

# FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Informed by YWCA's rich 160-year history and by the expertise of our nationwide network, YWCA advocates for practical solutions that meet the needs of women, girls, and marginalized communities to advance our intersectional mission to eliminate racism and empower women. With local YWCA associations across 45 states and the District of Columbia, YWCAs are on the frontlines providing child care, gender based violence, housing, and other programs and services to as many as 2 million women, girls, and families in a typical year.

**We call on members of Congress to act on the following health, economic, safety, and racial justice priorities areas:**



## Strengthen YWCA Programs and Services

### Appropriations

Increase federal funding and support for housing, childcare, and domestic violence services to address rising demands and ensure stability

### Child Care

Strengthen the nation's network of childcare and early learning providers, increase access to quality affordable childcare for working families, and expand behavioral health services for children and staff

### Gender-Based Violence

Support survivors and prevent domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of gender-based violence as demand for services continues to rise

### Nonprofit Sector

Strengthen the sector's ability to help government and the broader social service sector work together more effectively to serve communities



## Advance Racial Justice and Gender Equity

### Racial Justice

Advance equity, safety, and racial justice for women and girls of color across justice, education, health, and other systems with structural racial disparities

### Reproductive Justice and Abortion Access

Strengthen and protect access to maternal health services and safe, legal abortion care

### Women's Economic Security

Ensure safe, fair, and inclusive workplaces that expand opportunities for women, particularly women of color, LGBTQ+ people, and historically marginalized communities

YWCA is committed to working with Congress and the Administration to pass legislation on these critical issues that disproportionately affect women and girls of color.

# 1. SAFETY FROM GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

YWCA is the largest network of domestic and sexual violence service providers in the United States. We advocate for practical solutions to protect survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and eradicate all forms of gender-based violence. Today, women and girls of all ages, income levels, racial and ethnic communities, sexual orientations, gender identities, and religious affiliations continue to experience violence in the form of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and trafficking. Reported need for lifesaving domestic violence services (including crisis interventions, legal services, housing, and behavioral supports) provided by YWCAs remains high. The crisis remains particularly high for women of color, due to barriers, lack of access, and policing systems that were built in ways that fail them and their families.

## Against this backdrop, YWCA urges Congress to act on the following issues:

- Introduce the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) in the first 100 days of the 118th Congress and reauthorize this bill
- Strengthen and maintain enforcement, oversight, accountability of Violence Against Women (VAWA) and Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) implementation
- Increase support for community-level prevention grants targeted at ending gender-based violence
- Identify and increase behavioral health and additional supports for survivors and their families

# 64%

of GenZ women of color surveyed in YWomenVote 2022 expressed heightened concern about experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or gender-based violence



## 2. CHILDCARE

Childcare and early learning programs are essential for working women and our nation’s economic future. While YWCAs are grateful for the initial infusion of funds to stabilize the childcare sector during the pandemic, additional support and effective oversight is required to ensure the longevity of both the sector and its workforce. In its current form, funding levels only enable core federal programs to reach just a fraction of eligible families, leaving far too many families struggling to find and afford high-quality care that meets their needs. Systemic barriers have also led communities of color, families with non-traditional work hours, and single-mother head of households without access to quality, affordable care.

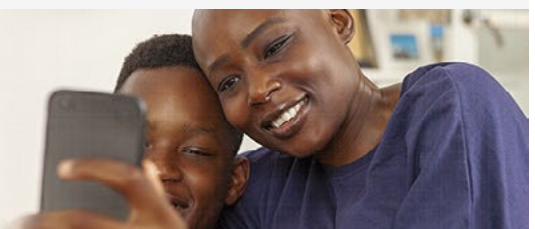
Building and retaining a healthy, equitable childcare workforce is also integral to the sustainability of the childcare and early learning sector and the well-being of children in their care. According to a Yale research study, 66.5% of child care providers are experiencing moderate to high levels of stress, and 45.7% of child care professionals screen positive for depression. Coupled with poverty level wages, childcare workers (93% of whom are women and disproportionately women of color) are fleeing the profession. Without additional federal investments, the ongoing exit of providers will deepen the already detrimental workforce shortage, leaving families without options and our economy in peril.

Continued prioritization and investment to address our nation’s child care crisis will ensure that businesses can remain open and retain their workforce and parents can stay at work knowing their children are in safe, educational environments. A sustainable childcare infrastructure is pivotal to meeting the needs of all women, families, and childcare providers.

**Guided by the on-the-ground experience and voices of providers, we urge Congress to:**

- Stabilize and build the child care workforce by increasing access to living wages and skills-based training for childcare providers and educators
- Invest in the long-term stabilization of the child care sector to ensure accessible, quality, and affordable child care for all
- Address the mental, behavioral, and emotional health needs of providers and children
- Ensure healthy, equitable, and supportive workplaces for teachers, staff, and the children in their care
- Make additional investments in the childcare sector via the appropriations process

**52%** of mothers surveyed in YWomenVote 2022 express deep concern about accessing child care



# 3. FEDERAL BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS

YWCA is on the front lines of communities, strengthening the pillars of economic security for women and families and meeting their needs in moments of crisis. Every day, we see first-hand the critical difference that federal funding for housing, childcare, domestic and sexual violence, and other services makes in communities served by local YWCA associations. Today, federal grants and funding remain a large area of financial support for YWCA programs and services across the country that impact the health, safety, and economic well-being of YWCA clients.

**Faced with ongoing and increased demand for services caused by COVID-19, YWCA urges Congress in the appropriations process to provide robust levels of federal funding for programs and services that:**

- Support survivors and prevent gender-based violence, particularly through the:
  - » Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), particularly VAWA’s Transitional Housing program
  - » Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)
- Stabilize and increase child care accessibility specifically through the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Early Head Start, and Head Start
- Increase access to emergency and transitional housing, specifically through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):
  - » Emergency Solutions Grant
  - » Continuum of Care Program, including the Gender-Based Violence Set-Aside

# 79%

of American Indian/Alaska Native women surveyed in YWomenvote 2022 overwhelmingly support expanding availability of services to support survivors of gender-based violence





# 4. STRENGTHENING THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

The nonprofit sector is the backbone of our communities and continues to champion on-the-ground programs, human services, and educational activities for families across the country. Prior to the pandemic, charitable organizations collectively employed over 12.3 million individuals and served as the nation's third largest employer. Today, YWCA remains a national leader in the charitable nonprofit coalition, supporting policies that contribute to a strong civic society and culture of giving with a focus on support for women, girls, and their families.

The need to strengthen the nonprofit sector's ability to respond and assist in any key recovery efforts – from pandemic to hurricane, power outage to flood - as well as hire and retain workers is more critical than ever. The demand for services provided by nonprofits remains high as small dollar donations have declined in the past years. People and communities in need will continue to rely extensively on charitable nonprofits – like YWCA - for important services and support.

**YWCA urges Congress to enact bipartisan policy solutions supported by national, state, and local nonprofits and urgently provide relief and recovery for the nonprofit sector nationwide, including:**

- Strengthening and building an equitable nonprofit workforce with the ability to hire and retain a diverse workforce at family sustaining wages
- Restore and expand the above-the line or universal charitable deduction and other tax policies that incentivize giving

# 75%

of women overall surveyed in YWomenVote 2022 believe increasing funding for nonprofits is a high priority



# 5. RACIAL JUSTICE

YWCA is committed to ensuring that everyone is afforded an equal opportunity and equal protection under the law. But too often, stereotypes, biases, and racial power dynamics are embedded in our laws and public policies, impacting a broad range of issues across education, justice, civic engagement, health, and other sectors. The unique experiences of women and girls of color underscore the importance of expedited action by policymakers at all levels to implement and advance racial justice and safety. It is imperative that policymakers expand gendered narratives to recognize and address the racialized violence that women and girls of color continue to experience.

YWCA’s intersectional mission to eliminate racism and empower women demands that we advocate against the oppression and inequities that many groups and individuals endure.

## YWCA thus urges bold Congressional action to advance racial justice to:

- Pass legislation that addresses racism as a public health crisis and marshal resources across sectors to promote health and well-being in communities of color
- Defend and protect equal access to the ballot box
- Enact laws that safeguard people of color from police violence and increases police accountability
- Eliminate school discipline disparities, enhance school climates, and protect the rights of all students
- Increase access to comprehensive youth mental health services that is culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and recognizes the unique experiences and impacts of youth of color

# 71%

of Black women surveyed in YWomenVote 2022 reported having experienced discrimination based on upon race or ethnicity



# 6. REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE AND ABORTION ACCESS

For more than fifty years, YWCA USA has supported the reproductive freedom of all people to make fundamental decisions about whether and when to have children. In issuing its decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and with it more than 50 years of legal precedent, disproportionately impacting the lives of young women and people of color who are already marginalized in our healthcare system. While racial disparities in health care increase pregnancy concerns for Black women, they also face a maternal health crisis that leaves them at four times greater risk of dying due to a pregnancy-related death, deepening the impacts of the decision in *Dobbs*. The reversal of *Roe v. Wade* not only imperils the significant health gains that women have made (with particularly stark consequences for young women of color), but it also remains closely interconnected with their economic security. Abortion bans push young people out of the workplace and limit their educational opportunities and careers with lifelong consequences that can and will impact economic stability and opportunity for themselves and their families. For people of color, those consequences are more severe due to existing systemic racial inequities.

**Bodily autonomy and the right to have an abortion are fundamental rights of all persons. YWCA urges immediate Congressional action to:**

- Codify equal access to safe, legal abortion care for all
- Strengthen maternal health services and improve health outcomes for survivors of domestic and sexual violence as well as women of color

# 70%

of GenZ women of color surveyed in YWomenVote 2022 were very or somewhat worried that reproductive health, including abortions, will remain legal where they live



# 7. ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES

Women are the primary source of financial support for many families and bear significant caretaking responsibilities at home. At YWCA, we believe no one should have to choose between their livelihoods and their health, their family, or their safety. Yet as a result of their dual roles as caregivers and primary breadwinners, many women in the workforce, particularly women of color, are often forced to choose between their family's economic security and their health when they or their loved ones need care. Moreover, women continue to face the economic barriers of pay inequity, sexual harassment, and discrimination.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed and exacerbated a depth of intersecting public health, economic, and racial justice crises that have long existed in our nation with disproportionate impacts on women, women of color, and their families. Unfortunately, failure by Congress to appropriately act and address these growing concerns have - once again - left women to endure. Simply put, the widespread and acute economic pain that women have experienced has not ended with the pandemic and action is required.

## **YWCA urges immediate Congressional action to:**

- Pass the Paycheck Fairness Act to work towards equal pay for equal work and pass legislation prohibiting the use of salary history in job interviews and negotiations
- Enact nondiscrimination laws, such as the Equality Act
- Prohibit sexual harassment on the basis of gender and gender identity in the workplace
- Codify paid family and medical leave, paid sick, and safe leave laws that are inclusive of all families, with strong accountability and job protection requirements

# 64%

of women identifying as LGBTQ surveyed in YWomenVote 2022 reported experiencing discrimination because of their sexual orientation





eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**

# **YWCA IS ON A MISSION**

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