



Sister Reach

SISTERREACH LEGISLATIVE REPORT 2022:
Highlight and Commentary on the 117th Federal Legislative Session

MEMORANDUM:

The 117th United States Congress began January 3, 2021, and is ongoing until January 3, 2023, but we wanted to provide an update simultaneous with our 112th Legislative Session Tennessee General Assembly Report. As of the date of this memorandum between both chambers a combination of 19,609 bills, resolutions, and amendments have been filed, and of these, one hundred twenty-nine (129) public acts have passed. In this memorandum is a brief explanation of some of the bills and acts that reflect the focus framework of our work, Reproductive Justice.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE JUSTICE

HR6268: Protect Black Women and Girls Act of 2021

Sponsor: Representative Robin L. Kelly

Status: Disseminated to several House committees on 12/14/2021

Summary: This bill was introduced to address the underrepresentation of black women in research trials, ultimately resulting in underfunding of health conditions disparately impacting them. The legislation creates an “Interagency Task Force” to collect information regarding “issues involving Black women and girls in education, economic development, health care, justice and civil rights, and housing” and then provide recommendations for improvement, including incentives.

RJ Analysis: We support this legislation in that it will focus specifically on our community and needs, identify the barriers and harm caused, and provide us with representation to be afforded benefits previously unavailable.

HR959: Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act of 2021 (“Omnibus”)

Sponsor: Representative Lauren Underwood

Status: House: Introduced and disseminated to multiple committees, and currently in eight (8) subcommittees, the most recent referred to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, & Homeland Security on 4/23/2021

Summary: A wordplay on the term “omnibus,” this extensive legislation is a compilation of twelve individual bills expertly combined to comprehensively acknowledge and address the maternal health crisis faced in BIPOC communities.

RJ Analysis: We support this legislation in that it identifies areas of need and invests in necessary resources to combat maternal mortality.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

HR2116: Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act of 2022 (“CROWN Act”)

Sponsor: Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman

Status: Passed House 3/18/2022; Senate: Referred to Committee on the Judiciary on 3/21/2022

Summary: This bill addresses discrimination in federally assisted programs, housing programs, public accommodations, and employment as it relates to hair texture or style affiliated with race or national origin.

RJ Analysis: We support this legislation in that it is inherently inappropriate to establish and maintain barriers to any opportunity that should be accessible to all.

HR5129: Community Services Block Grant Modernization Act of 2021

Sponsor: Representative Suzanne Bonamici

Status: Passed House on 5/13/2022; Senate: Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions on 5/16/2022

Summary: This bill reauthorizes the original Community Services Block Grant program and modifies it to provide funds for poverty alleviation, employment, education, housing, and health assistance to 200% of the federal poverty line.

RJ Analysis: We support the efforts made to improve our communities utilizing locally based resources and programs, although we would prefer to see the Federal Poverty Line at the original 125% instead of increased to 200%.

HR1651: COVID-19 Bankruptcy Relief Extension Act of 2021

Sponsor: Representative Jerrold Nadler

Status: Became Law 3/27/2021

Summary: This law extends the relief afforded for bankruptcy debtors due to COVID-19.

RJ Analysis: We support efforts that recognize the devastating financial impact that the pandemic had on individuals and mitigate economic disparity.

HR1799: PPP Extension Act of 2021

Sponsor: Representative Carolyn Bordeaux

Status: Became Law 3/30/2021

Summary: This law extends the Paycheck Protection Program from March 31, 2021 to June 30, 2021.

RJ Analysis: We support the recognition that the pandemic is not over, that small businesses

and, in accordance, employees have struggled with economic hardship and that relief is extended to mitigate the impact thereof.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

HR3755: Women’s Health Protection Act of 2021 (“WHPA”)

Sponsor: Representative Judy Chu

Status: Passed House 9/24/2021; Senate: Cloture Not Invoked 5/11/2022

Summary: The original version of this bill prohibited the individual states from restricting abortion access and allowed health providers the ability to perform abortions without intrusive medically unnecessary regulations.

RJ Analysis: We support this bill as it would override the trending laws being passed to restrict abortion, including trigger bans, and ensure accessibility to this medical procedure is afforded to all patients and providers free of “bounties” and criminalization.

HR2234: Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance Act of 2021 or the EACH Act of 2021

Sponsor: Representative Barbara Lee

Status: House: After dissemination into multiple committees on 3/26/2021, four referrals were made to subcommittees, latest update 10/19/2021

Summary: This bill would eliminate insurance restrictions on abortion coverage.

RJ Analysis: The Hyde Amendment has long been a barrier in accessing healthcare for low income populations. This bill would dismantle the Hyde Amendment, ensuring access previously unobtainable.





HR189: John Lewis NIMHD Research Endowment Revitalization Act of 2021

Sponsor: Representative Nanette Diaz Barragan

Status: Became Law 3/18/2022

Summary: Expands eligibility for research endowments through the National Institute on Minority Health & Health Disparities to promote the inclusion of underrepresented minority individuals in programs and health activities.

RJ Analysis: This law increases resource availability for additional programming to facilitate better representation of our community in medical and behavioral research and treatment.



HR4445: Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act of 2021

Sponsor: Representative Cheri Bustos

Status: Became Law 3/3/2022

Summary: This law invalidates any prerequisite that one must submit to arbitration prior to filing for judicial relief in matters involving sexual assault or sexual harassment.

RJ Analysis: We support this law as it allows the victimized party to elect their preferred route of recovery and removes barriers to access relief.

S4100: Mamas First Act

Sponsor: Senator Elizabeth Warren

Status: Senate: Committee on Finance 4/27/2022

Summary: This bill expands Medicaid coverage to include doulas, midwives, and tribal midwives.

RJ Analysis: We support this bill as we believe that these providers are essential to maternal health and wellbeing and persons should not be barred from accessing these services due to income disparity.



RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS

HR1378/S2752: Do No Harm Act

Sponsor: House HR1378: Representative Robert C. "Bobby" Scott; Senate S275: Senator Cory A. Booker

Status: HR1378 House: Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties on 4/28/2021; S2752 Senate: Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary 9/15/2021

Summary: This bill prohibits the abusive application of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA), such as when used to subvert discrimination or equal opportunity protections, employment laws, and other provisions.

RJ Analysis: We support the separation of church and state, religious freedoms, but also to not weaponize religion in a political or legislative manner to accomplish nefarious purposes in pursuit of poor policy and agendas.



HR5746: Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act

Sponsor: Representative Donald S. Beyer, Jr.

Status: Passed House 12/8/2021; Failed to invoke Cloture in Senate 1/19/2022

Summary: This proposed legislation combined two original bills, The Voting Rights Advancement Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021. This powerful combination would provide a much needed overhaul to the voting process, including, but not limited to: judicial reform, enhanced voter protections to combat the trending voter suppression laws passed by individual states.

RJ Analysis: We support this legislation as we believe the right to vote is sacred and should be made accessible without unnecessary restrictions and impediments to all eligible citizens.

HR3485: Global Respect Act

Sponsor: Representative David N. Cicilline

Status: Passed House on 2/9/2022; Senate: Referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

Summary: This bill would block visas of foreign persons that were involved in human rights violations centering around LGBTQIA+ persons.

RJ Analysis: While we support inclusive and affirming practices, we would be remiss if we did not point out the hypocrisy between how we are treating foreign persons while the individual states are allowed to terrorize our own LGBTQIA+ youth and families in schools and communities with the introduction and passage of so many negative laws right here at home.

HR5: Equality Act

Sponsor: Representative David N. Cicilline

Status: Passed House 2/25/2021; Senate: Committee on Judiciary Hearings on 3/17/2021

Summary: This bill prohibits discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expands the areas over which protected coverage will be afforded.

RJ Analysis: We support inclusivity, intersectionality, and the ability to enjoy life free from harassment.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

HR55: Emmitt Till Antilynching Act

Sponsor: Representative Bobby Rush

Status: Signed into Law 3/29/2022

Summary: This law makes lynching a federal hate crime offense with a penalty of up to thirty (30) years and/or a fine.

RJ Analysis: We support efforts to eliminate harm caused by hate.

HR3617: MORE Act; Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act

Sponsor: Representative Jerrold Nadler

Status: Passed House 4/1/2022; Senate: Committee on Finance 4/4/2022

Summary: This bill decriminalizes marijuana at a federal level, removes it as a scheduled substance from the Controlled Substance Act, prohibits the denial of Federal benefits resulting from a marijuana conviction, provides an expungement process for federal offenses, and creates trust fund programs for communities that have been impacted by the war on drugs.

RJ Analysis: We support the decriminalization of marijuana as it has disparately impacted our community, and applaud the restorative portion of the bill that provides for programs to assist the fallout suffered by the community.

HR1652: VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021

Sponsor: Representative Jerrold Nadler

Status: Became Law 7/22/2021

Summary: This law creates new revenue for Crime Victims by diverting from the general Treasury Fund, increases state compensation, and includes provisions to address the pandemic.

RJ Analysis: We support services that empower and assist victims to become whole.

HR1620: Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act

Sponsor: Sheila Jackson Lee

Status: Passed House 3/17/2021; Senate: Committee on the Judiciary on 5/24/2022

Summary: This bill seeks to Reauthorization the original Violence Against Women Act to prevent matters such as domestic violence, as well as increases support through additional programs, including housing stability for victims, and additional services.

RJ Analysis: We support this bill because it includes all persons that are at risk of violence (not just women), and seeks to provide restorative justice with community supports.

HR1446: Enhanced Background Checks Act

Sponsor: Representative James Clayburn

Status: Passed House 3/11/2021; Senate: Legislative Calendar under General Orders Calendar No. 391 on 5/25/2022

Summary: There is currently a “loophole” in the law where, after a waiting period of three (3) days, if a background check has not been returned, a Federal firearms licensee may transfer a firearm to an unlicensed person by default. This law increased the time to a ten (10) day waiting period, followed by a petition for final firearms eligibility, wait another ten (10) days, and then the firearm may be transferred by default.

RJ Analysis: We support this regulation in that having the appropriate clearance to transfer a firearm will likely reduce the risk of harm to victims of domestic violence and increase community safety.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

HR 3684: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

Sponsor: Representative Peter A. DeFazio

Status: Became Law 11/15/2021

HR5434: Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2021

Sponsor: Representative Peter A. DeFazio

Status: Became Law 10/02/2021

HR5763/S3122: Further Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2021

Sponsor: Representative Peter A. DeFazio

Status: Became Law 10/31/2021

Summary: Each one of these infrastructure/transportation bills served to provide funding for much needed studies, projects, and employment to survey and revitalize and increase availability of resources to our communities.

RJ Analysis: These laws not only will provide opportunities for employment, they will improve environmental areas such as water infrastructure, clean school busses, broadband, highway and pedestrian safety, and transportation resources.

HR68: Veterans, Women, Families with Children, Race, and Persons with Disabilities Housing Fairness Act of 2021 or the Housing Fairness Act of 2021

Sponsor: Representative Al Green

Status: Ordered to be reported amended by the yeas and nays in the committee on financial services on 6/22/2022

Summary: This bill reauthorizes the original Fair Housing Initiatives Program, creates a grant program to develop a pilot project to test solutions to end housing discrimination/segregation and collect data on housing discrimination/segregation's impact on military and veterans, and further expands efforts to address housing discrimination in general.

RJ Analysis: We support this legislation to not only document, but study and develop realistic solutions to address the housing disparity and remove barriers to access.

HR6: American Dream and Promise Act

Sponsor: Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard

Status: Passed House on 3/18/2021; Senate: Committee on Judiciary Hearings 6/15/2021

Summary: This bill provides a pathway to permanent residency status for migrant minors and removes overly restrictive and burdensome requirements previously applied against immigrants.

RJ Analysis: We support removing barriers to immigration and providing a system to maintain family integrity.

UDDICIA

Closing:

While there were many losses that stripped Tennesseans of rights and autonomy, we remain hopeful. This surge of discriminatory and conservative legislation will not stop us from rallying our communities around these issues and fighting for justice.

SisterReach and the surrounding community give thanks to all of the supporters and advocates who uplift the work for women, girls, and gender non-conforming people of color and LGBTQIA+ people in Tennessee and the South.

To learn more about SisterReach and support our work, visit us at:

Website: www.SisterReach.org

Instagram: [@SisterReach](https://www.instagram.com/SisterReach)

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