

August 04, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20505

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20505

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20505

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy,

We, the 189 undersigned local, state, and national organizations, write to you in solidarity with Black women Reproductive Justice advocates leading the work to ensure Reproductive Justice for all, which includes the ability to make decisions about our lives, bodies, sexuality, and reproduction free from interference and violence. We call on you as federal leaders representing constituents who have been directly harmed by police violence and other state sanctioned violence to support the efforts and leadership of Black women and other reproductive and racial justice leaders in each and every one of your districts and states across the country.

SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective defines Reproductive Justice as “the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe, and sustainable communities.”<sup>1</sup> The term “Reproductive Justice” was coined by 12 Black women in 1994 after they recognized that the larger women’s rights movement, led predominantly by white women, could not account for the needs of women of color, other marginalized women, and trans and non binary people.<sup>2</sup>

The ability to live and thrive in communities that are safe from interpersonal and state violence, including freedom from coercion, police terror, and violence is an inherent pillar of Reproductive Justice. Law enforcement that is vested in models of harm, punishment, and legal repression jeopardizes the safety, health, and livelihood of Black communities.

Police violence does not impact hypothetical people. These are our friends. Our families. Our communities. Far too often, police use their powers and freedoms to enact violence on Black communities. The recent murders of Breonna Taylor, Dominique Fells, George Floyd, Nina Pop, Riah Milton, Ahmaud Arbery, Sean Reed, Tony McDade, and Rayshard Brooks demand us to reimagine safety for everyone in our communities.

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<sup>1</sup> SisterSong. What is reproductive justice? <https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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Black leaders and communities have the answers. People closest to the pain must be closest to the power. To feel safe, communities need less police presence and more unbiased healthcare, including mental health and the full range of reproductive healthcare, housing for unhoused people, employment for people who are unemployed or underemployed, and food for people who need nutritional assistance.

White supremacy and policing are two sides of the same coin of institutionalized violence, obstructing people's ability to exercise the fullness of their bodily autonomy. This institutionalized violence includes targeted divestment of resources from Black and brown communities, from clinic closures and lack of access to clinic-based abortion care, to the risk of being over-policed and surveilled for self-managing their abortion outside of a clinic setting. We also acknowledge that prosecutions for self-managed abortion disproportionately impact Black people who face higher rates of arrests for a suspected abortion or pregnancy loss, or are forced to have more interactions with police and other state agents (such as social workers) because of negative pregnancy outcomes caused by health disparities.

We must continue to hold the full picture of our communities and uplift and center the realities of Black trans and gender non-conforming people. Black trans and gender non-conforming communities face extremely high rates of violence and are often revictimized when seeking help. Due to high rates of employment discrimination and poverty, many transgender people participate in underground economies. For example, 53 percent of Black trans people who worked in these spaces reported elevated levels of police violence.<sup>3</sup>

At a time when the maternal mortality rate for Black pregnant women is three to four times that of white women, federal, state, and local governments continue to increase law enforcement budgets that allow for more police presence, which decimate Black communities and kill Black people, instead of working to decrease maternal mortality among Black women. No Black person should have to raise a family in an overpoliced neighborhood; send their children to schools that place them in jail as often as they do colleges; live without affordable and accessible health care and child care; be subject to health care that is denigrating and demoralizing; or be expected to thrive in a society that consistently and relentlessly brutalizes and dehumanizes them. Reproductive justice requires that we critique frameworks of power and the state factors that continuously dictate our right to form families and parent with dignity. The right to parent free from violence is Reproductive Justice.

As organizations committed to a world where everyone has the right to decide if, when, and how to become a parent - we have seen the needs of our families and communities rejected by local, state and federal governments year after year as defense and law enforcement budgets eclipse funding for programs and resources that our families need to thrive. We can no longer stand for

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<sup>3</sup> National Center for Transgender Equality. Blueprint for Equality: A Transgender Federal Agenda, Chapter 6: Reforming Police and Ending Anti-Transgender Violence. <https://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NCTE%20Federal%20Blueprint%20Chapter%206%20Police%20and%20Ending%20Violence.pdf>

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cuts to food assistance and other critical resources for families with low incomes, restrictions on and cuts to Medicaid and other safety net programs, bans on abortion coverage, cuts to family planning providers and much more. Budgets are moral documents and we are in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives and [Reproductive Justice advocates](#), and we call on members of Congress to take action federally and to support local efforts to divest from law enforcement and invest in Black and brown communities. A poll among women of color who voted in the 2018 election found that 75% of Black women named ending racial, ethnic, and cultural discrimination as a top priority that drives them to the polls, with Latina and Asian American and Pacific Islander women also expressing it as a top priority.<sup>4</sup>

The blueprint for this already exists. Last year, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley introduced the “People’s Justice Guarantee” recognizing the United States has a moral obligation to meet its foundational promise of guaranteed justice for all. Last month, Congresswoman Pressley along with Congresswoman Karen Bass, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee introduced a resolution condemning police brutality. Most recently, Congresswoman Pressley, Congresswoman Tlaib, and the Movement for Black Lives unveiled their plans to introduce the BREATHE Act. This legislative proposal aims to divest from the system of policing and prisons and invests in approaches to maintain safe and sustainable communities. These are just a few examples of those in power listening to the communities most impacted and proposing ideas and solutions to serve those communities. While much of this work will happen at the local and state level, Congress can set the tone for progress and demonstrate what service to community needs look like.

However, Congress continues to insert discriminatory policies such as the Hyde Amendment, which remains in this year’s FY2021 appropriations package despite the efforts of Black women such as Congresswoman Barbara Lee and Ayanna Pressley to end it. These bans are racist and perpetuate systems of oppression, anti-Black racism, and white supremacy that target people of color, especially Black women, and their ability to thrive in their own communities. For more than 40 years, the Hyde Amendment has disproportionately denied Black, Indigenous, and people of color the right to decide when and how to start or grow their families. The clock has run out--Congress must put an end to abortion coverage bans, once and for all. It is time for us to act upon the leadership of Black women by ending harmful policies like the Hyde amendment and instead enact ones that affirm the autonomy and dignity of Black people.

We need federal legislation that will divest from the violent reality of over-policing of Black people and instead invest in new approaches to community safety utilizing state incentives. We need legislation that will allocate new money to build health, sustainable, and equitable communities for all people. We call on congressional leaders to listen to the individuals in your cities and states and act justly. Communities know what is best for themselves. We are [telling you what we need](#) - your role is to listen and act upon our demands.

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<sup>4</sup><https://intersectionsofourlives.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/The-Intersections-of-Our-Lives-Survey-Findings-FINAL.pdf>

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*Endorsement is an indication of solidarity within our movement to address ending police brutality and a recognition of the urgency of these policies. Endorsement does not necessarily mean that each organization has expertise in or are actively working towards everything listed therein.*

In liberation,

Abortion Access Front  
Abortion Care Network  
Abortion Fund of Arizona / Pro-Choice Arizona  
Access Reproductive Care (ARC)-Southeast  
ACCESS Women's Health Justice  
ACLU of Nebraska  
Advocates for Youth  
AIDS Alabama  
Alabama Black Women's Roundtable  
Alianza Americas  
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas  
All-Options  
American Atheists  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American College of Nurse-Midwives  
American Humanist Association  
American Jewish World Service  
American Medical Student Association  
AMPLIFY Georgia  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)  
Athlete Ally  
Atlanta Women's Center  
Black and Pink  
Black Women for Wellness Action Project  
Black Women's Health Imperative  
Bridgeport Prospers  
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice  
California Nurse-Midwives Association  
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network  
Carolina Abortion Fund  
Catholics for Choice  
Center for Biological Diversity

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Center for Reproductive Rights  
Center Song, LLC  
Centering Equity and Racial Literacy in Family Planning (CERCL-FP)  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers  
CHANGE (Center for Health and Gender Equity)  
Charlotte Reproductive Action Network  
Chicago Abortion Fund  
Choice Network  
Citizens For Choice  
Civil Liberties & Public Policy Program  
Cobalt Advocates  
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)  
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)  
Equality California  
Equality North Carolina  
Equity Forward  
Families USA  
Feminist Health Center of Portsmouth, Inc./ Joan G. Lovering Health Center  
Feminist Humanist Alliance  
Feminist Majority Foundation  
Feminist Women's Health Center  
Flood Family Law, LLC  
FORGE, Inc.  
Forward Together Action  
Global Justice Center  
Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights GRR!  
Guttmacher Institute  
Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center  
Healthy and Free Tennessee  
Healthy Teen Network  
Hep Free Hawaii  
HIVE  
Hometown Action  
Hope Clinic for Women  
Ibis Reproductive Health  
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice  
Impact Fund  
Impetus - Let's Get Started LLC  
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda  
Indivisible  
Interfaith Voices for Reproductive Justice (IVRJ)  
International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)  
Ipas

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Jane's Due Process  
KM Consulting & Training, LLC  
Laotian American National Alliance  
Latino Commission on AIDS  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
Legal Voice  
Lift Louisiana  
Lilith Fund  
Mabel Wadsworth Center  
Medical Students for Choice  
Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health (MOASH)  
Midwest Access Coalition  
Montgomery PRIDE United/ Bayard Rustin Community Center  
Mothers on the Frontline  
MoveOn  
Ms. Foundation for Women  
NAPAFASA  
NARAL Pro-Choice America  
NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut  
NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland  
NARAL Pro-Choice North Carolina  
NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio  
NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon  
NARAL Pro-Choice Texas  
NASTAD  
National Abortion Federation  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter  
National Birth Equity Collaborative  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Center for Youth Law  
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD)  
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of Jewish Women Los Angeles  
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)  
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association  
National Health Law Program  
National Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice

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National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Women's Health Network  
National Women's Law Center  
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ  
New Era Colorado  
New Orleans Abortion Fund  
New Voices for Reproductive Justice  
NM Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
North Carolina AIDS Action Network  
Nurses for Sexual and Reproductive Health  
Odyssey Family Executive Center of South Norwalk  
Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Ohio Women's Alliance  
Oklahoma Call for Reproductive Justice  
PAI  
People's Parity Project  
Physicians for Reproductive Health  
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Population Connection Action Fund  
Population Council  
Population Institute  
Positive Women's Network - USA  
Pregnancy Options Wisconsin: Education, Resources & Support  
Preterm  
Pro-Choice Arizona / Abortion Fund of Arizona  
RAICES  
re:power  
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Reproductive Health Access Project  
Reproductive Rights Coalition  
SHK Global Health  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change  
SisterLove, Inc.  
SisterReach  
SisterSong: National Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective  
Society for Humanistic Judaism  
Soul 2 Soul Sisters  
SPARK Reproductive Justice Now!, Inc.

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Standly Solutions Consulting, LLC  
Tampa Bay Abortion Fund  
TEACH (Training in Early Abortion for Comprehensive Healthcare)  
Texas Equal Access Fund  
The Afiya Center  
The Black Women's Health Imperative  
The Kentucky Health Justice Network  
The Ordinary People Society  
The Womxn Project  
UCSF HIVE and Team Lily  
UltraViolet  
United We Dream  
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity  
Virginia Organizing  
We Testify  
Whole Woman's Health Alliance  
Win Without War  
Women Have Options/ Ohio  
Women with a Vision, Inc.  
Women's Foundation California  
Women's Information Network (WIN)  
Women's Law Project  
Women's Medical Fund (Wisconsin)  
Women's Voices for the Earth  
WV FREE  
Yellowhammer Fund  
Young Invincible