

# 2023 Policy Priorities

At In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda, our core mission is to amplify the voices of Black women leaders at the national and state levels in our ongoing fight to secure reproductive justice for all people. We develop new and expansive policy solutions to the most pressing crises we face as a society. Working across all levels of government—and in partnership with Black-women-led state partners—we work to educate and mobilize Black women, femmes, girls and gender-expansive people on a span of issues, from maternal health, abortion access, and contraceptive equity, to economic justice, voting rights, and environmental justice.

Our state partners include:

- Black Women for Wellness
- SisterLove, Inc
- The Afiya Center
- Black Women's Health Imperative
- SisterReach
- Women With a Vision
- New Voices for Reproductive Justice
- SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!

## Our Approach

Our work is rooted in a **reproductive justice framework**. We believe in the human right to control our bodies, our sexuality, our gender, our work, and our reproduction. And we know that reproductive justice can only be achieved when all individuals have the complete economic, social, and political power and mental, physical, and community health to make decisions about their bodies and their futures.

Our work is also informed by the **intersectional impact of systemic racism, sexism, and homophobia**. Our work toward reproductive justice *requires* racial justice and LGBTQ+ liberation. We stand in unity with people around the country who are marching and protesting for an end to state-sanctioned violence against Black people and we support programs and policies that ensure LGBTQ+ individuals have the resources and the right to make healthy decisions about their lives.

We also know that religion has long been an important aspect in the lives of Black people and Black communities in the U.S. We support the Black exercise of **moral agency to achieve liberation** at the intersections of race, class, gender, and other forms of oppression.

## Our Policy Priorities

Black women, femmes, girls, and gender-expansive people are dynamic leaders across communities and sectors. At the same time, they face increasing state, local, and federal attacks on their human rights: abortion bans in dozens of states and the loss of *Roe's* protections; attempts to circumvent LGBTQ+ liberation; disproportionately high Black maternal morbidity and mortality; environmental injustice fueled by a climate crisis; inaccessible or inadequate healthcare; pay inequality and workplace discrimination; unaffordable housing; voter restrictions; and countless others. **Our Reproductive Justice Policy Agenda is a guide for policymakers who want to improve outcomes for Black women, femmes, girls and gender-expansive people. It offers concrete policy solutions that will directly change our communities for the better. Our key issues include:**

### HEALTH EQUITY, CARE, ACCESS

Systemic racism, toxic stress, and a long history of medical mistreatment and socioeconomic inequities are killing Black women, femmes, girls, and gender-expansive people. We battle chronic health conditions at higher rates than any other population – including breast and reproductive cancers, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. We urge leaders to:

- Increase federal funding for the identification and amelioration of diseases and conditions that inequitably impact Black women, including those caused by social determinants of health.
- Invest in a diverse, representative, and responsive health care workforce that hears Black women, and require training on timely and appropriate treatment for all races and ethnicities.
- Expand access to mental health services.

### MATERNAL HEALTH AND PREGNANCY CARE

Black women in the U.S. are 3 to 5 times more likely to experience a pregnancy-related death than their white counterparts. This is not only a public health crisis but a moral one as well. We support Black women's access to high-quality, affordable health care before, during, and after pregnancy. We urge federal leaders to:

- Increase funding for doula and midwifery care in federal health care programs.
- Guarantee comprehensive holistic maternity care for at least one year postpartum.
- Pass federal law to ban the shackling of pregnant incarcerated people.
- Pass legislation to require comprehensive coverage for fertility care and treatment.

### ABORTION ACCESS

Access to abortion care cannot be separated from other human and reproductive rights. We trust Black women to make the important personal decisions that are best for themselves and their families. We support access to abortion care, including having insurance coverage, so every woman can access affordable and safe abortion care. We urge federal leaders to:

- End all federal bans on abortion care coverage.
- Pass the Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance Act (EACH).
- Pass the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA).

### COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL EDUCATION & CONTRACEPTIVE EQUITY

Historically, Black people have been the targets of coercive contraceptive practices and policies, misinformation about the use of contraceptives, and unethical contraceptive testing. Our systems lack comprehensive sexual health education that include information and strategies for addressing social pressure, discussing stigma, and fostering self-esteem. We call on federal leaders to:

- Pass the *Real Education for Healthy Youth Act* to expand contraceptive access.
- Codify Title X family planning regulations.
- Expand funding for increased sexual and reproductive health education.
- Prevent "religious freedom" from blocking access to comprehensive sexual health education.

### VOTING RIGHTS

Black women are the largest voting constituency in the American electorate. Every year, we register voters, organize our communities, and deliver the votes that give politicians their jobs. At In Our Own Voice, we are committed to increasing Black women's voter turnout in local and state elections, and have worked to strengthen voter participation through our I AM A REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE VOTER initiative. We urge federal leaders to join us, and:

- Pass the *John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act* to ensure Black people can vote.
- Pass the *For the People Act* to address gerrymandering and reform campaign finance systems.

### ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Persistent wage disparities hold Black families back from financial security and the ability to generate wealth. Black women are paid only 62 cents for every dollar a white man is paid, as compared to the 70 cents white women make. Black women are also disproportionately segregated into sectors that are the least likely to have access to paid leave and workplace protections. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated existing inequities. We urge federal leaders to:

- Prioritize student loan debt relief.
- Pass a national paid leave program.
- Make child tax credits permanent.

### PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Black women, femmes, girls, and gender-expansive people deserve to be free from community-based dangers, including gender-based and police violence, and to live in safe and healthy communities. We urge federal leaders to:

- Robustly fund the Sexual Assault Services Grant Program and sexual assault research
- Pass the *George Floyd Justice in Policing Act*
- Prioritize environmental justice in infrastructure funding implementation and future investments, including increasing access to clean water.