



2026 STATE POLICY PRIORITIES



Reproductive Justice can only be achieved when all people have complete economic, social, and political power and mental, physical, and community well-being 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 both bodily autonomy and racial justice to be fully realized.

Our Policy Priorities

Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people have always been dynamic leaders across communities and sectors. At the same time, they face escalating state-based attacks on their rights. These attacks include increased efforts to restrict bodily autonomy, limit access to essential health care and supportive services, and undermine democratic safeguards that protect communities' ability to shape the policies that impact their lives. These overlapping challenges compound longstanding inequities and threaten the conditions necessary for individuals and families to thrive.

In Our Own Voice is a national-state partnership. Our 2026 policy priorities directly reflect the needs and priorities of the communities we serve.

Our key issues include:

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

Democracy is foundational to Reproductive Justice because political power determines who controls decisions about bodies, families, and communities. Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people have faced generations of voter suppression rooted in racism and sexism. This experience makes it essential to protect their access to political participation. When Black communities fully participate in democracy, they can elect leaders who advance reproductive health care, economic security, environmental safety, and freedom from violence.

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 citizens understand both their rights and legislators' roles and responsibilities.

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MEDICAID COVERAGE

Medicaid is an essential program that helps ensure access to health care for Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people. Approximately 83 million Medicaid enrollees are women; more than half of those women are of reproductive age; and about 4.4 million of those women identify as Black. For families living on low incomes, programs like Medicaid and coverage options expanded through the Affordable

Care Act provide pathways to essential health care. These options help reduce financial barriers to care and support healthier outcomes for Black individuals and families. Protecting and expanding Medicaid supports continuity of care, mental and physical health, and financial stability, and affirms that Black communities deserve comprehensive and affordable health care at every stage of life.

We urge state leaders to:

- Expand Medicaid eligibility to ensure a larger number of holistic practitioners can participate in the health care workforce and provide 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 care coverage.

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ACCESS TO ABORTION CARE

Access to abortion care, including medication abortion, is inseparable from reproductive autonomy and human rights. Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people are disproportionately impacted by abortion restrictions due to structural barriers, economic inequity, and racialized criminalization. Moreover, they are more likely to live in states with severe abortion bans and restrictions. The latest attacks on our health care infrastructure,

coordinated restrictions on access to medication abortion, and attempts to criminalize providers for delivering essential health services will only exacerbate existing inequities in access to abortion care. We trust Black people to make decisions about their bodies, health, and futures. We support comprehensive abortion access, including insurance coverage for abortion care; access to medication abortion; and broader systems of care needed to ensure safe, dignified, and equitable access.

We urge state leaders to:

- Eliminate all restrictions on abortion care, including mandatory waiting periods, hospital 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.

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MATERNAL HEALTH

Black women in the United States face a maternal mortality rate nearly three times higher than white women due to systemic racism, bias, and chronic underinvestment in maternal support systems. Strengthening maternal health policies is essential to ensuring respectful, evidence-based, and culturally responsive care that results in the best outcomes for Black birthing people and infants. These policies include expanded doula access, extended postpartum coverage, and stronger hospital accountability. Investing in maternal health through a Reproductive Justice lens supports community stability and generational well-being. It also creates conditions in which Black people can choose parenthood without risking their lives or health.

We urge state leaders to:

- Require and reimburse postpartum check-ins within the first three 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, such as 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.

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MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Mental and emotional well-being is a fundamental part of Reproductive Justice; it is not a privilege. Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people face persistent barriers to affordable, high-quality, and culturally competent mental health. They are also forced to navigate the compounded impacts of racism, sexism, reproductive injustice, and

economic inequity. We support expanded access to community-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally grounded mental health services that honor lived experiences and ensure Black communities have the support needed to heal, thrive, and make empowered decisions about their lives and families.

We urge state leaders to:

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

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Comprehensive sexual health education is essential to reduce racial disparities in reproductive and sexual health. Culturally responsive sexual health education provides Black people with the tools and information they need to make informed decisions about their bodies, relationships, and sexual well-being. We support sexual health education that centers

consent, identity, pleasure, and harm prevention. We believe that sexual health education must equip young people to navigate stigma, resist social pressure, and build their self-esteem. Comprehensive sexual health education is a critical pathway to bodily autonomy, safety, and empowered decision-making across the lifespan.

We urge state leaders to:

- Require comprehensive and medically accurate sexual education in all public schools.
- Invest dedicated state funding for comprehensive sexual health education.

LGBTQIA+ LIBERATION AND GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE

Black LGBTQIA+ people face disproportionate discrimination, health disparities, and legislative attacks that threaten their well-being. Access to gender-affirming care and protections from discrimination are essential to safety, mental health, and the ability to live authentically. Policies that ensure inclusive education, safe housing, and equitable care create conditions for Black LGBTQIA+ people to thrive. Advancing these policies upholds Reproductive Justice by affirming bodily autonomy and supporting communities that have, for too long, been pushed to the margins.

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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 LGBTQIA+ people from discrimination in health care settings.

ABOLISH CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTERS

Crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs), also known as “fake clinics,” intentionally target Black communities with misleading practices that are intended to delay or block their access to abortion care and other medical services. CPCs provide misinformation and shame-based counseling and do not offer real or medically based reproductive health services. Regulating CPCs protects Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people from coercion and ensures their access to evidence-based care.

Supporting legitimate providers-- including abortion clinics, midwives, and community health centers-- restores power to patients and helps dismantle the reproductive control that has historically been imposed upon Black people.

We urge state leaders to:

- Require CPCs to clearly disclose that they are not licensed medical facilities and prohibit them from engaging in deceptive advertising about the services they provide.

- Enact and enforce consumer protection laws that prevent CPCs from spreading medically inaccurate information about abortion care, contraception, or pregnancy.
- Invest in and expand access to legitimate reproductive health care providers, including abortion clinics, midwives, and community health centers serving Black communities.

RELIGIOUS AUTONOMY

Religious autonomy requires *individuals* to make decisions about their reproductive lives based on their own personal beliefs. These decisions should never be placed in the hands of lawmakers or institutions. Many anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQIA+ policies seek to impose a narrow religious ideology that does not

reflect the diverse spiritual traditions of Black communities. Protecting religious autonomy ensures that Black communities can practice their faith (or no faith) without having another’s religious beliefs imposed on their health care decisions.

We urge state leaders to:

- Ensure that Reproductive Justice policies protect access to comprehensive reproductive health care by supporting religious autonomy.
- Reject religious refusal policies that allow providers or institutions to deny reproductive or sexual health services.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SURVIVOR SUPPORT

Black women face some of the highest rates of domestic and intimate partner violence in the country. At the same time, Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people encounter myriad barriers to services, legal protections, and safe housing. Strengthening survivor-centered policies is essential to ensuring safety, autonomy, and stability for Black

women, girls, and gender-expansive people. Comprehensive supports-- including culturally grounded services, financial assistance, and legal protections--help prevent harm and promote healing. Protecting survivors affirms that all people deserve to live free from violence and raise families under conditions of dignity and independence.

We urge state leaders to:

- Increase funding for survivor-centered services, including culturally responsive shelters, counseling, legal assistance, and prevention programs that serve Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people.
- Expand access to safe and stable housing, financial assistance, and employment protections for survivors seeking to leave abusive situations.

MEDICAL SCHOOL ACCESS FOR HISTORICALLY UNDER-REPRESENTED STUDENTS

Representation in the health care profession reduces bias and improves health outcomes, including maternal and reproductive health outcomes. Health outcomes for Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people improve the most when Black doctors, midwives, nurses, and mental health providers enter the workforce. Expanding access to medical education for Black and other historically under-represented students builds a culturally competent, community-rooted workforce. Policies

that remove financial barriers, strengthen mentorship, and support academic pathways help diversify the health care workforce and transforms academic institutions and health care systems that have historically excluded and harmed Black people. Investing in a diverse health care workforce is essential to reducing implicit biases and medical malfeasance, as well as ensuring Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people receive culturally responsive care.

We urge state leaders to:

- Invest in policies and programs that recruit, train, and retain Black and other diverse health care providers, including physicians, midwives, nurses, and mental health professionals serving Black communities.
- Expand scholarship, loan repayment, and financial aid programs that reduce the cost of medical and health professional education for historically under-represented students.

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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Environmental Justice is critical for Black people to attain Reproductive Justice. Black communities are disproportionately exposed to contaminated water, polluted air, and environmental hazards due to systemic environmental racism, which harms fertility, pregnancy outcomes, and long-term health. Clean water and air are necessary

for Black communities to thrive and are constantly under-resourced. Reproductive Justice requires us to invest in environmental justice policies that address contamination and structural inequities to ensure that Black families have the ability to raise children in safe conditions and support intergenerational health and well-being.

We urge state leaders to:

- Enact state-wide water affordability plans that cap water bills based on the ability to pay and ensure that no one is forced to choose between water and other basic needs.
- Increase funding to improve water infrastructure and programs that result in clean, affordable drinking water.
- Strengthen clean air protections by reducing industrial pollution in marginalized communities and investing in air quality monitoring and enforcement to protect Black communities' health.

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