

2024 FEDERAL 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 State Enhancement Initiative partners include:

- Birth In Color RVA
- New Jersey Black Women Physicians Association
- Oshun Family Center
- The Wisdom Institute

Our Approach

Our work is rooted in the **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 classism**. Reproductive Justice *requires* bodily autonomy and racial justice to be fully realized. We stand in unity with people around the country who are calling for an end to state-sanctioned violence against Black people and we support programs and policies that ensure LGBTQIA+ 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, 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. Our most recent national poll, commissioned ahead of the 2024 election cycle, reveals that nearly one-quarter of Black women 18 to 44 surveyed felt worried about their health and safety during pregnancy or childbirth because of their race. 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:

- Pass the Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act
- Increase funding for doulas 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. Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people are more likely to live in states that have enacted near-total bans on surgical and medication abortion—and Black pregnant people living in poverty and battling systemic racism are not able to simply travel to another state to receive abortion care. 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 recognize that bans on Medicaid coverage for abortion results in one in four low-income women carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term. We know that this outcome—a pregnant person who is denied an abortion—can push an individual into a cycle of poverty. 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 a federal right to abortion care.

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. Black women, girls, and gender-expansive individuals continue to face provider bias about recommended family planning services, coercion about contraceptive choices and services, and inability to access the full range of contraceptives. Further, many states that have restricted access to abortion care have also made it harder for their residents to access contraception. As new, over-the-counter options for contraception enter the market, federal legislators need to prioritize removing cost sharing for as many contraceptive options as possible. We urge federal leaders to:

- Increase federal funding for the Title X program to expand access to pregnancy, STI, and HIV testing and other sexual and reproductive health services
- Fund programs that combat anti-Black racism and expand diversity and cultural competency training for health care professionals
- Provide prescription contraceptives at no cost and reimburse for contraceptive counseling

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL EDUCATION

Sexual health education and resources that are comprehensive, medically accurate, culturally sensitive, and inclusive of all gender-identities can not only reduce racial disparities in reproductive and sexual health, but also enable Black people to get the tools and information needed to make the best decisions about their own bodies and relationships. Comprehensive sexual health education is a catalyst to the information and empowerment needed to navigate if, when, and how to engage in safe and consensual sexual activity—and how to find pleasure in safe and consensual sexual activity. 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 comprehensive sexual education.
- Expand funding for increased sexual and reproductive health education.
- Prevent “religious freedom” from blocking access to contraception and 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 66 cents for every dollar a white man is paid, as compared to the 74 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 exacerbated deep, 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, 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
- Prioritize environmental justice in infrastructure funding implementation and future investments, including increasing access to clean water.