



# State Innovation Exchange (SiX)

## Reproductive Freedom Leadership Council Platform: Our Vision and Values

### Our Vision

Reproductive health and self-determination are essential elements of human freedom and necessary to a life of dignity and opportunity. The ability to control our fertility is inherent in other basic human rights, including healthy sexuality and the ability to form families as we choose. We envision a nation in which each of us can make our own decisions about our reproductive health, pregnancy, and parenting, free from political interference, and we view this as intrinsically woven into the broader progressive fabric of gender equity, economic justice, and racial equity.

Today, we fall far short of that vision. Too many of our colleagues have used the privilege of public service to pass new laws limiting their own constituents' reproductive health and rights<sup>1</sup>. For decades, the Hyde Amendment has punished low-income people by banning insurance coverage for abortion for those enrolled in Medicaid. In recent years, state legislators have passed hundreds of new laws that try to take us backward by decimating family planning and sex education resources, denying and delaying access to abortion care, and making it ever more difficult for women to have healthy pregnancies and raise families safely and with dignity. Low-income people and people of color bear the brunt of these devastating policies.

### Our Values

**We affirm** that all people deserve medically sound, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate sexual and reproductive health information and care.

**We honor** the personal and profound decision of whether, when, and how to become a parent and condemn political interference with decisions about pregnancy and parenting. When a woman has decided to end her pregnancy, she should be able to get safe, timely, affordable care in her community, without anyone shaming, threatening, or trying to impose their beliefs on her.

**We declare** that each woman should have access to the health care providers she needs to support healthy pregnancy and childbirth – from before she becomes pregnant and continuing through childbirth and afterward.

**We value** families and acknowledge the demanding work of raising children. As such, we affirm that parents should have the resources necessary for families to thrive, including being able to raise children in healthy communities that are free from violence.

**We decry** the ways in which a person's ability to get contraception, abortion services, prenatal care, and other reproductive health services has for too long been diminished or blocked based on income, race, immigration

<sup>1</sup> Laws Affecting Reproductive Health and Rights: State Policy Trends at Midyear, 2017, Guttmacher Institute (July 13, 2017), <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2017/07/laws-affecting-reproductive-health-and-rights-state-policy-trends-midyear-2017>.



status, age, sexuality, gender, or where they live. We decry the crisis of maternal death in this country and to the disproportionate impact on Black women.

**We recognize** that not everyone who needs contraception, abortion, and maternity care identifies as a woman, and that truly comprehensive and culturally appropriate reproductive and sexual health care must meet the needs of transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming people.

**We stand** with and work for all people seeking health, dignity, and freedom, for themselves, their families, and their communities.

**We proudly** champion our progressive values and assert that reproductive freedom is a central and necessary component of an inclusive progressive agenda.

### **Our Commitment**

**We believe** in the sacred duty of public office and honor our charge to act for a better future for our constituents and communities. We know that in these challenging times, the sparks of resistance and a groundswell of change will come from the states. State legislators can show what's possible: whether by advancing a transformative vision or taking a stand against tough odds. While our stories, and our states, are each unique, our values connect us across geography in a shared dedication to justice.

**We strive** to lead our colleagues into an era when, instead of seeing new policies enacted each year that restrict reproductive rights and health, we instead advance meaningful solutions to the health care needs, economic inequalities, and other challenges our constituents face.

Leveraging the innovation and inspiration of our linked network of colleagues from around the country, **we promise** to use the power of our voices and the privilege of public office to advance these values and this vision, and invite our colleagues and allies to do the same.

### **Endorsements**

[Click here to view the full list of legislators on the council.](#)