

YWCA Greenwich 2024 Legislative Agenda

The Mission of YWCA Greenwich:

To Eliminate Racism, Empower Women, and Promote Peace, Justice, Freedom and Dignity for all.

To support YWCA Greenwich's intersectional mission and as proposed by the Strategic Plan, the following is an agenda for legislative advocacy during the calendar year 2023. YWCA Greenwich will advocate at the local, state, and federal levels of government within the limits allowed by law.

Economic Empowerment and Advancement

- **Pay Equity** – YWCA Greenwich supports efforts to eliminate the pay gap across gender, race, and sexuality, and provide equal pay for the same or substantially similar work. The long-term economic insecurity and retirement insecurity of women and historically disadvantaged communities are exacerbated by a lifetime of unequal pay.
- **Childcare & Early Learning Infrastructure** – YWCA Greenwich supports strengthening the state's childcare infrastructure to ensure long-term affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning programs for all families.

Additional efforts include:

- Supporting increased livable wages and skills-based training for childcare professionals and early educators.
- Advocating for resources to address the mental, behavioral, and emotional needs of childcare providers and children as well as an equitable and healthy workplace.
- Supporting the stabilization and increased accessibility of childcare services
- **Paid Family Medical Leave** – YWCA Greenwich supports opportunities to increase affordability and expansion of paid leave.
 - YWCA Greenwich will continue to monitor the economic impacts of the state's paid leave program via the CT Paid Leave Authority¹ alongside federal efforts to create a national paid family and medical leave program.
- **Paid Sick Leave** – YWCA Greenwich supports the expansion of paid sick days to more workers.
- **Inclusive Representation on Municipal Boards & Commissions** – YWCA Greenwich is following YWCA Hartford Region's led to support equitable gender and racial diversity on municipal boards and commissions. YWCA Greenwich will continue to monitor the piloting of the first campaign by YWCA Hartford and the City of Hartford.
 - Building on Public Act 21-49ⁱⁱ, which ensures statewide boards and commissions have a racial and gender composition reflective of state demographics. This includes modifying policies and practices relating to women, BIPOC, and other marginalized groups in the Town of Greenwich

Racial Justice and Civil Rights

- **Reproductive Rights** – As YWCA USA states: limiting reproductive freedom is a withdrawal of human rights harming everyone who experiences pregnancy, especially young women, women of color and marginalized communities that are economically disadvantaged. YWCA Greenwich is strongly opposed to barriers that limit reproductive choices and access to healthcare. YWCA Greenwich will advocate for reproductive freedom, ensuring that the state of Connecticut reduces barriers to reproductive decision-making in a post *Roe v. Wade* world.
- **Housing and Homelessness**– YWCA Greenwich will support legislation and other efforts that enforce inclusionary zoning, equitable urban revitalization, and affordable housing to end racial and class segregation throughout CT. We support efforts to lessen the negative effects of high housing and rent

costs, including the strengthening of affordable housing voucher programs. YWCA Greenwich also supports additional funding for Connecticut's homeless response system and providers, as well as changes in social policy that prevent homelessness in the first placeⁱⁱⁱ.

- **Education** –YWCA Greenwich supports efforts to end racial and gender disparities in education systems. We will support initiatives that encourage STEM education for women, women of color and marginalized groups while creating opportunities for them in non-traditional industries. Our efforts include:
 - *Teaching & Learning* –supporting district, state, and federal policies and practices that promote and equip educators to talk about race, racism, and gender in schools. YWCA Greenwich supports Connecticut's requirement for schools to offer courses on African American, Black, Puerto Rican, and Latino studies, and the further expansion of both racial/ethnic studies and learning about the experiences of marginalized populations.
 - *School Safety* –^{iv}.
 - YWCA Greenwich is committed to advocating for comprehensive school safety measures. This includes supporting local, state, and federal initiatives aimed at eliminating disparities in discipline and suspension rates. Our advocacy extends to securing funding for training and personnel dedicated to fostering positive school climates and endorsing transformative, non-exclusionary responses to student behaviors. Crucially, we emphasize the integration of effective gun safety policies and practices in schools to ensure a secure and inclusive learning environment for all students."
- **LegalSystem** - YWCA Greenwich supports efforts reducing unwarranted contact by women, BIPOC, and other marginalized groups with the justice system such as supporting review boards that prevent youth incarceration and vacatur laws for human trafficking victims. Our efforts include:
 - Monitoring the implementation of a local police advisory council and statewide police accountability.
 - Advocating for measures that improve safety and wellbeing of incarcerated people, such as the regulation of healthcare provided by Connecticut's Department of Corrections and ending of solitary confinement
 - Advocating for bail reform that ensures the safety of victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence
 - Diverting funds spent on pretrial incarceration to invest in social services to support reentry
 - Efforts to ensure that domestic violence providers are part of the criminal justice reform conversation.
 - Addressing disparities in the carceral system that have a disproportionate impact on historically minoritized communities
- **Reparations** – YWCA Greenwich will support legislation and efforts that seek to study reparations in all forms for African Americans as a means to repair the past and present harm of systemic racism.
- **Racism as a Public Health Crisis** – YWCA Greenwich will support legislation, programs, policies that address racism and anti-black racism, and declare racism as a public health crisis YWCA Greenwich is deeply committed to confronting and dismantling medical racism, a pervasive issue impacting the health and well-being of communities of color. We advocate for increased funding and support for community health initiatives that are culturally competent and accessible including addressing the alarming disparity in black maternal mortality rates and promoting policies that ensure equitable prenatal and postnatal care. Simultaneously, we prioritize bridging the gap in breast cancer treatment access, advocating for comprehensive, affordable, and culturally sensitive healthcare solutions.
- YWCA Greenwich demands an end to acts of Islamophobia and Antisemitism. We advocate for equitable, historically informed, and community-led strategies that attempts to eliminate Islamophobia and antisemitism as social norms and values. YWCA Greenwich is committed to campaigns that educate, organize, and mobilize to end Islamophobia and Antisemitism while valuing collectivity, and celebrating differences while advocating for interfaith efforts of combatting hate. YWCA Greenwich advocates for additional funding into community health initiatives that combat bigotry and creed-based discrimination.

Voter Access – YWCA Greenwich supports legislation and initiatives that increase voter access and eliminate voter suppression. Our efforts include:

- Following the passage of the amendment to the state Constitution authorizing early voting, support bills that operationalize early voting in equitable and effective ways.
- Supporting legislation to protect state ballot measures from foreign interference and a bill creating a task force to study Rank Choice Voting
- Implementation of automatic voter registration^v.
- **Gender and LGBTQ+ Rights** – YWCA Greenwich will fight against discrimination of girls, women and LGBTQ+ groups and oppose any attempt to roll back laws supporting equal rights for these communities. Our efforts include:
- Supporting the federal legislation that explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation^{vi}Climate Justice – YWCA Greenwich will support efforts to reduce the disparate impacts of climate change on marginalized communities.

Domestic and Sexual Violence

- **Intimate Partner Violence** - YWCA Greenwich will collaborate with national, state, and local agencies, including the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, to promote legislation and policies that serve and protect victims and survivors of intimate partner violence and their children. We support legislation and policies that:
 - Increase availability and accessibility to affordable housing options for survivors in all towns and cities.
 - Access to flexible funding for survivor housing without strings attached.
 - Housing insecurity responses that are flexible to center the unique safety and privacy needs of survivors.

Economic Justice and Self-Sufficiency

- Relief from coerced debt.
- Financial empowerment and equal pay initiatives.
- Increased availability and accessibility to affordable childcare that supports a survivor’s ability to work or go to school.
- Expanded access to public benefits and affordable, healthcare, including for undocumented survivors.
- **Prevention, Health, and Well-Being** Distribution of domestic violence information and resources to all pregnant and postpartum individuals.
- Strong policies that ensure access to reproductive healthcare and protections for abortion care providers.
- Equitable access to all healthcare services for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Increased availability and accessibility of mental and physical healthcare, as well as affordable insurance.
- Opportunities to strengthen prevention through education in schools and youth-serving organizations.
- Efforts to reduce gun violence including federal red-flag laws, given extreme risk to domestic violence victims whose abusers possess firearms.

Equitable, Responsive Legal System

- Enhanced family court infrastructure that accurately assesses and addresses domestic violence within divorce and custody matters, neither forcing survivors to disclose nor dismissing disclosures when they occur.
- Access to low-cost or free legal representation.
- Comprehensive, coordinated, and survivor-centered cross-systems criminal justice responses that ensure survivor safety and offender accountability.
- Increased opportunities for survivor notification and participation in the criminal justice system.

- **Gender-based Violence** – YWCA Greenwich will support state and federal legislation that addresses gender-based violence, which includes an increase for funding services for those victims of all forms of sexual violence
 - *Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)*^{vii}, the federal legislation must be reauthorized to renew funding for crucial services to domestic violence victims and survivors, including emergency shelters, crisis hotlines, access to culturally specific and other support programs.
 - *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment*, to prosecute aggressors pursuant to extended statutes of limitation; to develop a contemporary definition of consent to include contextual clues (“contextual consent”); to educate employers pursuant to new sexual harassment training requirements; and, to educate the public on these issues.
 - *Human Trafficking*, strengthen laws that will charge traffickers and “Johns” with crimes. YWCA Greenwich will support legislation that strengthens approaches to eliminating sex trafficking and rescuing victims; provides funding strategies for victim and survivor services, especially suitable advocates, and greater resources for the prosecution of traffickers; and provides greater accountability for this issue within state government.
 - We will promote public education, provide support for victims and survivors of gender-based violence, and support and increase of community-level prevention grants targeted at ending gender-based violence.
 - We also support increased access to emergency and transitional housing.

Funding of Critical Programs and Initiatives

YWCA Greenwich will advocate for the passage of funding bills on the municipal, state and federal levels that support the above agenda, YWCA programs, and issues related to the mission and strategic plan of the organization. In addition, YWCA Greenwich will support efforts to strengthen the nonprofit sector’s ability to respond to crises such as the pandemic or economic downturns..

ⁱ Connecticut Paid Leave. (2021). *Connecticut paid leave*. https://ctpaidleave.org/s/?language=en_US.

ⁱⁱ Connecticut General Assembly. (2021). *Senate Bill no. 883, Public Act 21-49*. <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2021/act/Pa/pdf/2021PA-00049-R00SB-00883-PA.PDF>.

Racial Justice and Civil Rights

ⁱⁱⁱ CT Can End Homelessness. (2022). *2023 Legislative Agenda*. <https://cceh.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/CT-CAN-Legislative-Agenda-12.22.22.pdf>.

^{iv} Adelaiye, S., & Ruth, L. (2021). *Protecting or pushing out: The prevalence and impact of school resource officers in Connecticut*. Connecticut Voices for Children. <https://ctvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/SRO-FINAL-Full-Acknowledgements.pdf>.

^v Common Cause Connecticut. (2022). *Automatic Voter Registration*. <https://www.commoncause.org/connecticut/our-work/expand-voting-rights-election-integrity/voter-registration-modernization/>

^{vi} United States Congress. (2021). *H.R. 5*. <https://www.congress.gov/117/bills/hr5/BILLS-117hr5pcs.pdf>. (‘Equality Act’)

^{vii} Congressional Research Service. (2021). *Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)*. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11170>.