efforts as well as of UMW more broadly.

Budget: $2,410 to develop the video and to fund travel to UMW groups. This amount includes 18 hours of time for the professional videographer. This amount also includes reimbursement for 1000 miles of travel at $.55/mile and 8 nights in a hotel at $100/night.