



LZC Summer Updates

August 2025



Director's Note

Calling all change agents! These are challenging times. Our new normal in 2025 includes structural violence against immigrants and immigrant-serving organizations, high levels of insecurity and fear in immigrant families and communities, and the rapid dismantling of democracy. And yet, we don't have to look far to find hope and inspiration in the words and actions of our partners in Massachusetts.

- With leadership from **HLISN** and many others, healthcare workers and leaders are mobilizing quickly within and across hospital networks to learn about their patients' rights, safeguard immigrant access to care, establish procedures for interacting with ICE, and much more.
- State and municipal policymakers in Massachusetts are stepping up by **offering clear messages of support and protection for immigrants** in the face of ICE threats, **funding in the state budget to provide immigrants at risk of deportation with legal counsel, emergency planning guidance** for immigrant parents and caregivers, **guidance for employers** about immigration and work authorization, and much more.
- Organizations and coalitions like **MIRA, MIC, LUCE**, and the **Massachusetts TPS Committee** (among many others) are providing direct assistance, know your rights trainings, and resources to immigrant families while also conducting vital movement-building and policy advocacy work.
- Individual leaders are raising their voices. See **this public comment** in response to proposed federal policy changes written by Maggie Sullivan, FNP-BC, DrPH, FAAN, a board-certified family nurse practitioner who has worked for 20 years at community health centers. Maggie is also a Doctor of Public Health, Instructor, and Director of the FXB Center Program on Immigrants and Unhoused Communities at the FXB Center for Health & Human Rights at Harvard University. In this **letter**, Maggie explains how expanding the definition of "federal public benefit" to include community health centers will limit immigrant access to healthcare, prevent health center staff from fulfilling their roles and create moral injury, and impact public health. Maggie submitted this letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services during its comment period.

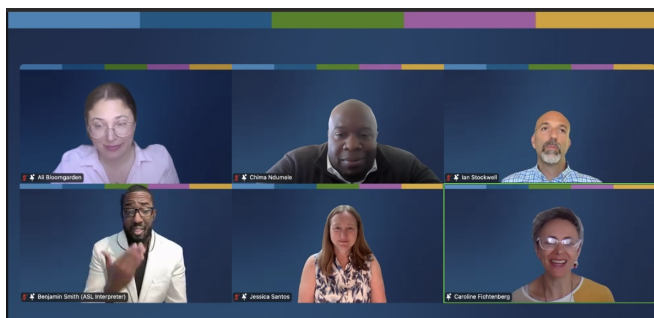
This is the time to find your voice and act to uphold equity in our institutions, processes, and policies. LZC is raising our voice and acting through immigrant health projects in our three main areas of work (research, capacity and learning, and networks). Thank you for joining us **on the right side of history**. We hope this newsletter offers you hope, insight, humor and/or inspiration as it provides us with a chance to pause, breathe, reflect, and share. Please don't hesitate to reach out at **lzc@icommunityhealth.org** if we can support your own work with data, stories, or a friendly face or two in support of immigrant and community health and well-being at this time.

Research Highlights

LZC is pleased to welcome our newest team members: Four co-researchers have joined our project with MIRA, **Policy on the Frontlines: Narrative Change for Immigrant Well-being**: Sophie Frushell, Yoann Sophie Jean-Felix, Qin Li, and Walter Mena. Our team is hard at work training, interpreting results from Wonder: Strategies for Good's initial landscape review of narrative findings about immigrants in healthcare, and preparing to hit the field this fall to conduct focus groups with frontline healthcare workers. The goal of this study is to understand mindsets about immigrants in healthcare and build a narrative change strategy that counters polarization, fear, and harm. Stay tuned for outreach/recruitment information coming soon!



Dr. Jessica Santos joined other researchers from across the country on August 27th for a webinar called ***Equity in Action: Navigating New Landscapes in Health Equity Research*** hosted by RWJF. She shared the goals and some preliminary lessons learned from LZC's research, and discussed challenges and opportunities for health equity research in today's sociopolitical landscape.



LZC is closely working with a team of Parent Leader Facilitators (PLFs) and the

Greater Rochester Health Foundation in Rochester, NY on **Healthy and Equitable Futures**, a participatory action research project designed to enhance the capacity of PLFs as they work with schools and other educational organizations towards parent leadership and liberation. In LZC's last site visit, Dr. Carrie Fisher and Nubia Goodwin set the team of PLFs up to facilitate future rounds of a strengths-based timeline activity, which maps the individual and collective work of the PLFs towards parent liberation as well as the changing sociopolitical community context in Rochester.



Capacity and Learning Highlights

Over the summer, LZC hosted three immigrant scholars through a partnership with the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health and a research project funded by the CDFI Research Consortium at the University of New Hampshire's Center for Impact Finance. Milka Ashine, MPH '26, and Siddiqua Shuma, MPH '26, from Harvard Chan researched and developed a landscape review on immigrant mental health in the Greater Boston region along with individual Spotlight Briefs on legal status and child well-being. Fernanda Escobar, PhD '26, from Brandeis University conducted primary research through interviews with CDFI leaders nationally about immigrant financial trauma and financial integration and will continue this research project into the fall. Below, the scholars reflected on their summer experience.



Siddiqua Shuma, MPH '26

"This summer at LZC, I explored topics related to immigrant mental health, wellbeing, and child welfare. In today's polarized environment, it's easy to believe everyone falls into extremes — but I've come



to learn that there's a quiet middle. These are the people whose stories often don't make headlines, but who live the realities shaped by our systems and decisions. Their narratives are rarely centered, yet they exist — and they care. Even if the impact of our work isn't always visible, it matters to those in between. That makes it worth doing and keeps me motivated.

My experience at LZC deepened my interest in working more closely with immigrant-led, community-based organizations — especially those serving Bangladeshi communities. I've been thinking more about what it would take to build something that would serve the real needs of Bangladeshi immigrants. I want to better understand what already exists, what's missing, and what kinds of community-driven mental health models could work in that context."

Learn more about Siddiqua [here](#).

Milka Ashine, MPH '26



"During my internship at LZC, I had the opportunity to contribute to research on the landscape of immigrant mental health in the Boston area. I was particularly interested in exploring how community programs influence the mental health of immigrant populations and the community-based organizations available in the area. Throughout my research, I gained a great understanding of the complex factors that shape mental health outcomes for communities.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my internship at LZC. It provided me with great knowledge about immigrant health and the complicated pathways to care. The experience not only solidified my passion for this field but also equipped me with practical skills that I intend to utilize in my future endeavors, whether in research or policy-making. I am eager to continue advocating and to carry forward the lessons I learned during my time at LZC."

Learn more about Milka [here](#).

Fernanda Escobar, PhD '26

"My time as a summer intern fellow at LZC has been an incredible learning experience. My work focused on how financial trauma and empowerment shape the relationships between



new Americans and financial institutions, and on the role of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) in supporting immigrant communities. This summer, I had the opportunity to conduct interviews with key informants, which gave me valuable insights into how CDFIs address barriers and promote financial inclusion for the immigrant community.

One of the highlights of my internship was working with such a dedicated and caring team at LZC. They are not only outstanding professionals but also deeply compassionate people in the way they support immigrant communities and one another. That is

something I will carry with me. This experience also helped me reconnect with the work I love—supporting immigrant communities, who, even in difficult times, are known for their resilience and hard work."

Learn more about Fernanda [here](#).



LZC was honored to partner with the **Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative (MIC)** for six months in 2024 to provide strategic guidance on the direction of their organization as they become an impact-driven collaborative. LZC worked with MIC's leadership and Steering Committee and the 15 organizations that comprise the Collaborative to co-develop a capacity assessment survey and an evaluation framework. We also supported MIC in implementing and analyzing the survey, which they can now replicate in the future. MIC plays a key role in delivering coordinated services to immigrants across linguistic and cultural communities in Massachusetts, and we look forward to many future collaborations.

Networks: LZC in Community

Know Your Patients' Rights: Keeping Healthcare Welcoming and Safe for Immigrants

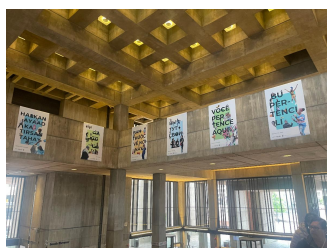
On February 12th, the Leah Zallman Center joined the **Health and Law Immigrant**

Solidarity Network, **EqualHealth**, The Border Is Here, the **National Immigration Project**, and **Health Law Advocates** for a panel discussion about the latest policy changes impacting immigrants in healthcare settings, best practices to keep healthcare welcoming and safe for immigrants, and ways to support immigrant families in uncertain times.



MIRA's Preparing for Action: Immigrants' Rights Conference

On March 18th, the Leah Zallman Center attended MIRA's Preparing for Action: Immigrants' Rights Conference. The day was full of workshops and speakers that spoke on the current immigrant rights landscape and policies moving at the state.



City of Boston Festival of Belonging

On May 21st, the Leah Zallman Center attended the launch of the City of Belonging Festival in observance of Immigrant Heritage Month. The event was hosted by the City of Boston's Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement (MOIA).

International Refugee and Immigrant Health Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia

In June, Dr. Jessica Santos presented findings from an analysis led by Dr. Ariela Braverman Bronstein on the relationship between financial security and mental health (publication forthcoming) at the International Refugee and Immigrant Health Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia.



Bearing Witness @ ICE

The Leah Zallman Center joined the **Health and Law Immigrant Solidarity Network** for Bearing Witness, a group of community members joining in peaceful solidarity at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detention Center in Burlington, MA. Dr. Jessica Santos and Sofia Ladner stood with healthcare professionals and spoke about how ICE actions are harming the healthcare system, sharing data and research. To learn more about Bearing Witness, [click here](#).



LZC Coffee Chat on Changing Immigrant Narratives

Join us and our partners at the MIRA Coalition for a virtual chat on changing immigrant narratives for well-being in Massachusetts.

Learn from current research:

- Policies and narratives go hand in hand
- Immigrant contributions are woven into the fabric of our Commonwealth
- Healthcare providers have a key role to play in changing hearts and minds

Panelists:

Karl Martinez, MPH
Senior Policy Analyst
MIRA Coalition

Marcel Minter
Political Director
MIRA Coalition

Jessica Santos, PhD
Director, Leah Zallman Center for Immigrant Health Research

Walter Hana
Co-researcher, Leah Zallman Center for Immigrant Health Research

Tuesday, August 12th, 2025
1:00-2:00 pm ET
Virtual on Zoom

All are welcome!
Please reach out to lzc@communityhealth.org with any questions.

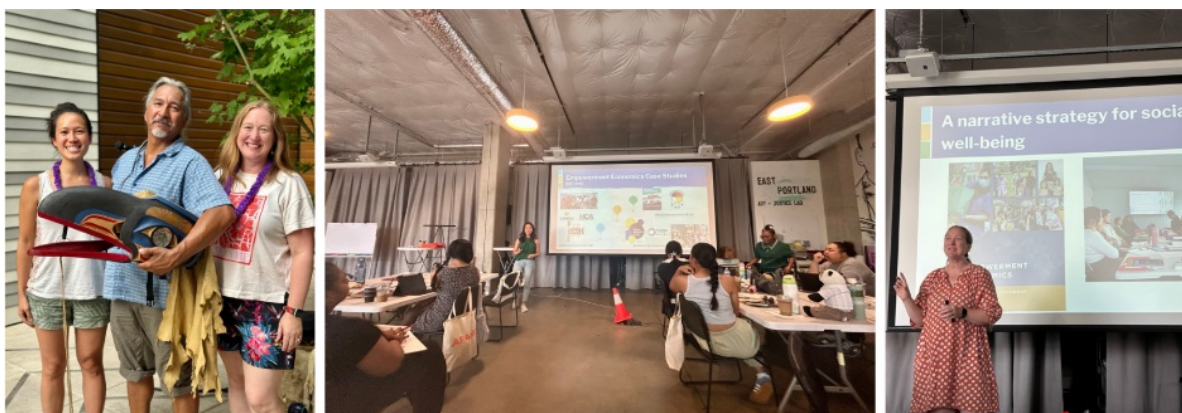
CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

Coffee Chat on Changing Immigrant Narratives

On August 12th, the Leah Zallman Center hosted the LZC Coffee Chat on Changing Immigrant Narratives with our partners at the MIRA Coalition. Four panelists shared research on how policies and narratives go hand in hand, immigrant contributions are woven into the fabric of our Commonwealth, and healthcare providers have a key role to play in changing hearts and minds.

Empowerment Economics

From August 24-26, LZC joined **National CAPACD** partners and a cohort of funded Empowerment Economics practitioners in Portland, Oregon for the Empowerment Economics summit. The group shared lessons learned from their work with AANHPI communities across the United States and discussed the potential impact of a cross-organizational narrative change strategy centered on building wealth and power. We celebrated Empowerment Economics partner **NAYA**'s block party for their new trauma-informed affordable housing complex in Portland, Oregon and had the opportunity to see raven dancer/storyteller **Gene Tagaban** perform (see picture below).



Updates from the
Institute for Community Health

LZC is a center at the **Institute for Community Health (ICH)**. Through participatory evaluation, applied research, and other services, ICH staff work with local and national partners to improve community health in a sustainable and equitable manner. ICH is supporting state and local governments, health care systems, and community-based organizations that strive to make health and wellbeing accessible to everyone. Visit **our website** to learn more about the work that we do and check out our latest **blog posts** and **publications**.



Support and engage with the Leah Zallman Center for Immigrant Health Research

The work of the Leah Zallman Center for Immigrant Health Research is made possible by generous private donations that support our unique and intensive model of community-engaged, participatory research. We are grateful for our monthly and special donors who enable us to support the perspectives and knowledge of immigrants and grow future leaders. We invite you to join us on our mission by donating **here** and share this newsletter with others who support immigrant health and invite them to join our listserv **here**.



A CENTER AT



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