



A signature program of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

## 2023 BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE POLICY PRIORITIES AGENDA\*

The NCBCP Black Women's Roundtable has developed this agenda with the input of our members nationwide. While not an exhaustive list, the agenda highlights bills that are currently moving or of greatest interest to the communities we serve, including black women – the nation's most engaged and reliable voting bloc.

We have organized these priorities into several buckets:

- **Democracy Reform, Voting Rights and Digital Suppression**, where we include priorities such as the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to protect access to the ballot box and make voting more accessible.
- **Policing Reform and Criminal Justice**, where we include priorities such as the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act to hold police officers accountable for their actions and restore trust in law enforcement.
- **Economic Security**, where we include priorities such as the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Insurance Act and the other human infrastructure investments promised by the Build Back Better Agenda.
- **Public Safety**, where we include priorities such as an Assault Weapons Ban and closing of the Charleston Loophole to protect our communities from gun violence.
- **Health, Wellness, and Social Safety Net**, where we include priorities such restoring reproductive freedom, restoring health outcomes for communities of color and the protection of social safety net programs that will ensure retirement security, affordable health care, and nutrition for all.
- **Youth and Education**, where we include priorities such as investments in affordable childcare, investments in K-12 public school education and student loan debt forgiveness.

- **Technology and Telecommunications Policy**, where we include priorities such as ensuring the protection of civil rights in technology policy and the closing of the digital divide.
- **Gender and Worker Justice**, where we include priorities such as equal employment protections for women.
- **Small Business and Entrepreneurship**, where we include priorities such as investments in the growth of women and minority owned businesses, including an increase in the number of government contracts awarded to them.
- **Immigration**, where we include priorities such as comprehensive immigration reform.
- **Plan for Black America**, which includes priorities such as calling for a commission to study the truth and impact of slavery and racism on this nation.
- **Honorary Designations**, which include priorities such as the congressional acknowledgment of historical women and Black leaders, including our own Thomas W. Dortch.

We also thank the 117th Congress for taking action on the following issues that were included in our 2021 and 2022 policy agendas.

- **Hate Crimes**, including passing the Emmett Till Anti-lynching Act to making lynching a federal hate crime.
- **Prescription Drug prices** by passing the Inflation Reduction Act, which includes a cap on the cost of insulin at \$35.00 per month for seniors on Medicare and allows for the government to negotiate for lower drug prices.
- **HIV/AIDS** by the 2022 Omnibus Spending package including \$220 million for the Ending the HIV Epidemic Initiative and \$3.3 billion for HIV/AIDS research.
- **College costs** by increasing the Pell Grant for the first time in years in the 2022 Omnibus spending package.

- **Workplace fairness for women** by passing the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act to eliminate discrimination against pregnant workers and promote pregnant workers' health and economic security and the Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act.
- **Environmental Justice** by including billions for clean air, water safety, and air pollution in underserved communities, including communities of color that are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards.
- **Digital Inclusion** by including in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act billions for the expansion of broadband in rural and redlined communities, an affordable broadband benefit program - the Affordable Connectivity Program, and digital empowerment programs to ensure all Americans have the skills needed to access the benefits of the digital age.

For more information, contact [BWRPolicy@ncbcp.org](mailto:BWRPolicy@ncbcp.org).

## 2023 BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE PRIORITY ISSUES

### FY 2024 BUDGET

The NCBCP Black Women's Roundtable (BWR) believes that the nation's budget reflects what it values most, and so we were pleased to see President Biden's budget release for Fiscal Year 2024 include investments in the nation's human infrastructure - the American people. The budget includes lowers spending costs for working families, strengthens the social safety programs, lowers prescription drug prices, and makes healthcare more affordable, investing in childcare programs, expands access to affordable housing, tackles college affordability, and invests in civil rights and voting rights enforcement. These are the investments that will quickly and tangibly improve the lives of everyday Americans and that reflect the entirety of the BWR agenda below.

**BWR encourages Congress to support this budget and avoid continuing resolutions that do not meet the needs of the American people.**

### PANDEMIC RECOVERY

#### **LEARN THE LESSONS OF COVID-19**

As our nation continues to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, BWR recognizes that we must not return to the pre-pandemic status quo which left so many communities behind. Congress must incorporate the lessons learned from this pandemic and pass legislation and appropriations to close health disparities, provide permanent paid sick and family leave, strengthen our educational systems, invest in small businesses, ensure safe and affordable housing, close the digital divide, protect the social safety net, and prioritize first responders.

#### **COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY**

The Biden-Harris Administration has already indicated plans to the end the COVID-19 State of Emergency in May 2023, but Congress and the Administration have a responsibility to ensure those safety net expansions made during the emergency are maintained for those who may still need it to recover from the pandemic and the years of

	<p>under investment in the social safety net that preceded it. The pandemic only exacerbated existing inequities, and we must not go back.</p> <p>Background reading: <a href="https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/what-happens-when-covid-19-emergency-declarations-end-implications-for-coverage-costs-and-access/">https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/what-happens-when-covid-19-emergency-declarations-end-implications-for-coverage-costs-and-access/</a></p> <p><b>BWR asks Congress to ensure those safety net expansions made during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency are maintained and normalized in non-emergency policy and appropriations for those who may still need it, especially where they close equity gaps that predated the pandemic.</b></p>
<p><b>DEMOCRACY REFORM, VOTING RIGHTS, &amp; DIGITAL VOTER SUPPRESSION</b></p>	<p><b>VOTING RIGHTS</b></p> <p>According to the Brennan Center, "legislators have introduced 150 restrictive voting bills, 27 election interference bills and 274 expansive voting bills in 2023 alone.</p> <p>After the 2020 election, which garnered the highest voter turnout in over a century, a wave of state legislatures across the country enacted restrictive voting laws. In the last two years, nearly every state in the nation, especially those with Republican-led legislatures, have considered restrictive voter laws. In 2021, at least 19 states enacted 34 laws that make it harder for Americans to vote, and voters of color most especially experienced an uptick in voter suppression laws during the 2022 Mid-Term Elections.</p> <p>We've already seen 32 states have voter restrictive laws introduced in the first quarter of 2023. These voter suppression laws include restrictive voter ID laws and polling place closures, which make it particularly difficult for Black people, other people of color, young adults, the elderly, the disabled, and the poor to vote. We need Congress to act to protect equal access to the voting booth for all citizens, no matter where they live.</p>

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would reverse this aggressive wave of voter suppression by restoring the full protections of the original, bipartisan Voting Rights Act of 1965, which were eroded by the Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby v. Holder* in 2013. Last Congress, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act passed the House but failed to pass in the Senate due to arcane filibuster rules that require a supermajority of Senators to pass a bill.

The Freedom to Vote Act would set national standards to protect the freedom to vote, end partisan redistricting, and overhaul the nation's campaign finance system. Together with the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, the Freedom to Vote Act would be a comprehensive democracy reform law to protect all Americans' right to vote.

Background Reading: <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/john-lewis-voting-rights-advancement-act>

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/freedom-vote-act>

**BWR urges the Senate to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act to protect all Americans' access to the ballot box, ban partisan gerrymandering, and reduce the influence of big money in politics.**

#### **DIGITAL VOTER SUPPRESSION**

Forms of voter suppression have emerged in which digital advertising on social media was designed and specifically targeted to keep African Americans from voting. The Senate Intelligence Committee reported that during the 2016 elections, the Internet Research Agency (IRA), a Kremlin-linked, information campaign operation, overwhelmingly used Facebook advertisements to target and suppress the voter turnout of African Americans. The Committee reported that, “[N]o single group of Americans was targeted by IRA information operatives more than African Americans.” **BWR urges Congress to support legislation which imposes sanctions on countries involved in voter suppression, applies the same requirements, limitations, and protections regarding political advertising in traditional media to internet or digital political advertising, and sets forth special rules**

for disclosure statements for certain internet or digital ads.

### STATEHOOD FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BWR supports the ideals of the U.S. Constitution and the tenants of democracy upon which it stands. It is within this context that BWR believes that laws which impose federal taxation on U.S. citizens who are residents of the District of Columbia without allowing these same individuals full representation in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, denies such citizens of their constitutional right to full representation. **BWR urges Congress to pass the Washington, D.C. Admission Act, which would expand democracy to all U.S. citizens who are residents of the District of Columbia by admitting into the United States the state of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth, composed mostly of the territory of the District of Columbia, on an equal footing with the other states.**

### POLICING REFORM & CRIMINAL JUSTICE

#### POLICE REFORM

In the summer of 2020, people around the globe witnessed the graphic murder of George Floyd by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. While this horrific crime spurred the emotions of people around the world who were heartbroken by this instance of police brutality and racism, acts of police violence against Black people are nothing new. Racially motivated police brutality against Black people has plagued this nation since the establishment of policing in colonial America.

To curb the violence perpetrated on Black people at the hands of the police, we need the comprehensive and meaningful police reforms included in the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act to enforce police accountability and seek justice against law enforcement officers who violate their oaths.

Last Congress, the House passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, but negotiations fell apart in the Senate, even though bill sponsors were willing to compromise on some provisions in the bill. The Biden-Harris Administration went on to issue an Executive Order that uses the power of the Justice Department to improve police accountability for federal law enforcement and through training and guidance to other law enforcement agencies, but it is no substitute for legislation.

This legislation would: 1) ban chokeholds; 2) end racial and religious profiling; 3) eliminate qualified immunity for law enforcement; 4) establish national standard for the operation of police departments; 5) mandate data collection on police encounters; 6) reprogram existing funds to invest in transformative community-based policing programs; and 7) streamline federal law to prosecute excessive force and establish independent prosecutors for police investigations.

Background Reading: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/25/fact-sheet-president-biden-to-sign-historic-executive-order-to-advance-effective-accountable-policing-and-strengthen-public-safety/>

<https://nadler.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=394557>

**BWR urges Congress to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act to hold police accountable, change the culture of law enforcement, empower our communities, and build trust between law enforcement and our communities by addressing systemic racism and bias to help save lives.**

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

More than 1 in 3 adults have some form of a criminal record, keeping them from participating in many facets of everyday life as nearly nine in ten employers, four in five landlords and three in five colleges utilize background checks to screen applicants.

Currently, the federal government lacks any meaningful way to clear federal criminal records, regardless of whether they resulted in an actual conviction. The bipartisan Clean Slate Act aims to address this issue by automatically sealing federal arrest records for individuals not convicted and records for individuals convicted of low-level, nonviolent drug offenses after successfully completing their sentence. It would also establish new procedures to allow individuals to petition to seal records for other nonviolent offenses that are not automatically sealed.



	<p>Background Reading:  <a href="https://bluntrochester.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2698">https://bluntrochester.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2698</a> (Blunt Rochester/Casey and Ernst)</p> <p><b>BWR urges Congress to pass the Clean Slate Act to allow people with low-level and nonviolent criminal records a second chance to fully participate in society.</b></p>
<p><b>ECONOMIC SECURITY</b></p>	<p><b>BUILD BACK BETTER</b>  While much of the Build Back Better Agenda has passed via the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the CHIPS and Science Act, many of the human infrastructure investments promised by full Build Back Better Agenda have yet to be realized. The human infrastructure investments would help to drive a more equitable recovery for Black women and our families by making investments in early childhood education, child tax credits, college costs, childcare, eldercare, workers, health care, and paid leave. This investment in the nation’s human infrastructure would enable Black women to reach our full potential and share in the nation’s recovery and growth.</p> <p>Background reading: <a href="https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/07/15/fact-sheet-how-the-build-back-better-framework-will-support-womens-employment-and-strengthen-family-economic-security/">https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/07/15/fact-sheet-how-the-build-back-better-framework-will-support-womens-employment-and-strengthen-family-economic-security/</a></p> <p><b>BWR urges the Administration and Congress to continue fighting to pass the human infrastructure elements of the Build Back Better Agenda, including early childhood education, child tax credits, college costs, childcare, eldercare, workers, health care, and paid leave.</b></p> <p><b>PAID LEAVE</b>  With more than 7.3 million Black people working in the United States unable to earn a single paid sick day, it forces us to choose between our health and the health of our families or our economic security. If we take time off from work because we get sick or have to care for a sick family member, we must sacrifice food, shelter, childcare, and other</p>

critical life sustaining essentials. As the economy recovers from the pandemic, Black women are still being left behind as underlying racial and gender disparities continue to exacerbate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black workers and families.

**BWR urges Congress to pass a 12-week, permanent comprehensive national paid family and medical leave program, which would be administered by the Social Security Administration and partially enforced by the U.S. Department of Labor. This program should be available for the arrival of a child, to care for a seriously ill, injured, or disabled family member, for one's own serious health condition, or to address the impact of a loved one's military deployment.**

Black women are among the 32 million private sector workers who do not have a single paid sick day. This makes it impossible for them to address their own healthcare or that of their families. The Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act would provide all workers with up to 12 weeks of partial income when they take time for their own serious health conditions, including pregnancy and childbirth recovery; the serious health condition of a child, parent, spouse, or domestic partner; the birth or adoption of a child; and certain military caregiving and leave purposes. **BWR urges Congress to pass the Family Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act.**

#### **HOME OWNERSHIP/ AFFORDABLE HOUSING:**

The American dream of homeownership as a means of generational wealth is not a reality for a substantial percentage of Black women. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, homeownership for Black people was at a record low of 40.6% in 2019 and increased to 47% in the second quarter of 2020. **BWR urges Congress to continue to support funding to increase homeownership and affordable housing options for Black women, and ensure that civil rights laws, such as the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act are enforced. BWR urges Congress to reintroduce and pass the Housing Fairness Act to prevent housing discrimination with nationwide testing and increase funds for the Fair Housing Initiatives.**

## WORKERS RIGHTS

The Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act would, among other things, broaden the scope of individuals covered by the fair labor standards and extend protections to union workers and those trying to organize unions. **BWR urges the Senate to pass the Protecting the Rights to Organize (PRO) Act to expand labor protections related to employees' rights to organize and collectively bargain in the workplace.**

Unstable, unpredictable, and rigid scheduling practices, like placing workers “on-call” with no guarantee of work hours, scheduling them for “split shifts” of non-consecutive hours, sending workers home early without pay when demand is low, requiring workers to work the closing shift one day and the opening shift the next, and punishing workers who request schedule changes, make it all but impossible for Black women to balance professional responsibilities with individual and family needs. The Schedules That Work Act would permit employees to request changes to their work schedules without fear of retaliation, ensure that employers consider these requests, and require employers to provide more predictable and stable schedules for employees in certain occupations with evidence of unpredictable and unstable scheduling practices. **BWR urges Congress to pass the Schedules That Work Act to provide Black women with the more predictable and stable work schedules needed to balance work, personal and family needs.**

## LIVABLE WAGES

The federal minimum wage has not increased in more than a decade—which is the longest period in U.S. history. Black women are among the 32 million workers who earn the current minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour or below. Sixty-eight percent of Black women are the primary breadwinners in their households. Now, there is no place in America where a Black woman, who is a full-time worker making the federal minimum wage, can afford her mortgage or rent, food, and other essentials. The Raise the Wage Act introduced in the Senate and House would raise the federal minimum wage, in annual increments, to \$15 per hour and phase out the subminimum wages for tipped workers, youth workers, and workers with disabilities. **BWR urges Congress to pass the Raise the Wage Act to help eliminate poverty wages.**

## PUBLIC SAFETY

### GUN SAFETY

In 2022, the nation had more than 44,000 gun related deaths – more than half of which were suicides – and 640 mass shootings, – far more than were days in a year. In 2023, we are already on track to match these numbers and these numbers don't include the numbers of people injured by gun violence. Nevertheless, except for last year's Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, Congress has not had the political will to pass meaningful and commonsense gun safety legislation, even though it is overwhelmingly popular with American voters.

The Bipartisan Background Checks Act closed the boyfriend loophole, which expands the bans on people convicted of domestic violence from owning a firearm, and enhances background checks for young gun owners, incentivizes states to adopt red-flags, and increases funding for school safety and mental health resources. Still, we need comprehensive gun safety legislation that includes a ban on high-capacity assault weapons, provides for universal background checks, and closes the Charleston Loophole.

Background Reading:

<https://www.gunviolencearchive.org>

<https://www.npr.org/2022/06/21/1106466279/senators-reach-final-bipartisan-agreement-on-a-gun-safety-bill>

<https://www.everytown.org/report/pass-the-assault-weapons-ban-of-2021-h-r-1808/>

<https://www.everytown.org/solutions/close-the-charleston-loophole/>

<https://www.everytown.org/report/hr8-bipartisan-background-checks/>

**BWR urges Congress to pass the Enhanced Background Checks Act, which closes the Charleston Loophole by increasing the amount of time a federal firearms licensee must wait to receive a completed background check prior to transferring a firearm to an unlicensed person, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act, which would require a background check for every firearm sale, and the Assault Weapons Ban.**

**BWR also urges Congress to repeal the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Law that protects firearms manufacturers and dealers from being held liable when crimes have been committed with their products.**

#### **ERADICATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

The violence women experience comes in many forms: domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual assault and rape, sexual harassment in the workplace and on the street, and emotional abuse. Black women, women of color, and transgender women of all races and ethnicities experience the highest rates of violence. No place is safe -- not homes, workplaces, and other public spaces, especially the streets where women are often forced to walk while receiving a gauntlet of unwelcome remarks. There has been tremendous progress in addressing the problem, but we are far from where we should be as a humane society.

Black girls are also disproportionately at higher risk for human trafficking because of they are more often in situations of poverty, family instability and dislocation, and placement in the child welfare system.

In the 117 Congress, the President signed into law the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act to provide programs to prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. Congress also reauthorized the Trafficking Victims Protection Act for a period of five years and provided federal grant funding for trafficking victims to ensure they have expeditious access to the services and support they need.

**BWR now urges reauthorization of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Improvement Act with increased funding to provide enhanced services such as emergency shelter, counseling, legal assistance, crisis intervention, domestic and dating violence prevention education, culturally specific programs, and programs to reach underserved populations.**

**HEALTH, WELLNESS,  
& PROTECT THE  
SAFETY NET (Social  
Security, Medicare,  
Medicaid, TANF,  
SNAP)**

**HEALTH EQUITY**

The COVID-19 pandemic shone a light on existing health disparities for racial and ethnic minorities – from disparate treatment to disparate health outcomes, even when the patient has health insurance, financial means and is educated. The Health Equity and Accountability Act is an omnibus piece of legislation comprised of bills that would improve health outcomes of racial and ethnic minorities. The bill would improve health data collection, health care delivery, promote maternal health, expand access to mental health care, invest in a diverse healthcare workforce and address the social determinants of health, including environmental factors.

Background Reading: <https://www.booker.senate.gov/news/press/booker-warnock-introduce-legislation-to-advance-health-equity#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20Health%20Equity%20and%20Accountability,health%20care%20workforce%2C%20and%20so>

**BWR asks Congress to pass the bills included in the Health Equity and Accountability Act to close race and ethnicity-based health disparities.**

**AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE**

President Biden signed an executive order to strengthen the Affordable Care Act (ACA). BWR encourages the Biden-Harris administration to continue to support and strengthen the ACA for those in need of affordable healthcare services and coverage. To further this effort to preserve the gains made by the ACA to provide affordable quality healthcare coverage, **BWR urges the Congress to pass the Health Care Affordability Act, which would lower health insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs by making tax credits for Health Insurance Marketplace plans more generous and available to more consumers.**

The American Rescue Plan is helping millions of families on Affordable Care Act plans save \$2,400 a year on their health premiums. **BWR urges Congress to pass legislation to close the coverage gap and make those savings permanent.**

## **MATERNAL HEALTH**

Lowering the disproportionately high maternal mortality rate among Black women continues to be a high priority. [BWR urges Congress to pass the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act, which includes a series of 12 bills to save mothers' lives and end racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes and achieve maternal health justice for Black women and all birthing woman of color.](#)

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

Approximately 15% of Black female high school students attempted suicide in 2018, compared to about 9% of White female students and about 12% of Hispanic female students. The suicide death rates for Black girls ages 13 to 19 increased by 182% from 2001 to 2017. [BWR urges Congress to pass legislation that would increase funding to the National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health, and other national and state-based programs and initiatives for research and interventions to address the rising suicide rates among Black girls and combat this growing epidemic in the U.S.](#)

## **REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE/REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

Reproductive health is essential for Black women's economic security, reproductive autonomy, and the right to determine our own lives. [BWR urges Congress to reintroduce and pass the Women's Health Protection Act to protect women's right to reproductive health services.](#)

## **SOCIAL SECURITY**

Although Black women are among the highest numbers in this nation's work force, work long hours, and rank highest among groups who go to college and get degrees, when it comes to pay—we are consistently paid less than White men and women. The cumulative effect of this persistent racial and gender discrimination in our pay robs us of the wealth that we need for economic stability during our retirement years. As a result, Black women enter our retirement years economically insecure. Social Security benefits play a vital role in reducing poverty and lifting more Black women above the poverty line than any other program. Without Social Security, 21.7 million more Americans would be poor. Although, most of those whom Social Security keeps out of poverty are elderly, 6.9 million are under age 65, including 1.2 million children. Social Security is particularly important for Black



women, who have fewer retirement resources outside of Social Security

**BWR urges Congress to support legislative to ensure Social Security's adequacy and solvency, and improvements in the administration of the Social Security program.**

### **MEDICARE**

Payroll taxes are the major contributor to the Medicare trust fund. Increased unemployment resulting from the pandemic has led to a significant decrease in payroll taxes, thus reducing the amount of the trust fund. The Social Security Act (which governs Medicare) does not authorize the government to use general revenues to fund the deficit, so Medicare is only permitted to make payments based on money it collects in taxes. **BWR urges Congress to take immediate action to improve the program's solvency and avoid cuts in benefits before the trust fund is depleted.**

Over 58 million Americans count on Medicare for their health security. BWR continues to advocate for protecting the Medicare program's needed benefits, increasing quality and value in order to improve health outcomes. This includes strengthening the program for beneficiaries through expanded coverage for needed services, medications, and protection from excessive costs.

**BWR urges Congress to oppose any changes that weaken the Medicare guarantees or shift more risk and costs to older Americans.**

### **MEDICAID**

The Biden administration signed an executive order to strengthen Medicaid and has revoked the previous administration's "work requirement" because this requirement does not promote the objectives of the Medicaid program. BWR continues to advocate to protect individuals and families served by the Medicaid program. As such, **BWR urges Congress to pass the Incentivizing Medicaid Expansion Act to provide the same level of Federal matching assistance for every State that chooses to expand Medicaid coverage to newly eligible individuals. BWR also urges Congress to support Medicaid policies that will: 1) allow more individuals to receive home and community-based services provided by Medicaid, 2) enhance Medicaid Expansion federal matching funds beyond COVID-19**



relief funding to provide greater health care access to women in states that have refused Medicaid Expansion, and 3) opposes efforts to cap Medicaid funding that will endanger the health, safety, and care of millions of individuals who depend on the essential services provided through the Medicaid program.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 35 million Americans experienced food insecurity. During the pandemic that number increased to 42 million Americans, including an estimated 13 million children. The rising cost of food in America outpaces SNAP benefits each year, forcing families to choose between putting food on the table and covering other essential expenses. **BWR urges Congress to pass the Closing the Meal Gap Act, which would support a sustained increase in SNAP benefits that would raise the baseline benefit for all SNAP households, allocate more funds to those with large medical and housing expenses, and increase access to the program.**

#### **TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)**

Many Black women who are heads of household depend on the TANF program to provide the assistance their families need to survive--especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. For years, The TANF program has been a part of the safety net program. In recent years, TANF's combination of nearly unfettered state flexibility, fixed block grant funding, narrowly defined work requirements, and time limits combines to provides a safety net to very few families in need. Also, TANF does not prepare parents for today's labor market. Now only 20% of TANF dollars are going toward providing struggling families with economic assistance. **BWR urges Congress to take measures to ensure that TANF remains a separate program, with changes in federal law that eliminates time limits, and other barriers to participation and directs states to spend more of their unused TANF dollars for childcare, education, or workforce training programs.**

#### **CHILD TAX CREDIT**

The American Rescue Plan temporarily increased the Child Tax Credit (CTC) from \$2,000 per child to \$3,000 per child for children over the age of six and from \$2,000 to \$3,600 for children under the age of six and raised the age limit from 16 to 17. The CTC also authorizes monthly payments per child to families from July to December 2021. This

	<p>temporary measure kept over three million children from poverty. <b>BWR urges Congress to enact legislation to extend the 2021 expanded CTC temporary increases and make monthly child allowance payments permanent.</b></p>
<p><b>YOUTH &amp; EDUCATION</b></p>	<p><b>PUBLIC EDUCATION K-12</b>  <b>The American Rescue Plan Act</b> provided \$123 billion in critical funding for K-12 public schools. This is the single largest investment ever in public education funding. This funding will be used to provide students, educators, and school buildings with critically needed resources to 1) help schools operate safely and add student supports, 2) establish the COVID-19 Educational Equity Challenge Grant to support partnerships with school communities to advance equity and evidence-based policies to respond to educational challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, and 3) help close the digital divide by purchasing technology (both devices and wi-fi connectivity) for students to aid in their digital learning interactions. <b>BWR urges Congress to continue to support funding for public schools and to oppose publicly funded private school vouchers.</b></p> <p><b>FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION</b>  For almost 50 years the federal <b>Pell Grant</b> program has been the cornerstone of financial assistance for students from low- and moderate-income families, helping millions go to college. Because of the skyrocketing costs of college, Pell grants do not go as far as they used to; in fact, the increased maximum grant of \$6,495 for the 2021-2022 award year will only cover the lowest share of public college costs. The cost of obtaining a college degree has increased over 1,120% in the past three decades, about five times the rate of inflation.</p> <p><b>BWR urges Congress to increase the Pell Grant maximum to provide greater opportunity for a college education to aspiring college students.</b></p> <p>Students and graduates are currently facing over \$1.5 trillion in outstanding student loan debt. Balances of student loans have surpassed both auto loans and credit cards, making student loan debt the nation’s largest form of consumer debt outside of mortgages. Private student loans have been particularly burdensome on students, as these loans often have higher interest rates and fewer consumer protections than federal student loans. The</p>

Administration has a plan to forgive student loan debt for those who need it most, but it is the subject of litigation and is currently being reviewed by the Supreme Court. A legislative solution may be required to relieve student loan debt.

**BWR urges Congress to pass legislation that would forgive the substantial student loan debt that is a crippling liability for former college students. One such piece of legislation to consider is the Student Loan Relief Act, which would require the Department of Education to forgive \$50,000, or the aggregate of a borrower's balance, whichever is less, of federal student loan debt for all borrowers. If the borrower has more than \$50,000 in student loan debt, the Department would be instructed to forgive the loans with the highest interest rates first. Any amount forgiven would be excluded from taxable income.**

#### **FUNDING FOR HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (HBCUS)**

HBCUs continue to serve an important and critical role within the higher education community with programs that provide institutional and student support without exacerbating debilitating student debt.

**BWR urges Congress to 1) support increased funding for Title III programs and other federal programs designed to help HBCUs to become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students, 2) pass the IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act to provide for the long-term infrastructure and technology improvements at HBCUs, 3) pass the Cybersecurity Opportunity Act to fund the establishment or expansion of cybersecurity programs at HBCUs, and reintroduce the HBCU Investment Expansion Act, which would allow municipal bonds issued by HBCUs to have “triple tax-exempt” status (local, state, and federal).**

#### **CHILDHOOD HUNGER**

Children are the future and yet we disregard them when we visualize the future of the country. How can we communicate that the health, livelihood, and rights of humans is the upmost important when we can't uphold that for our own youth? Food insecurity is not a new phenomenon and all the steps we have taken towards ending it are structured to help adults help children, but why not help youth food security where the government and

youth intersect the most, schools. The pandemic has largely increased food insecurity amongst marginalized and rural communities. Today about 12 million children struggle with finding where their next meal will come from. All children, no matter their socioeconomic status, deserve to be fed. It is required of children to attend school from kindergarten to 12th grade and to be in an academic building for at least 6-7 hours a day. So why would we, as a nation, not require that these children are fed? We expect them to perform and be present without providing the necessary fuel to do so. A Universal School Meals program would reduce youth hunger, improve child nutrition and wellness, and encourage child development, school readiness, and academic achievement. In 2021, The Universal School Meals Program Act was introduced but no progress on it was made. On June 25, 2022, Keep Kids Fed Act was passed (public law No: 117-158) providing temporary healthy meals to kids during the summer of 2022 and expanding previous school meal programs. Therefore, congress is aware of the benefits of keeping the youth fed, but now it's time to prioritize removing a large barrier that stands in the way of long-term solutions. Food should not be considered a benefit. It's a basic human need. **BWR strongly urges Congress to support legislative actions towards supporting American youth, starting with the ability for them to know where their next meal is coming from.**

#### **CHILDCARE FOR WORKERS:**

The Childcare for Working Families Act, would provide access to affordable, quality early learning and care programs to children of low- and moderate-income families. It would also allocate program funds for states to provide services and support to infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities.

**Background Reading:** <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warren-sherrill-lawmakers-unveil-new-child-care-bill#:~:text=The%20Child%20Care%20for%20Every%20Community%20Act%20will%20ensure%20that,locally%2Dadministered%20child%20care%20option>

**BWR urges Congress to pass the Childcare for Working Families Act to provide childcare and early learning programs for low- to moderate-income families.**

## TECH AND TELECOM POLICY

### PRIVACY

As Black women, our online data profiles determine our online search results. Based on algorithms that determine our race and gender, our online search results are steered to lower-paying job opportunities, housing advertisements that are restricted to only certain neighborhoods, and mortgages and loans with higher interest rates. Online personal data profiles are also being manipulated to advance voter suppression campaigns, target hate towards communities of color and religious minorities, and create division among communities. To combat online algorithmic bias, discrimination, hate speech and voter suppression, Black women want data privacy and content moderation legislation that is based upon a civil rights framework that acknowledges the enduring political, economic, and cultural consequences of racial and gender discrimination, hate speech and voter suppression.

BWR urges Congress to pass legislation that is platform-neutral and 1) imposes restrictions on data monetization used by tech companies and third parties; 2) prohibits and protect against algorithm/data discrimination and bias; 3) requires tech companies to provide easily understandable and updated privacy policies; 4) accommodates consumers' right to access and delete their personal data; 5) requires clear opt-out procedures; 6) provides safeguards to protect victims of domestic violence; 7) requires notification of data breaches and provides adequate remedies; and 9) holds social media companies accountable for user-generated content that enables cyber-stalking, targeted harassment and violence, digital voter suppression, and discrimination on their platforms (enforcement).

### BROADBAND

Reliable and affordable home high-speed broadband internet service is no longer a luxury—it's a necessity. But many Black women and families do not have access to high-speed internet because of the cost or have to cut back on other essentials to make their monthly internet service payments. Many Black women and families also live in urban and rural communities that are unserved or underserved with reliable and affordable high-speed broadband internet service.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Law included the Broadband Equity,

	<p>Access and Deployment Program (BEAD), which provides \$42.45 billion to expand high-speed internet access in unserved and underserved communities; the Digital Equity Act Programs (DEA), which provides \$2.75 billion to establish grant programs aimed to ensure that all people and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of the digital economy; and the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which provides \$14.2 billion to support a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers.</p> <p><b>BWR urges Congress to build on these investments to ensure the Affordable Connectivity Program becomes permanent and can reduce the cost of reliable high-speed broadband service for those who could not otherwise afford it.</b></p>
<p><b>GENDER &amp; WORKER JUSTICE</b></p>	<p><b>EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT</b>  Black women live at the intersection of racism and sexism. As a result, Black women have experienced generations of discrimination in employment, housing, banking and finance, education, healthcare, and other matters. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) would guarantee equal legal rights for all American citizens regardless of sex. <b>BWR urges Congress to remove the deadline for ratification of the ERA so that Black women will be one step closer to equality.</b></p> <p><b>EQUAL PAY</b>  Black women who work full time, year-round are paid, on average, only 62 cents for every dollar paid to White men. This results in a gap of an estimated \$23,540 less in median annual earnings for Black women over an entire year. The Paycheck Fairness Act would provide more effective remedies to victims of discrimination in the payment of wages on the basis of sex such as enhancing nonretaliation prohibitions and making it unlawful to require an employee to sign a contract or waiver prohibiting the employee from disclosing information about her/his wages. <b>BWR urges Congress to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act</b></p>



to help to close the discriminatory pay gap for Black women, eliminate the loopholes in the Equal Pay Act, break the harmful patterns of pay discrimination, and strengthen workforce protections for Black women.

#### **LGBTQ EQUALITY**

LGBTQ persons are protected under judicial interpretation of anti-discrimination law, but it is important to modernize these laws to make their protections clear. **BWR urges Congress to passed the Equality Act, which would prohibit discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in areas including public accommodations and facilities, education, federal funding, employment, housing, credit, and the jury system.**

#### **CROWN ACT**

The U.S. society has burdened Black women and men with the apprehensions of consider if their natural hair is appropriate or professional in their everyday and professional lives. The CROWN Act would prohibit discrimination based on a person's hair texture or hairstyle in federally funded institutions and in the workplace. **BWR urges Congress to pass the CROWN Act to 1) to prohibit discrimination based on a person's hair texture or hairstyle if that style or texture is commonly associated with a particular race or national origin, and 2) prohibit this type of discrimination.**

#### **WORKPLACE HARASSMENT**

For generations, Black women have been vulnerable to racial and sexual harassment in the workplace. This harassment includes unwanted touching, grabbing, stalking, and demeaning racial and sexual comments. **BWR urges Congress to reintroduce the Fair Employment Protection Act to restore workplace protections weakened by the Supreme Court's 2013 *Vance v. Ball State University* decision and strengthen workplace harassment laws.**

#### **GOOD JOBS FOR GOOD AIRPORTS ACT**

	<p>Even though wages for airport workers have gone up since the pandemic, pay in the sector still lags behind other service industries. Low wages for these workers translate into higher turnover, which means worse service at the airport. Labor instability and inexperience in the industry are reducing airport safety and security and leading to travel slowdown, while shortages have led to dire circumstances in the industry. <b>BWR urges Congress to pass the Good Jobs for Good Airports Act which would 1) establish minimum wage and benefit standards for these workers.</b></p> <p><b>FEDERAL ACTION ON NURSING HOME WORKERS (INCREASE WAGES &amp; STAFFING LEVELS)</b></p> <p>73% of nursing home workers say their employers are not scheduling enough staff to safely care for residents, while the median hourly wage and annual wage for nursing assistants is just \$14.41 and \$24,200, respectively. All healthcare workers deserve livable wages and benefits, not just to provide a better future for our families but to retain dedicated workers needed to safely care for nursing home residents. Nursing homeowners must be held accountable to maintaining safe staffing levels to ensure there are enough workers, now and in the future, to provide the quality care that our communities deserve. <b>BWR urges Congress to pass legislation that would improve pay and working conditions for nursing home workers and ultimately grow the nursing home workforce.</b></p>
<p><b>SMALL BUSINESS &amp; ENTREPRENEURSHIP</b></p>	<p><b>ENTREPRENEURSHIP</b></p> <p>Before the coronavirus pandemic, black women were the fastest growing demographic of entrepreneurs in the U.S.; but the racial and gender disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and capital posed challenges to Black women business owners in reaching their full potential.</p> <p>The pandemic served as an inflection point for many Americans, including Black women, inspiring many Black women to start their own businesses out of pure necessity due to job loss or seizing the opportunity to start something new. But again, the racial and gender disparities in access to capital and resources continue to plague Black women. Data</p>



from JP Morgan found that 61% of Black women entrepreneurs self-fund their businesses instead of securing a loan from a bank, while only 47% of white women and 32% of white men self-fund.

To better gauge and address the needs of Black women-owned businesses, collecting data on race and gender would better quantify Black women-owned businesses, assess how they are faring, and specifically identify these businesses for funding opportunities and other assistance.

**BWR urges Congress to instruct the Small Business Administration to change the current way in which it collects and aggregates data from categories based on 'race or gender' to categories based on 'race and gender.'**

**BWR urges Congress to authorize the Small Business Administration to utilize the System for Award Management's (SAM.gov) race and gender data for small business certification. This data will help the SBA to quantify Black women-owned businesses and specifically identify any needs these businesses have for funding opportunities and other assistance.**

With the increased speed and reliable mobility provided by 5G technology, Black women-owned businesses will be able to leverage new opportunities in their industries and better meet the demands of their customers.

**BWR urges Congress to provide funding to the Small Business Administration for programs to educate Black women-owned businesses on strategies to utilize 5G technology to enhance their businesses and increase business efficiency and production.**

In 2017, the Minority Business Development Agency released a report that found there has been little growth in minority business participation in public contracts. To address the inequities in the federal contracting system:

**BWR urges Congress to increase Small Business Administration funding for federal contract set asides for minority- and women-owned small businesses and require 25%**

	<p>of all federal contracts to be allocated for minority- and women-owned small business subcontracting.</p> <p>BWR urges Congress to require beneficiary of prime contractors to develop and execute plans to increase subcontracting opportunities for Black-women-owned, small, and disadvantaged businesses.</p> <p>BWR urges Congress to require recipients of 5G Fund for Rural America subsidies to develop and execute plans to implement subcontracting opportunities for Black women-owned, small, and disadvantaged businesses.</p>
<p><b>IMMIGRATION</b></p>	<p><b>A PATH TO CITIZENSHIP</b>  The House passed the American Dream and Promise Act to establish paths to citizenship or legal status for individuals eligible for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), and millions of undocumented immigrants, including those brought to this country unlawfully as children. <b>BWR urges Congress to reintroduce and pass; the American Dream and Promise Act to support comprehensive immigration reform.</b></p> <p><b>TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS (TPS) AND DEFERRED ENFORCED DEPARTURE (DED)</b>  Temporary Protected Status has been extended for beneficiaries from Haiti to February 3, 2023, Somalia to March 17, 2023, and South Sudan to May 2, 2022. Cameroon faces extraordinary and temporary conditions that also warrant a designation of TPS. Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians will be terminated as of June 30, 2022. <b>BWR urges Congress to support a permanent solution for TPS and DED holders from African countries.</b></p> <p><b>DIVERSITY VISAS</b>  The Diversity Immigrant Visa Program is a bipartisan effort created in 1990 to encourage immigration from underrepresented countries. It provides an opportunity to a limited number of immigrants from countries with historically low immigration rates to come to the United States. This program has played a particularly significant role in facilitating</p>

	<p>immigration from Africa. Since 1995, the Diversity Visa Program has enabled more than 480,000 individuals and their families from Africa to immigrate to the United States. With an average of 20,000 new immigrants each year from the African continent, this is the largest way for Black immigrants to legally migrate here. <b>BWR urges Congress to protect and continue to support the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program.</b></p>
<p><b>PLAN FOR BLACK AMERICA</b></p>	<p><b>REPARATIONS</b>  With the rise in white supremacist expression, the United States needs now more than ever to atone for its atrocities imposed upon generations of African Americans people and to account for their brutal mistreatment during chattel slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and the enduring structural and systemic racism endemic to our society.</p> <p><b>BWR urges Congress to pass legislation Urging the Establishment of a United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation to acknowledge, memorialize, and be a catalyst toward jettisoning the belief in a hierarchy of human value; embracing our common humanity; and permanently eliminating persistent racial inequities.</b></p> <p><b>BWR urges Congress to pass the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, which would establish a Commission to study and develop reparation proposals for African Americans.</b></p>
<p><b>HONORARY DESIGNATIONS</b></p>	<p><b>Shirley Chisholm Congressional Gold Medal Act</b>  In 1968, the Honorable Shirley Chisholm became the first African American woman elected to Congress. Congresswoman Chisholm inspired the political achievements of African Americans and others by running for president of the United States in 1972. Her presidential candidacy raised the profile and aspirations of African American women in the field of politics. <b>BWR urges the House to reintroduce the Shirley Chisholm Congressional Gold Medal Act to posthumously award a Congressional gold medal to Shirley Chisholm.</b></p>

### **A Statue of Shirley Chisholm in the United States Capitol**


The Honorable Shirley Chisholm became the first African American woman elected to Congress. Congresswoman Chisholm inspired the political achievements of African Americans and others by running for president of the United States in 1972. Her presidential candidacy raised the profile and aspirations of African American women in the field of politics. [BWR urges Congress to pass legislation to place a statue of Shirley Chisholm in the United States Capitol.](#)

### **Woman on the Twenty Act**

Harriett Tubman is an icon in American history. Ms. Tubman, an African American woman, self-liberated herself from slavery, and as the “conductor” of the Underground Railroad, led 19 trips back to the south to guide other enslaved African Americans to freedom, all while carrying a bounty on her head. Ms. Tubman was also a nurse during the Civil War, a Union spy, and played a pivotal role as an activist for women’s rights and suffrage. Her legacy has inspired countless people from around the world. [BWR urges the House to reintroduce the Women on the Twenty Act to require \\$20 notes \(bills\) to include a portrait of Harriet Tubman.](#)

### **Congressional Gold Medal for Thomas W. Dortch, Jr.**

The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP) and Black Women's Roundtable is proud to support the resolution advocating for Thomas W. Dortch Jr. to receive a Congressional Gold Medal. Mr. Thomas W. Dortch’s contributions across America in lifting the Black community, Black culture, Black excellence and Black political and economic power are truly exceptional and deserve to be honored in the highest form. Mr. Dortch has committed his life to building institutions in support of the movement to increase economic mobility, access to greater opportunities, equity and equality for all people.



Congresswoman Nikema Williams (GA-05) introduced the resolution in recognition of Mr. Dortch's unique and substantial contributions across America.

**BWR urges Congress to support the resolution to Award Thomas W. Dortch Jr. a Congressional Gold Medal (posthumously).**

\*The 2023 NCBCP Black Women's Roundtable Policy Priorities are subject to amendment and/or change.