

YWCA NASHVILLE & MIDDLE TENNESSEE ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee engages in advocacy efforts that support our mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. We believe that systems of power and control harm all members of the community in which they are practiced. We seek to promote trauma-informed, survivor-centered policies and practices that contribute to community accountability and harm reduction at the intersection of racism, sexism, and gender-based violence.

YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee's education and legislative advocacy efforts support the people we serve through our domestic violence services, youth development programming, and adult education programs. Below are the issues YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee focuses on, including policies and practices we advocate for and/or support.

Racial Justice | Promote Policies and Practices that Advance Equity for People of Color

YWCA is committed to ensuring that everyone is afforded equal opportunity and equal protection under the law. Regardless of race, skin color, language, place of origin, immigration status, or ethnicity, we believe that people deserve equal access to resources. Too often, however, stereotypes, biases, and racial power dynamics that maintain inequity are embedded in our laws and public policies.

What we support:

- Raising awareness and promoting education of racism as a public health crisis.
- Implementing policies and practices that ensure the protection of and equal opportunity for immigrants and refugees.
- Ending racial and religious profiling.
- Ensuring equal access and opportunity to high-quality neighborhood schools, colleges, and universities, regardless of racial background.
- Access to quality, free public education with the honest and accurate teaching of history, social studies, and systems of power to all students.
- Enforcing Civil Rights legislation, such as the Fair Housing Act of 1968, that address neighborhood-level racially disparate distribution of resources.

Gender-Based Violence | Invest in the Safety of Survivors of Domestic Violence (DV)

Women and girls of all races, ethnicities, religious affiliations, gender identities, sexual orientations, and socio-economic classes continue to experience violence in the form of domestic abuse, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and trafficking. While there are obstacles for anyone seeking to leave an abusive relationship, these are even more pronounced for women of color, including immigrants. As one of the largest domestic violence shelters in the state of Tennessee, YWCA seeks to understand root causes and cycles of violence in order to work for practical solutions to protect survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and eradicate all forms of gender-based violence (GBV).

What we support:

- Restricting firearms from convicted DV offenders and those who are identified by the courts/ law enforcement as imminent threats to their victims. We oppose the conclusions of U.S.5th Circuit Court of Appeals in cases such as *United States v. Rahimi* that endanger the lives of women. We worked to educate the community on the dangers of returning firearms to convicted domestic violence offenders in advance of the U.S. Supreme Court hearing this critical case in November of 2023.
- Increasing dedicated and recurring funding for shelter services, case management, children’s therapy, and mental health and substance use treatment for DV victims.
- DV victims to have access to qualified attorneys for civil and criminal cases and access to judges who are informed about GBV.
- Educating all judges/policy makers in areas of sexual harassment, objectification of women, coercion, financial abuse, and sexual violence.
- Continuing to educate licensed cosmetologists, barbers and students on recognizing and responding to domestic violence and on referring clients to safety.
- Job-protected "safe leave" to enable survivors to seek medical and legal support.
- Safe, inclusive, and restorative work and school environments that are free from sexual violence and harassment and supportive of survivors.
- Funding programs that teach young boys and men about gender and healthy masculinity and empower them to express their emotions in safe and healthy ways.

Civil & Human Rights | Protect the Rights and Safety of Marginalized Communities

YWCA’s intersectional mission to eliminate racism and empower women demands that we show up to advocate against the oppression that historically marginalized groups and individuals endure. We recognize the interconnected experiences of discrimination and disadvantage that women face from their overlapping identities. We strive for a society where all people are afforded the rights bestowed upon them not only as citizens but also as human beings.

What we support:

- Restoration of the full protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- Community education on voter suppression tactics, and voter intimidation.
- Efforts to register voters, expand voting rights, and restore voting rights to those who have lost their rights.
- Increasing awareness among high schoolers and eligible voters about their voting rights and the importance of civic engagement.
- Support of restorative justice practices for those who cause harm and those who are harmed as alternatives to punitive measures that disproportionately target marginalized communities.
- Reforming laws, policies, and practices to safeguard people of color from police violence.
- Reforming school discipline policies that disproportionately punish students of color and result in unsafe and inequitable school environments.
- Legal protections for LGBTQ+ people.
- Advocating against criminalizing women on birth outcomes.

Health, Safety, & Empowerment | Ensure Access to Quality, Affordable Health Care for Women, Girls, Gender Expansive People, and Marginalized People

Quality, affordable health care is critical for a functioning society. But for many women, gender expansive people, children, people of color, and trauma survivors, getting the insurance coverage and trauma-informed medical care they need is a struggle due to structural barriers. We support efforts to improve women's economic security, access to affordable housing, expanded safety nets in the state, and safety from gun violence in our homes, schools, and communities.

What we support:

- The protection of quality healthcare, including expansion of access to Medicaid in Tennessee and affordable reproductive healthcare for all people.
- Comprehensive, medically accurate, non-shaming, and LGBTQ-inclusive sexuality education and reproductive health services.
- Improved maternal health outcomes for Black women and women of color.
- Efforts to improve women's economic security by advocating for affordable childcare and paid sick and family leave.
- An increased proportion of TANF funds in Tennessee targeted toward basic assistance for women and their families.
- Eliminating the race and gender wage gap through measures targeted toward vulnerable populations.
- Comprehensive, inclusive, and adequately funded plan to address the urgent need for permanent, affordable housing in Nashville and Middle Tennessee.
- Universal background checks on firearm purchases, extreme risk protection orders, safe storage laws, bans on assault weapons, and bans on high-capacity magazines for civilians.