

August 04, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20505

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20505

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20505

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy,

We, the 189 undersigned local, state, and national organizations, write to you in solidarity with Black women reproductive justice advocates leading the work to ensure reproductive justice for all, which includes the ability to make decisions about our lives, bodies, sexuality, and reproduction free from interference and violence. We call on you as federal leaders representing constituents who have been directly harmed by police violence and other state sanctioned violence to support the efforts and leadership of Black women and other reproductive and racial justice leaders in each and every one of your districts and states across the country.

SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective defines reproductive justice as “the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe, and sustainable communities.”¹ The term “reproductive justice” was coined by 12 Black women in 1994 after they recognized that the larger women’s rights movement, led predominantly by white women, could not account for the needs of women of color, other marginalized women, and trans and non binary people.²

The ability to live and thrive in communities that are safe from interpersonal and state violence, including freedom from coercion, police terror, and violence is an inherent pillar of reproductive justice. Law enforcement that is vested in models of harm, punishment, and legal repression jeopardizes the safety, health, and livelihood of Black communities.

Police violence does not impact hypothetical people. These are our friends. Our families. Our communities. Far too often, police use their powers and freedoms to enact violence on Black communities. The recent murders of Breonna Taylor, Dominique Fells, George Floyd, Nina Pop, Riah Milton, Ahmaud Arbery, Sean Reed, Tony McDade, and Rayshard Brooks demand us to reimagine safety for everyone in our communities.

¹ SisterSong. What is reproductive justice? <https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>

² Ibid.

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Black leaders and communities have the answers. People closest to the pain must be closest to the power. To feel safe, communities need less police presence and more unbiased healthcare, including mental health and the full range of reproductive healthcare, housing for unhoused people, employment for people who are unemployed or underemployed, and food for people who need nutritional assistance.

White supremacy and policing are two sides of the same coin of institutionalized violence, obstructing people's ability to exercise the fullness of their bodily autonomy. This institutionalized violence includes targeted divestment of resources from Black and brown communities, from clinic closures and lack of access to clinic-based abortion care, to the risk of being over-policed and surveilled for self-managing their abortion outside of a clinic setting. We also acknowledge that prosecutions for self-managed abortion disproportionately impact Black people who face higher rates of arrests for a suspected abortion or pregnancy loss, or are forced to have more interactions with police and other state agents (such as social workers) because of negative pregnancy outcomes caused by health disparities.

We must continue to hold the full picture of our communities and uplift and center the realities of Black trans and gender non-conforming people. Black trans and gender non-conforming communities face extremely high rates of violence and are often revictimized when seeking help. Due to high rates of employment discrimination and poverty, many transgender people participate in underground economies. For example, 53 percent of Black trans people who worked in these spaces reported elevated levels of police violence.³

At a time when the maternal mortality rate for Black pregnant women is three to four times that of white women, federal, state, and local governments continue to increase law enforcement budgets that allow for more police presence, which decimate Black communities and kill Black people, instead of working to decrease maternal mortality among Black women. No Black person should have to raise a family in an overpoliced neighborhood; send their children to schools that place them in jail as often as they do colleges; live without affordable and accessible health care and child care; be subject to health care that is denigrating and demoralizing; or be expected to thrive in a society that consistently and relentlessly brutalizes and dehumanizes them. Reproductive justice requires that we critique frameworks of power and the state factors that continuously dictate our right to form families and parent with dignity. The right to parent free from violence is reproductive justice.

As organizations committed to a world where everyone has the right to decide if, when, and how to become a parent - we have seen the needs of our families and communities rejected by local, state and federal governments year after year as defense and law enforcement budgets eclipse funding for programs and resources that our families need to thrive. We can no longer stand for

³ National Center for Transgender Equality. Blueprint for Equality: A Transgender Federal Agenda, Chapter 6: Reforming Police and Ending Anti-Transgender Violence. <https://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NCTE%20Federal%20Blueprint%20Chapter%206%20Police%20and%20Ending%20Violence.pdf>

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cuts to food assistance and other critical resources for families with low incomes, restrictions on and cuts to Medicaid and other safety net programs, bans on abortion coverage, cuts to family planning providers and much more. Budgets are moral documents and we are in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives and [reproductive justice advocates](#), and we call on members of Congress to take action federally and to support local efforts to divest from law enforcement and invest in Black and brown communities. A poll among women of color who voted in the 2018 election found that 75% of Black women named ending racial, ethnic, and cultural discrimination as a top priority that drives them to the polls, with Latina and Asian American and Pacific Islander women also expressing it as a top priority.⁴

The blueprint for this already exists. Last year, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley introduced the “People’s Justice Guarantee” recognizing the United States has a moral obligation to meet its foundational promise of guaranteed justice for all. Last month, Congresswoman Pressley along with Congresswoman Karen Bass, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee introduced a resolution condemning police brutality. Most recently, Congresswoman Pressley, Congresswoman Tlaib, and the Movement for Black Lives unveiled their plans to introduce the BREATHE Act. This legislative proposal aims to divest from the system of policing and prisons and invests in approaches to maintain safe and sustainable communities. These are just a few examples of those in power listening to the communities most impacted and proposing ideas and solutions to serve those communities. While much of this work will happen at the local and state level, Congress can set the tone for progress and demonstrate what service to community needs look like.

However, Congress continues to insert discriminatory policies such as the Hyde Amendment, which remains in this year’s FY2021 appropriations package despite the efforts of Black women such as Congresswoman Barbara Lee and Ayanna Pressley to end it. These bans are racist and perpetuate systems of oppression, anti-Black racism, and white supremacy that target people of color, especially Black women, and their ability to thrive in their own communities. For more than 40 years, the Hyde Amendment has disproportionately denied Black, Indigenous, and people of color the right to decide when and how to start or grow their families. The clock has run out--Congress must put an end to abortion coverage bans, once and for all. It is time for us to act upon the leadership of Black women by ending harmful policies like the Hyde amendment and instead enact ones that affirm the autonomy and dignity of Black people.

We need federal legislation that will divest from the violent reality of over-policing of Black people and instead invest in new approaches to community safety utilizing state incentives. We need legislation that will allocate new money to build health, sustainable, and equitable communities for all people. We call on congressional leaders to listen to the individuals in your cities and states and act justly. Communities know what is best for themselves. We are [telling you what we need](#) - your role is to listen and act upon our demands.

⁴<https://intersectionsofourlives.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/The-Intersections-of-Our-Lives-Survey-Findings-FINAL.pdf>

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Endorsement is an indication of solidarity within our movement to address ending police brutality and a recognition of the urgency of these policies. Endorsement does not necessarily mean that each organization has expertise in or are actively working towards everything listed therein.

In liberation,

Abortion Access Front
Abortion Care Network
Abortion Fund of Arizona / Pro-Choice Arizona
Access Reproductive Care (ARC)-Southeast
ACCESS Women's Health Justice
ACLU of Nebraska
Advocates for Youth
AIDS Alabama
Alabama Black Women's Roundtable
Alianza Americas
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
All-Options
American Atheists
American Civil Liberties Union
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Humanist Association
American Jewish World Service
American Medical Student Association
AMPLIFY Georgia
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
Athlete Ally
Atlanta Women's Center
Black and Pink
Black Women for Wellness Action Project
Black Women's Health Imperative
Bridgeport Prospers
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
California Nurse-Midwives Association
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
Carolina Abortion Fund
Catholics for Choice
Center for Biological Diversity

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Center for Reproductive Rights
Center Song, LLC
Centering Equity and Racial Literacy in Family Planning (CERCL-FP)
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
CHANGE (Center for Health and Gender Equity)
Charlotte Reproductive Action Network
Chicago Abortion Fund
Choice Network
Citizens For Choice
Civil Liberties & Public Policy Program
Cobalt Advocates
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Equality California
Equality North Carolina
Equity Forward
Families USA
Feminist Health Center of Portsmouth, Inc./ Joan G. Lovering Health Center
Feminist Humanist Alliance
Feminist Majority Foundation
Feminist Women's Health Center
Flood Family Law, LLC
FORGE, Inc.
Forward Together Action
Global Justice Center
Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights GRR!
Guttmacher Institute
Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center
Healthy and Free Tennessee
Healthy Teen Network
Hep Free Hawaii
HIVE
Hometown Action
Hope Clinic for Women
Ibis Reproductive Health
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
Impact Fund
Impetus - Let's Get Started LLC
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
Indivisible
Interfaith Voices for Reproductive Justice (IVRJ)
International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
Ipas

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Jane's Due Process
KM Consulting & Training, LLC
Laotian American National Alliance
Latino Commission on AIDS
League of Women Voters of the United States
Legal Voice
Lift Louisiana
Lilith Fund
Mabel Wadsworth Center
Medical Students for Choice
Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health (MOASH)
Midwest Access Coalition
Montgomery PRIDE United/ Bayard Rustin Community Center
Mothers on the Frontline
MoveOn
Ms. Foundation for Women
NAPAFASA
NARAL Pro-Choice America
NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut
NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland
NARAL Pro-Choice North Carolina
NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio
NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon
NARAL Pro-Choice Texas
NASTAD
National Abortion Federation
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter
National Birth Equity Collaborative
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Center for Youth Law
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD)
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Jewish Women Los Angeles
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Health Law Program
National Institute for Reproductive Health
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice

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National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ
New Era Colorado
New Orleans Abortion Fund
New Voices for Reproductive Justice
NM Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
North Carolina AIDS Action Network
Nurses for Sexual and Reproductive Health
Odyssey Family Executive Center of South Norwalk
Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Ohio Women's Alliance
Oklahoma Call for Reproductive Justice
PAI
People's Parity Project
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Connection Action Fund
Population Council
Population Institute
Positive Women's Network - USA
Pregnancy Options Wisconsin: Education, Resources & Support
Preterm
Pro-Choice Arizona / Abortion Fund of Arizona
RAICES
re:power
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Reproductive Health Access Project
Reproductive Rights Coalition
SHK Global Health
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change
SisterLove, Inc.
SisterReach
SisterSong: National Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective
Society for Humanistic Judaism
Soul 2 Soul Sisters
SPARK Reproductive Justice Now!, Inc.

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Standly Solutions Consulting, LLC
Tampa Bay Abortion Fund
TEACH (Training in Early Abortion for Comprehensive Healthcare)
Texas Equal Access Fund
The Afiya Center
The Black Women's Health Imperative
The Kentucky Health Justice Network
The Ordinary People Society
The Womxn Project
UCSF HIVE and Team Lily
UltraViolet
United We Dream
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Virginia Organizing
We Testify
Whole Woman's Health Alliance
Win Without War
Women Have Options/ Ohio
Women with a Vision, Inc.
Women's Foundation California
Women's Information Network (WIN)
Women's Law Project
Women's Medical Fund (Wisconsin)
Women's Voices for the Earth
WV FREE
Yellowhammer Fund
Young Invincible