



2025 STATE 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, girls, and gender-expansive leaders at the national and state levels in our ongoing fight to secure Reproductive Justice for all.

We develop new and expansive policy solutions, working across all levels of government, to educate and mobilize on a span of issues, from:

- Maternal Health.
- Abortion Access.
- Contraceptive Equity.
- Economic Justice.
- Voting Rights.
- Environmental Justice.

In this continued fight for reproductive justice, we recognize the hard work of state coalitions doing the groundwork in their communities and beyond. The organizations we collaborate with include:

- Black Women for Wellness
- Black Women's Health Imperative
- New Voices for Reproductive Justice
- SisterLove, Inc
- SisterReach
- SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!
- Women With A Vision
- The Afiya Center
- The Wisdom Institute
- Birth in Color RVA
- The New Jersey Black Women Physician Association
- Oshun Family Center

Our Framework

We know that Reproductive Justice can only be achieved when all people 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 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.

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 urge state leaders to:

- Eliminate all restrictions on abortion care, including waiting periods, surgical setting requirements, and parental consent or notification.

Our Policy Priorities

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: abortion bans in dozens of states and the loss of Roe's protections; attempts to circumvent LGBTQIA+ liberation; disproportionately high Black maternal morbidity and mortality; environmental injustice fueled by a climate crisis; inaccessible or inadequate health care; pay inequality and workplace discrimination; unaffordable housing; voter restrictions; and countless others. 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 include:

- Provide public funding for all abortion care services and invest in community-based providers.
- Protect all access to medication abortion.

Maternal Health and Postpartum Wellness

Maternal health and postpartum wellness are necessary components of Reproductive Justice. Black pregnant people are more likely to face complications during pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period - all which are preventable. We support full access to maternal health and postpartum services which include doula care, mental health support, and Medicaid coverage so that every Black birthing person has a chance to feel safe and supported. We urge state leaders to:

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- Require and reimburse postpartum check-ins within the first 3 weeks after birth, with follow ups tailored to each person's healing process, rather than just a six-week visit.
- Expand access to community-based postpartum supports, i.e. home visits, peer support groups, lactation counseling, community healing spaces, and counseling for postpartum depression, birth trauma and loss.
- Build systems of care that center rest, recovery, nourishment, and connection, not just clinical check-ins.

LGBTQIA+ Liberation and Gender-Affirming Care

Across the country, Black LGBTQIA+ individuals are being targeted by harmful legislation and laws that restricts life saving gender-affirming care. These harmful practices are rooted in homophobia, transphobia, and racism that prohibit how individuals express themselves and care for their bodies. We believe that everyone deserves access to the healthcare they need to feel fully supported and cared for. We urge state leaders to:

- Protect and expand access to gender-affirming care including hormone therapy, surgical services, and mental health support.
- Expand access to comprehensive, affirming sexual reproductive health education that reflects diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and family structures.
- Ensure policies that protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination in healthcare settings.

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Protecting and Restoring Medicaid

Access to Medicaid can help to ensure the health and economic security of Black communities. For families living on low incomes, Medicaid provides pathways to essential care, including postpartum services and mental health support. We support the full protection of Medicaid, as well as expanded postpartum coverage and equitable provider access. We urge state leaders to:

- Expand Medicaid eligibility to ensure more holistic practitioners can participate in the healthcare workforce, providing access to essential services in marginalized communities.
- Increase funding for outreach and enrollment efforts in Black communities.
- Challenge state policies that exclude formerly incarcerated individuals and immigrants from receiving Medicaid coverage.
- Eliminate restrictions to comprehensive reproductive health care services, including abortion coverage.

Mental and Emotional Well-being

Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people face barriers to accessing quality, affordable, and culturally competent mental health care. Reproductive injustice, racism, and socio-economic inequality impact how we continue to experience stress, healing and support. We believe that mental and emotional well-being is not a privilege, but a right. We support increased access to community centered and trauma-informed mental health services that recognize our lived experiences. We urge leaders to:

- Expand Medicaid coverage to include comprehensive mental health services.
- Increase funding for community-based mental health services led by culturally responsive providers.

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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. We urge state leaders to:

- Increase the minimum wage to \$15 and link future increases to the consumer price index.
- Leverage federal funding to provide free state-run child care for working families and students.
- Implement a state-based paid leave program.
- Create reimbursement structures that allow holistic practitioners to bill insurance for services rendered in a private practice and community health settings, ensuring their work is financially sustainable.

Environmental Justice

Black communities are 75% more likely to live near facilities that produce hazardous waste, and live in areas with unsafe drinking water and polluted air. We believe that Black people deserve the same protections and resources as those who live in neighborhoods free from environmental harm. Black communities deserve to raise their children without the fear of illness or displacement. We urge state leaders to:

- Enact a statewide water affordability plan that caps water bills based on ability to pay and ensures no one is forced to choose between water and other basic needs.
- Ban water shutoffs, due to financial constraints, for pregnant and postpartum people and households with children, elders and people with disabilities.
- Increase funding to improve water infrastructure and programs that result in clean, affordable drinking water.
- Provides debt forgiveness for families affected by unaffordable water rates and bills.

Housing Rights

Black communities face housing discrimination, eviction, and homelessness at disproportionate rates. These inequities are rooted in systemic, economic and racial injustice. Not only do we believe that safe and fair housing is a basic right, but we also believe that the pathways to accessing affordable housing must be equitable. Black families deserve living conditions that do not expose them to harm through displacement. We urge state leaders to:

- Expand tenant protection and eviction prevention programs.
- Fund emergency rental assistance and relocation support for families facing eviction.

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. Protecting voting rights is foundational to a thriving democracy, particularly for Black communities that have historically faced systemic barriers to political participation. We urge state leaders to:

- Defend the fundamental right of every citizen to vote by dismantling barriers to access and guaranteeing that every eligible vote is not only cast but also accurately counted.
- Provide voter education and resources that help understand citizen rights and legislative roles and responsibility as it relates to passing laws.

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Comprehensive Sex Education

Sexual health education and resources that are comprehensive, medically accurate, and 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 their own 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 urge state leaders to:

- Leverage federal 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.

Autonomy and Self-Determination

For Black women and girls, bodily autonomy is constantly under threat. From reproductive restrictions which criminalize contraceptive care and abortion access, to messaging surrounding family-planning, the right to make decisions about one's own body has been policed. We believe that every person deserves the freedom to define what health and choice look like for themselves. We urge state leaders to:

- Provide full access to safe, affordable, and culturally competent reproductive health care, including contraception, abortion services, prenatal care, postpartum care and gender-affirming health services.
- Ensure that all care is trauma-informed and community-led, including support for midwives and doulas.
- Protect the right to live, heal and parent with dignity and self-determination.

HIV/STI Testing

Black women in the United States face disproportionate rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). We recognize that systemic barriers hinder access to prevention methods, testing, treatment, and care. These barriers are often rooted in racism, poverty, gender discrimination, and social stigma. We urge state leaders to:

- Ensure that Medicaid programs cover routine HIV/STI screening and treatment.
- Increase funding for community health centers in underserved communities.
- Expand free and confidential testing in community-based organizations, HBCUs, churches, and shelters.

Substance Use Disorders

Individuals in Black communities experiencing substance use disorder face structural harm, stigma, and lack of adequate care. Black women and girls specifically are criminalized for their substance use, particularly during pregnancy or parenting. They face higher rates of incarceration and child welfare involvement compared to their White counterparts. Black women are deserving of access to comprehensive, non-punitive care that will address their needs. We urge state leaders to:

- Expand access to harm reduction services.
- Shift from punitive approaches to public health-based responses to substance abuse.
- Decriminalize drug possession and invest in community wellness programs.

Religious Autonomy

Black women and gender-expansive people have the right to make decisions about their bodies and families, free from religious discrimination or coercion. Religious ideologies have been weaponized in healthcare settings to restrict access to abortion, contraception, and gender-affirming care. These harmful restrictions reinforce racism and gendered oppression. We urge state leaders to:

- Ensure that Reproductive Justice policies protect access to essential care for Black communities.
- Ensure the rights of individuals to make decisions about their body, family, and future according to their own values and beliefs, including their faith.
- Reject religious refusal policies that allow providers or institutions to deny reproductive or sexual health services.

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