

voice
IN OUR OWN
National Black
Women's
Reproductive Justice
Agenda

STATE LEGISLATOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE GUIDE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Who We Are 3

Our Framework 4

State of Play: Moving Toward Reproductive Justice 5

Our Policy Priorities 6

Our Partners and Key Legislation 8

 California 8

 Georgia 9

 Louisiana 11

 Michigan 12

 New Jersey 13

 Pennsylvania 13

 Tennessee 15

 Texas 15

Messaging Dos And Donts 16



WHO WE ARE

Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people are dynamic leaders across communities and sectors. At the same time, they face increasing state-based attacks on their human rights: disproportionately high Black maternal morbidity and mortality; bans on abortion care in dozens of states and the loss of Roe’s protections; attempts to circumvent LGBTQIA+ liberation; environmental injustice fueled by a climate crisis; inaccessible or inadequate health care; pay inequality and workplace discrimination; unaffordable housing; voter restrictions; and countless others.

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women’s Reproductive Justice Agenda aims to amplify the influence of Black women, girls, and gender-expansive leaders advocating for Reproductive Justice on the federal, regional, and state levels as they develop new and effective policy solutions to the most pressing crises we face as a society. We aim to dismantle the barriers that impede our capacity to reclaim agency over our bodies and lives. We work in deep collaboration with Reproductive Justice partners – both our founding strategic partners and our State Enhancement Initiative partners – in 10 states across the country. Our power is in our persistent focus on Reproductive Justice policy at every level of government. Developing strong strategies to ensure that state legislators are equipped with the tools and resources they need to support Reproductive Justice is imperative in our work.

The Reproductive Justice movement is at a critical juncture. Amidst the chaos that continues to ensue across states, we have an opportunity to crystalize what a vision for Reproductive Justice means from the grassroots up and build power to achieve that vision. In 2024, we are launching those efforts by connecting the constituents who rely on Reproductive Justice for their survival to YOU, a policymaker who has the ability to govern as Reproductive Justice champions. Our first step is to equip state legislators with this reference guide, deepening their understanding of Reproductive Justice as a human rights framework and supporting them in embedding that framework through their policy work—towards forging equity and justice for all.

This guide is intended to:

- **Introduce the Reproductive Justice framework, including how to effectively employ it in your policymaking and legislative work.**
- **Orient you to In Our Own Voice, including the work of our partners within your state and others.**
- **Highlight critical state Reproductive Justice policy issues for you to consider prioritizing.**
- **Offer key messaging approaches to support you in advancing Reproductive Justice.**

We are committed to a fostering collaboration between Reproductive Justice leaders and state legislators. Your journey through this guide is a first step as you deepen your work on Reproductive Justice. We look forward to working with you more this legislative season.

OUR FRAMEWORK

Reproductive Justice is a fundamental human right that supports all women, girls, and gender-expansive individuals, in all of their identities, and allows them to make and direct their own sexual and reproductive health decisions.

To ensure this right, policymakers must recognize and remedy the transgenerational racism, inhumanity, and inequality of access to information, services, and support that has and continues to affect women and girls from marginalized communities.

We use the World Health Organization’s definition of sexual and reproductive health, and consider that promoting reproductive health means working for a state of complete physical, mental, and social-emotional wellbeing related to reproductive functions and processes. Sexual and reproductive health includes *reproductive freedom*: the right to make fully informed reproductive health decision that are free from state interference and to access safe, effective, affordable reproductive health care services, including perinatal care and fertility regulation such as contraception and abortion care. Reproductive freedom includes the right not only to reproduce but also to safe and effectively raise one’s child—including affordable child care and paid family leave.

In response to the narrowness and white-centered heterogeneity of the 20th-century abortion rights movement, in the 1990s Black women coined the phrase “Reproductive Justice (RJ).” The RJ movement builds upon concepts of reproductive freedom, social justice, and human rights, and centers the specific lived experiences of Black women, girls, and gender-expansive individuals.

Reproductive Justice sheds light on the multiple combined forms of oppression that contribute to the reproductive oppression of women of color. At the heart of RJ theory is the fact that interlocking systems of oppression (i.e., race, class, gender, etc.) impact the lives of women of color. These interlocking systems create a complex, all-encompassing form of sexual and reproductive oppression that controls and exploits women, girls, gender-expansive individuals and others through their bodies, sexuality, labor, and/or reproduction.

To truly secure reproductive rights, we urge you and other concerned policymakers to advance Reproductive Justice. It is crucial to acknowledge and rectify the transgenerational racism, inhumanity, and disparities in access to information, services, and support that impact marginalized women, girls and gender-expansive individuals. State legislators can help dismantle these long-standing barriers and foster true Reproductive Justice through supporting and enacting comprehensive and proactive measures.

While public attention is typically focused on federal law and policy, we believe that there is crucial work to do on the state level. Our communities are experiencing health, socioeconomic, and political crises. Grassroots work from the community center to the neighborhood, to the ZIP Code, and the state level up is more critical than ever. To enhance the well-being of Black women, girls, and gender-expansive individuals, it is imperative that we unite in advocating for our human rights.

We appeal to you, as a state legislator, to actively support policies that empower individuals to attain and sustain optimal mental, physical, and economic health for ourselves, our families, and our communities. This *State Legislator Reproductive Justice Reference Guide* is an essential initial resource in this endeavor. Your engagement in these matters will play a crucial role in fostering positive change for Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people in your community.

NEED TO KNOW: Here is our biggest takeaway: We reiterate that Reproductive Justice is inclusive of, but not equivalent to reproductive health, reproductive freedom, or reproductive rights. The terms should not be used interchangeably.

RJ theory is grounded in the human rights framework and Black feminist theory; it affirms the following four human rights values:

- The right not to have a child;
- The right to have a child;
- The right to the social and economic supports to parent the child(ren) one already has, free from varying forms of interpersonal, community, and/or state-based violence; and
- The right to sexual expression and sexual pleasure.

STATE OF PLAY: MOVING TOWARD REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

In the wake of the 2022 Dobbs decision, 14 states banned abortion care. Last year, in 2023, waves of state legislatures attacked Reproductive Justice across the country. Having won the battle on abortion care, conservative legislators—particularly in deep red states like Texas and Tennessee—shifted their focus to restricting LGBTQIA+ freedoms; 589 anti-trans bills were introduced in 49 states, 84 of which were signed into law. 2023 also experienced an onslaught of legislation restricting or banning diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives at public colleges. More than 85 bills were introduced, 13 of which became law. Anti-Trans and Anti-DEI bills, and others like them, harm Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people’s ability to live freely and access resources they need to have agency over their bodies.

Despite these setbacks, there were still notable wins for Reproductive Justice. Deep blue states, like California and Michigan, led the charge in securing reproductive health by passing legislation that protects the rights of physicians who provide reproductive health and gender-affirming services, and repealing antiquated laws that banned abortion care. In several states where abortion bans are in place, such as Texas and Georgia, legislation passed to provide exceptions to abortion bans for ectopic pregnancies and to expand health coverage for low-income people.

In Ohio, the public overwhelmingly expressed support for access to abortion care. On Election Day 2023, Ohio voters approved a constitutional amendment that guarantees the right to abortion care and other forms of reproductive health care. The state joins Vermont and California in officially enshrining abortion rights in their constitutions. This push-back shows that voters in states—red, blue, and purple—care deeply about access to abortion care.

We are here to build on this momentum in 2024. To be clear, these wins do not achieve our full vision for Reproductive Justice. We have a long way to go, and significant work to do. However, each win is an important one in reducing harm and edging closer to that vision.

Our movement is strong, our advocates are strong, and our policies—with support from policymakers like you— will improve the lives of people across this country.



OUR POLICY PRIORITIES

Our Reproductive Justice Policy Agenda is a guide for state policymakers who want to improve outcomes for Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people. It offers concrete policy solutions that will directly change your local communities for the better. Our key issues are:



HEALTH EQUITY, CARE, ACCESS

Systemic racism, toxic stress, and a long history of medical mistreatment and socioeconomic inequities are killing Black women, 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:

- Invest federal and state funding to identify and ameliorate diseases and conditions that inequitably impact Black women, including those caused by social determinants of health.
- Recruit a diverse, representative, and responsive health care workforce that respects Black women, especially in state-run health care facilities, and require training on timely and appropriate treatment for all races and ethnicities.
- Expand access to mental health services through new flexibilities granted by federal law.



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 regardless of income or educational level. This is not only a public health crisis but also a moral one, as well. We support Black women's access to high-quality, affordable health care before, during, and after pregnancy. We urge all states to:

- Reimburse care provided by doulas and midwives, appoint doulas and midwives to Maternal Mortality Review Committees, and allow birth centers to operate under midwifery supervision.
- Implement Medicaid coverage for holistic maternity care for at least one year postpartum.
- Require comprehensive coverage for fertility care and treatment.



ABORTION CARE ACCESS

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

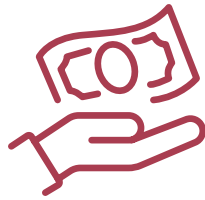
- Eliminate all restrictions on abortion care, including waiting periods, requirements to provide medically inaccurate information, surgical setting requirements, and parental consent or notification.
- Provide public funding for all abortion care services and invest in community-based providers.
- Protect access to medication abortion.



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 country lacks comprehensive sexual health education that include information and strategies for addressing social pressure, discussing stigma, and fostering self-esteem. We call on state leaders to:

- Leverage federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding to implement comprehensive sexual health education.
- Require comprehensive and medically-accurate sexual education in all public schools.
- Permit the purchase of birth control pills over-the-counter.



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Persistent wage disparities hold Black families back from financial security and the ability to generate wealth. Black women are paid only 63 cents for every dollar a white man is paid, 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 only exacerbated existing inequities. We urge state leaders to:

- Increase the minimum wage to \$15 and link future increases to the consumer price index (CPI).
- Leverage federal funding to provide free state-run childcare for working families and students.
- Implement a state-based paid leave program.



PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Black women, 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 state leaders to:

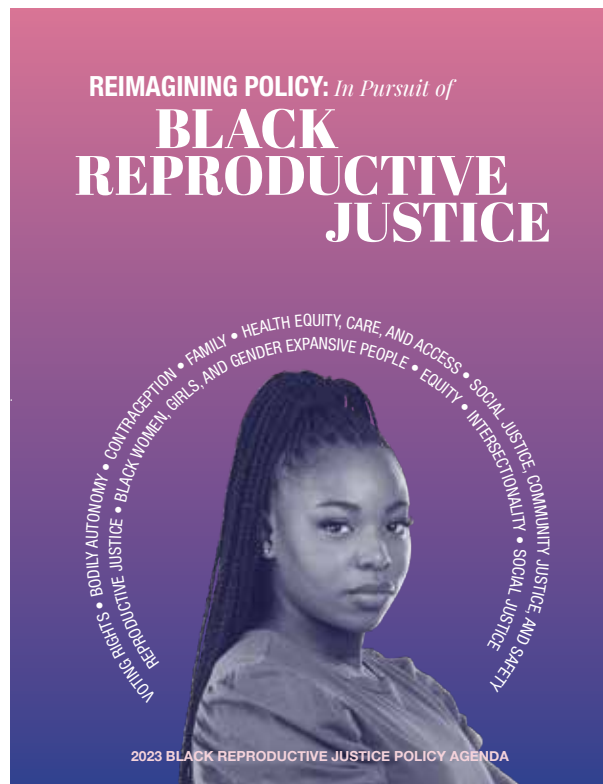
- Prioritize environmental justice, including increasing access to clean water, in implementing Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding and other future investments.
- Invest public safety funding into restorative justice approaches, including emergency response services that involve community-based social workers and mental health professionals.
- Leverage the federal Sexual Assault Services Grant Program to conduct research with data disaggregated by race.



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, girls and gender-expansive individuals 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 state leaders to join us, and:

- Protect the rights of all citizens to access the ballot box, including removing undue barriers to voting and ensuring every eligible vote is counted.



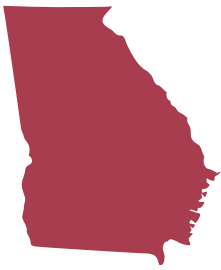
OUR PARTNERS AND KEY LEGISLATION

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. In Our Own Voices partners with Black-women-led state organizations to educate and mobilize Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people on many issues. These include maternal health, access to abortion care, contraceptive equity, economic justice, voting rights, and environmental justice. We are grounded in state partnership. Below is a sample of our state partners across the country; the policies on which they focus; and their legislative priorities for securing Reproductive Justice victories. We urge you to use this information to learn more about Reproductive Justice policies and priorities across the country, and to identify key areas of support in your state.



CALIFORNIA

BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS/ ACTION PROJECT	Policy Priorities
<p>Based in Los Angeles, California, Black Women for Wellness (BWW) is a multi-generational, membership-based organization dedicated to enhancing the well-being of Black women and girls. Its focus revolves around building healthy communities through health education, empowerment, and advocacy. Committed to elevating the lived experiences of Black women and girls in California, Black Women for Wellness' mission centers on empowerment, health, and overall well-being. Employing a Reproductive Justice framework, BWW actively engages in policy, advocacy, outreach, research, civic engagement, and education. Established by 6 women in 1997, BWW remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering positive change and support within the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maternal Health and Pregnancy Care• Access to Abortion Care• Comprehensive Sexual Health Education• Contraceptive Equity• Public Health and Community Safety• Environmental Justice



GEORGIA

SPARK REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE NOW (SPARK RJ NOW)	Policy Priorities	Advocated for	Advocated Against
<p>SPARK RJ NOW builds leaders to engage and educate their community in shifting power, changing culture, and uplifting Black women and queer and Trans young people of color (QTY-POC). The organization succeeds in this goal by engaging Black Women and QTYPOC through its programs, actions, initiatives and health advocacy efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal Health and Pregnancy Care • Access to Abortion Care • Comprehensive Sexual Health Education • Assisted Reproductive Technology & Fertility Care • LGBTQIA+ Liberation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.B. 75, Reproductive Freedom Act, Representative Shea Roberts Though unsuccessful, H.B. 75 aimed to change the status of personhood from conception to the moment of birth, permit unemancipated minors to get an abortion without parental consent if notification may lead to their physical or emotional harm and classifies abortion as a fundamental right. • H.B. 235, Representative Sandra Scott Would have provided policies for breast milk storage and breastfeeding of a delivered child in penal institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S.B. 140, Senator Carden Summers Signed into law in March 2023; prohibits certain surgical procedures relating to the treatment of gender dysphoria in minors performed in hospitals and other licensed healthcare facilities • S.B. 141, Senator Clint Dixon Would have prohibited health care providers from performing specified practices on minors relating to altering a person’s appearance relating to gender. • S.B. 36, Senator Randy Robertson This bill, crossed over to the 2024 session, would vastly increases the minimum sentence for those who pay people for sexual acts and those who collect the money. • S.B. 180, Senator Ed Seltzer Would excuse any Georgian from any state or local law, policy or other government action that they claim “burdens” their exercise of religion. • H.B. 496, Representative Emory Dunahoo Would allow physicians suspected of providing an abortion to be investigated and prosecuted.



BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH IMPERATIVE (BWHI)	Policy Priorities	Upcoming 2024 Legislation
<p>BWHI is the first and only national non-profit solely dedicated to achieving health equity for Black women in America. The organization was founded in 1983 by Byllye Y. Avery as the National Black Women's Health Project at a conference on the campus of Spelman College. Since then, BWHI evolved into a nationally recognized organization leading health policy, education, research, knowledge and leadership development, and communications to improve the health outcomes of Black women. *Note: Black Women's Health Imperative primarily does work at the federal level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal Health and Pregnancy Care • Comprehensive Sexual Health Education • Contraceptive Equity • Scientific Research • LGBTQIA+ Liberation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal legislation focus on 340B drug pricing; pregnancy and workplace protections

SISTERLOVE	Policy Priorities	Advocated Against	Upcoming 2024 Legislation
<p>SisterLove, Inc. founded in 1989, is a Reproductive Justice organization dedicated to sexual health and preventive care. Its focus spans areas such as HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancy, and violence. SisterLove is unwavering in its commitment to championing the human rights principles of liberty, justice, and dignity at the forefront of our movement-building endeavors. SisterLove strives to safeguard and propel the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal Health and Pregnancy Care • Access to Abortion Care • Comprehensive Sexual Health Education • Behavioral and Mental Health • LGBTQIA+ Liberation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S.B. 88, Parents and Children Protection Act of 2023, Senator Carden Summers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unauthorized Pelvic Exams Legislation



LOUISIANA

WOMEN WITH A VISION	Policy Priorities	Advocated for
<p>Women With A Vision, Inc (WWAV) is a community-based nonprofit, founded in 1989 by a grassroots collective of African-American women in response to the spread of HIV/AIDS in communities of color. Its mission is to improve the lives of marginalized women, their families, and communities by addressing the social conditions that hinder their health and well-being. They accomplish this through relentless advocacy, health education, supportive services, and community-based participatory research.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal Health and Pregnancy Care • Access to Abortion Care • Comprehensive Sexual Health Education • Contraceptive Equity • Voting Rights • Economic Justice • LGBTQIA+ Liberation • Environmental Justice • Housing Justice • Sex Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HB 346, Representative Delisha Boyd & HB 461, Representative Mary DuBuisson <p>Although abortion is illegal in Louisiana, Women With A Vision has been working with and keeping an eye on abortion bills that include exceptions, such as the ones listed above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SB 135, Senator Regina Barrow <p>Passed in June 2023; expands Medicaid reimbursement to services provided by a licensed midwife.</p>





MICHIGAN

WISDOM INSTITUTE	Policy Priorities
<p>Founded in 1999, The Wisdom Institute emerged from the Sister-2-Sister college program, focusing on near-peer mentoring. It empowered first-generation women college students, particularly single mothers, to support pregnant and parenting teenage mothers in staying in high school and pursuing higher education. The organization’s advocacy centers on teenage pregnancy, comprehensive sex education, and maternal child health. From The Wisdom Institute’s initial focus on mentoring pregnant and parenting teens, its work has evolved to raise awareness of the intersectional causes affecting African American women and girls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal Health and Pregnancy Care • Access to Abortion Care • Behavioral and Mental Health • Voting Rights • Economic Justice • Environmental Justice • Housing Justice • Religion and Reproductive Justice
Advocated for	Upcoming 2024 Legislation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S.B. 565, Jon Bumstead Passed in 2022 and created a nearly \$5 billion bipartisan infrastructure plan around drinking water and wastewater/stormwater upgrades. • Water Affordability Platform/Pledge – MI Water Table partner • H.B. 5890-5892, Expanding Community Access to Water Infrastructure Funding Signed into law in June 2022, this bipartisan package expand access to clean, safe water • Re-eradicating water shut-offs in MI Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs • Prop 22-3, successful November 2022 ballot initiative to establish an individual right to reproductive freedom in state constitution • HB 4006/SB 30, Senator Erika Geiss Enacted in April 2023; repealed 1931 Abortion Ban/protection of privacy/information related reproductive care. • Michigan “Mominubus” Omnibus package of bills addressing barriers to care and racial gender justice in the perinatal period (Michigan State of Birth Justice Community Coalition) • HB 4574/4575 & SB 332/SB 333, Representative Helena Scott and Senator Erika Geiss Michigan Family Leave Optimal Coverage (FLOC), Michigan Voices RJ Education & Outreach Committee Collective Statement (WICo-Chairs) Michigan Paid Leave for all Coalition • SB 0025, Human Right to Water Act, Senator Rosemary Bayer Would have required all state departments and agencies to establish certain water affordability criteria; and to prescribe the powers and duties of certain state and local governmental officers and entities. • Draft housing reform legislative package not yet introduced, tentatively the Eviction Legal Services Act and Detroit Right to Counsel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unauthorized Pelvic Exams Legislation • Wisdom Institute is continuing to advocate for more impactful definition of disadvantaged communities in H.B. 5890-5892, Expanding Community Access to Water Infrastructure Funding



NEW JERSEY

NEW JERSEY BLACK WOMEN'S PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION (NJBWPA)	Policy Priorities	Advocated for
<p>New Jersey Black Women’s Physicians Association is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and network of Black women physicians who are dedicated to advocacy and the elimination of health care disparities within communities of color and other vulnerable populations. Through partnerships, NJBWPA’s offer mentorship, education, and healthcare navigation to enhance resilience and improve the healthcare experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Sexual Health Education • Scientific Research • Education Justice • Maternal Health and Pregnancy Care • Reproductive Health Care for Incarcerated Black People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S3864, New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center Act, Senator Shirley Turner <p>This bill, signed into law in July 2023, establishes the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Center and appropriates \$23,220,000 to the project.</p>



PENNSYLVANIA

NEW VOICES FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE	Policy Priorities	Advocated for
<p>Inspired by the leaders who have shaped our movement, New Voices for Reproductive Justice envisions being part of a powerful, intersectional network and social justice movement based in the human right to control our bodies, sexualities, gender identities, expressions, work, reproduction; to have the ability to form our families on our own timelines; and the ability to do these things in safe, inclusive, accessible environments. <i>*Note: New Voices for Reproductive Justice organizes in Ohio as well.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Abortion Care • Comprehensive Sexual Health Education • Voting Rights • Gender-Based Violence • Environmental Justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproductive Freedom Platform, Philadelphia, PA City Council <p>Bills #220664, #220665, #220656 passed in December 2022</p> <p>Sponsored by councilpersons Kendra Brooks, Helen Gym, Jamie Gauthier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive sexual education in Pittsburgh, PA Public Schools <p>New Voices for RJ educated and advocated expand Pittsburgh’s Sexuality Education Policy, which was updated for the first time in 10 years in September 2022</p>

OSHUN FAMILY CENTER	Policy Priorities	Advocated for	In 2024
<p>Oshun Family Center is dedicated to providing racially concordant care for the well-being of the Black community. Our comprehensive services include psychotherapy, holistic healing, and birthing support such as doula and lactation assistance. Oshun Family Center is committed to prioritizing the unique experiences of Black individuals, and fostering a welcoming space for healing and refuge. Its mission is to empower those striving to break generational cycles and assert control over their bodies. Oshun Family Center envisions achieving health equity in reproductive and mental health, acknowledging the crucial need for culturally responsive providers in under-represented communities. The organization’s overarching goal is to overcome barriers by integrating race, culture, and ethnicity-based concordance into our care approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal Health and Pregnancy Care • Access to Abortion Care • Behavioral and Mental Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.R. 278, <i>Maternal Health Awareness Day</i>, Representative Gina H. Curry Would designate January 23, 2024, as “Maternal Health Awareness Day” in Pennsylvania to recognize all the women and birthing people who die from complications of pregnancy or childbirth. • H.B. 1618, doula coverage, Representative Morgan Cephas Would require health insurance policies to provide coverage for any services provided by a doula. • H.B. 1608, addressing maternal mortality, Representative Morgan Cephas Would require any services provided by a doula to be covered by Medicaid. • Provided technical assistance for H.B. 1362 (formerly H.B. 1173), Maternal Mortality Review Act, Representative Morgan Cephas Would require the Department of Health & Human Services to annually publish data on maternal mortality; Medicaid expansion for postpartum care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently working on the agenda with the PA Black Maternal Health Caucus in support of the minibus 2.0 in PA.





TENNESSEE

SISTERREACH	Policy Priorities
<p>SisterReach is a grassroots nonprofit founded in 2011, which promotes reproductive autonomy for women and teens of color, poor and rural women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and their families through the lens of Reproductive Justice. SisterReach’s mission is to empower its base for healthy lives, families, and sustainable communities, employing education, policy advocacy, cultural shift, and harm reduction. Operating locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, SisterReach centers marginalized voices, conducts community-centered discussions, and strategically engages stakeholders to advance human rights within the Reproductive Justice framework.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion and Reproductive Justice • Economic Justice • Sex Work • Maternal Health and Pregnancy Care • Access to Abortion Care • Comprehensive Sexual Health Education • Contraceptive Equity • Voting Rights • Environmental Justice



TEXAS

THE AFIYA CENTER	Policy Priorities	Advocated for
<p>The Afiya Center (TAC) was established in response to the increasing disparities between HIV incidences worldwide and the extraordinary prevalence of HIV among Black womxn, girls, and gender-expansive individuals in Texas. TAC is unique in that it is the only Reproductive Justice organization in North Texas that is founded and directed by Black womxn. TAC works to transform the lives, health, and overall wellbeing of Black womxn and girls by providing refuge, education, and resources. The organization ignites the communal voices of Black womxn resulting in full achievement of reproductive freedom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal Health and Pregnancy Care • Behavioral and Mental Health • Scientific Research • Economic Justice • Environmental Justice • Food Justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocated for, and provided technical assistance to HB 12, Representative Toni Rose (Postpartum Medicaid Expansion) Passed in June 2023 to expand duration of services provided under Medicaid to women following a pregnancy from 2 months to 12 months. • HB 460, Representative Shawn Thierry Would shift composition of the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee. • HB 663, Representative Shawn Thierry Would have strengthened confidentiality and reporting of certain maternal mortality information to the Department of State Health Services and to a workgroup establishing a maternal mortality and morbidity data registry. • HB 852, Representative Shawn Thierry Passed in June 2023, expanding Texas’ Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee from 17 to 21 members and to require inclusion of two community members with experience in health care, (one representing rural areas and the other urban areas).

MESSAGING DOS AND DONTs

Advancing a Reproductive Justice agenda requires an understanding of the framework, and a commitment to messaging and narrative shift that centers RJ in policy. To help you center language in a Reproductive Justice frame, we offer this messaging guidance:

DO	DON'T
Use “Reproductive Justice” when you mean Reproductive Justice.	Use Reproductive Justice when you mean reproductive health, rights, or freedom.
Define legislative wins that move us closer to Reproductive Justice as victories that reduce harm and move us toward incremental change.	Champion incremental legislative wins as achieving Reproductive Justice.
Underscore that achieving Reproductive Justice impacts women, girls, and gender-expansive people, as well as their families and communities. Use gender-inclusive language when talking about Reproductive Justice, and highlight the impact that RJ issues—from access to abortion care to voting rights—have on families and communities at large.	Only reference “women” in language about Reproductive Justice.
Talk about the right to abortion care in conjunction with the right to have a child; the right to the social and economic support to parent the child(ren) one already has, free from interpersonal, community, and/or state-based violence; and the right to sexual expression and sexual pleasure. Champion access abortion care alongside other criticalcritical RJ issues, including maternal health, voting rights, criminal justice reform, and sex education, to name a few.	Center only abortion rights as you work toward Reproductive Justice.
Say “abortion care.” if you use terms like “reproductive health,” ensure that you really mean the broad range of health care, not abortion care.	Use euphemisms when you talk about abortion. Not saying “abortion care” is both a symptom and source of abortion stigma.
Emphasize that abortion care is a very safe procedure; highlight that resources and medication enable people to manage their abortions safely.	Rely on images and messages about back-alley abortions, coat hangers, and dangerous methods people use to end a pregnancy. While this has been, and is, has been reality for many people, these images perpetuate the false notion that abortion is unsafe.
Highlight that abortion care must be available and affordable, focusing on how abortion must be safe, legal, and accessible for anyone who needs it.	Use should statements or describe abortion as a rare procedure. Both terms increase stigma and can foster support for restrictions.
Draw on your values in communicating about your commitment to Reproductive Justice. Emphasize that certain individual lawmakers and interest groups want to impose their values on others and take away individuals’ rights to control their own lives and bodies.	Say that the government should stay out of personal decisions and should not interfere in health care. This language demonizes the government’s (particularly Congress’) important role in ensuring access to a full range of health care services, including abortion care.



www.blackrj.org

For more information on about RJ and our priorities, see: *Re-Imagining Policy: In Pursuit of Black Reproductive Justice, 2023 Black Reproductive Justice Policy Agenda*, In Our Own Voice, June 2023 (76 pages; PDF)

Acknowledgements

Kaylan A. Tanner, Manager of State Policy, In Our Own Voice
Ebony M. Baylor, Vice President of Government Affairs, In Our Own Voice
KDF Strategies
Goris Communications