



Tennessee 2024 Legislative Report
113th Tennessee Legislative Session

ABOUT SISTERREACH

SisterReach, founded October 2011, is a Memphis, TN based grassroots 501c3 non-profit advocating for the reproductive autonomy of Black women, women and teens of color, poor and rural women, LGBTQIA2S and gender expansive individuals, and their families through the framework of Reproductive & Sexual Justice (RSJ) on the local, state, regional and national levels. Our mission is to empower the people we serve to lead healthy lives, raise healthy families and live in healthy and sustainable communities. We work from a 4-pronged strategy of education, policy & advocacy, culture shift and harm reduction.

We also strive to heighten awareness about the intersectional issues that impact our communities among policymakers, medical providers, educators, social justice advocates and allies, other advocacy organizations, and community leaders, etc. whose missions and agendas impact the people we serve. Since our founding, the reproductive and sexual justice framework has been adopted and implemented among aligned stakeholders and community members across the state and southeast region. We are proud that our work continues to make a significant shift in the lives and circumstances of the people we serve and beyond.

WE ARE THE PEOPLE WE SERVE!



INTRODUCTION

SisterReach makes it a priority to remain informed and educate the people we serve about legislation proposed or passed by elected officials which will affect people across the State of Tennessee - particularly Black community members and other people of color. Despite the impact of being in a conservative run, super majority state, we continue to track laws and engage with lawmakers to work towards bodily autonomy, systemic change for liberation and abundance for all people across Tennessee living on the margins. SisterReach's 2024 Legislative Session Report is a resource provided to our community for education, empowerment and as a tool to advocate for themselves, their families, and communities.

The 113th Tennessee Legislative Session began in January 2024 and ended in April of 2024 - one of the fastest moving sessions we have seen in a long time. Hundreds of bills were introduced this session. In our 2024 Legislative Report, we will give you a brief explanation of the bills we deem most important for our followers and supporters to be informed on and provide a summary of what these bills mean in the context of your daily lives. We kicked the 113th session off with our annual Black Folks Day on the Hill where Black community members engaged with State Legislators to have important discussions about bills passed into law in previous sessions as well as pending legislation and the impact it would have on their own lives and communities if passed. Below are highlights and summaries of the bills we discussed during our 2024 Black Folks Day on the Hill accompanied by a few additional bills that were introduced after Black Folks Day on the Hill and imperative to our work.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Amid the impact of anti-human rights policies, Christian Nationalism, systemic oppression, and white supremacy, SisterReach strives to be a resource to help explain and support advocacy about legislation that directly impacts our communities. Conservative lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have passed harmful laws that will have disproportionate impacts on women, those navigating medical disparities, youth and families, low-income communities, communities of color, and LGBTQIA+ people.

We are witnessing one of Democracy's most vulnerable times as conservative legislators are exacerbating opportunities for unnecessary death by refusal to pass common sense gun laws, further increasing economic disparities and poverty; state sanctioned violence, and there are still deaths as a result of COVID-19. SisterReach stands with Black and brown leaders on the local, state, and national levels in the fight against Christian Nationalism in every iteration of its existence, racial and all forms of systematic oppression in the United States. As a Black woman-led reproductive and sexual justice organization, our legislative report is one of several ways we actively engage in civil unrest and fight for Black liberation. In that same spirit, we are committed to pursuing justice and abundance for all people of color and low-income people in Tennessee and across the southeast.

BILL NUMBER: SB1920/HB2229 - ABUSE OF A CORPSE This bill states that a person cannot be charged with abuse of a corpse/or miscarried fetus if disposing of remains due to that person's miscarriage. This bill not only protects the medical provider, but also the person who has had the miscarriage.

SENATE SPONSOR: Raumesh Akbari/HOUSE SPONSOR: Harold Love, Jr./BILL STATUS: Stalled in committee.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach supports this bill as a preventive measure to protect both medical providers and a pregnant person experiencing a miscarriage. It also prevents and addresses the perceived illegal intent for pregnant persons to terminate their pregnancy or in some way intentionally harm a deceased fetus.

BILL NUMBER: SB1918/HB2227 DEFINING ABORTION This bill protects a person using contraception from criminalization or accusation of an abortion attempt and preserves people's self-determination to use methods of contraception to delay or prevent an unintended pregnancy.

SENATE SPONSOR: Raumesh Akbari/HOUSE SPONSORS: Harold Love, Jr., Ron Travis, John Ray Clemmons BILL STATUS: Failed in committee.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach finds this bill to align with our mission and values of empowering women and birthing people to make decisions about their reproductive and sexual healthcare without stress or duress. And ensures their ability to continue using the contraceptive method of their choice in consultation with their medical provider.

BILL NUMBER: SB2056/HB2431 OUT OF WEDLOCK PATERNITY Present law provides that absent an order of custody to the contrary, custody of a child born out of wedlock is with the mother. This bill amends this provision to provide, instead, that if a man has executed a voluntary acknowledgment of paternity, then the man and the mother of the child born out of wedlock are the legal parents of the child. However, if a man has not executed a voluntary acknowledgment of paternity, then the mother of a child born out of wedlock is the child's legal parent and has primary residential care and custody of the child absent an order of custody to the contrary.

SENATE SPONSOR: Raumesh Akbari/HOUSE SPONSOR: Andrew Farmer BILL STATUS: Taken off notice.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach supports this bill as it provides equal opportunity for both parents to be and act as custodial parents. However, we are concerned about the potential point of entry that a pedophile or rapist would have over the custody of a child and the potential of that child being placed in danger.

BILL NUMBER: SB1693/HB2824 - OFFICE OF GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION This bill creates a specialty office to receive and review the results of gun violence for the purposes of strategic intervention.

SENATE SPONSOR: Raumesh Akbari/HOUSE SPONSOR: Karen Camper BILL STATUS: Failed.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach believes in the fair and accurate reporting and analysis of data. This includes data for the purpose of creating strategies to curb gun violence.

BILL NUMBER: SB2468/HB2413 MARIJUANA TAX Present law provides that it is an offense for a defendant to knowingly possess or casually exchange a controlled substance, unless the substance was obtained directly from, or pursuant to, a valid prescription or order of a practitioner while acting in the course of professional practice. This bill adds that a person does not violate the above provision if the controlled substance is marijuana. Additionally, under present law, it is an offense for a person to distribute a small amount of marijuana not in excess of ½ ounce. This bill amends the above provision to provide, instead, that the offense of distributing marijuana in an amount equal to or less than ½ ounce does not apply to a person or entity if they are growing, processing, manufacturing, delivering, selling, or possessing marijuana with the intent to process, manufacture, deliver, or sell marijuana in this state as authorized in this bill.

SENATE SPONSOR: Raumesh Akbari/HOUSE SPONSORS: Rep. Vincent Dixie BILL STATUS: Assigned to committees.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach supports decriminalization of marijuana in the state of Tennessee. This bill removes barriers for employment imposed by current policy; and in that, it has the potential to render access to economic stability in marginalized communities.

BILL NUMBER: SB0181/HB1384 - HUMAN TRAFFICKING EXCEPTION This bill allows individuals who were previously convicted of aggravated prostitution as a result of being a victim of human trafficking, to have that conviction removed from their record (expunged), provided they meet certain requirements.

SENATE SPONSORS: Page Walley, Edward Jackson, Becky Massey, Jeff Yarbrow, Raumesh Akbari, Janice Bowling, Heidi Campbell, London Lamar/HOUSE SPONSORS: John Ragan, Dan Howell, Joe Towns, Debra Moody, G.A. Hardaway, John Gillespie, Gloria Johnson, Marry Littleton, Michele Carringer, Elaine Davis, John Ray Clemmons, Rick Eldridge, Jason Powell, Bob Freeman, Aftyn Behn, Scott Cepicky, Mark Cochran, Esther Helton-Haynes BILL STATUS: PASSED as Public Chapter No. 545.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach believes in the decriminalization for victims of human trafficking and other sexually related crimes and for persons living with HIV/AIDS. SisterReach also refrains from penalizing and further traumatizing any person living with HIV/AIDS.

BILL NUMBER: HB1626/SB1590 FULL BODILY AUTONOMY This bill allows for complete bodily autonomy to include pregnancy, abortion, and use of contraceptives. This bill provides that every person has a fundamental right to make decisions about the person's reproductive health care, including the fundamental right to use or refuse contraceptive procedures or contraceptive supplies. Additionally, this bill provides that a pregnant person has a fundamental right to continue a pregnancy and give birth, or to have an abortion and to make decisions about how to exercise such right. Finally, this bill provides that a fertilized egg, embryo, or fetus does not have independent or derivative rights under the laws of this state.

HOUSE SPONSORS: Aftyn Behn, Caleb Hemmer/SENATE SPONSORS: London Lamar, Charlane Oliver, Heidi Campbell BILL STATUS: FAILED.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach believes in a person's ability to be self-determining and have full agency over their reproductive health decisions without the interference of any individual or governmental entity.

BILL NUMBER: HB2234/SBSB2065 UNIVERSAL PRE-K FUNDING Taxes, Privilege - As introduced, enacts the "Universal Pre-K Funding Act." - Amends TCA Title 4, Chapter 51; Title 49 and Title 67. Present law provides that implementation of Tennessee's existing pilot pre-k programs by LEAs (Local Education Agency) are voluntary. This bill revises this provision to, instead, require each LEA to provide a pre-k program that provides the number of classrooms necessary to serve all eligible children under the voluntary pre-k program that serves at-risk or marginalized children.

HOUSE SPONSOR: Representative Aftyn Behn/SENATE SPONSOR: Senator Charlane Oliver BILL STATUS: FAILED in committee.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach supports this bill as it provides a check and balance to ensure all children in Tennessee have access to educational settings that optimizes their educational success. And this bill makes pre-K accessible to low- or no-income households.

BILL NUMBER: HB1473/SB1342 LAW ENFORCEMENT PUNITIVE ACTION This bill shortens the time frame for a law enforcement officer's hearing to be heard before an adjudication body.

HOUSE SPONSORS: Karen Camper, Joe Towns, Justin J. Pearson/SENATE SPONSOR: London Lamar BILL STATUS: Taken off notice.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach supports any attempt to hasten the process of any infraction to be adjudicated on the part of a law enforcement officer. This bill is a step in the right direction for equity specific to law enforcement violence.

BILL NUMBER: HB1577/SB1566 SEMI AUTOMATIC ACCELERATED PARTS This bill prevents the selling or possessing of firearm parts that accelerate the release of rapid fire.

HOUSE SPONSORS: Bo Mitchell, John Ray Clemmons, Torrey Harris, Yusuf Hakeem, Vincent Dixie/SENATE SPONSOR: Charlane Oliver BILL STATUS: Assigned to committees.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: This bill is a step in the right direction to reduce the usage and/or access of semi-automatic weapons.

BILL NUMBER: SB1686/HB2825 ROLLBACK PERMITLESS CARRY Present law provides that it is an exception that a person is carrying, whether openly or concealed, a handgun and the person lawfully possesses the handgun; the person is in a place where the person is lawfully present. This bill adds that a county legislative body is authorized to elect not to permit persons within the county to lawfully carry a handgun pursuant to the exception set out in this bill by passage of a resolution. Upon passage, the resolution eliminates the exception in this bill to the criminal offense of unlawful carrying, as prohibited by present law, within the county's boundaries.

HOUSE SPONSOR: Karen Camper/SENATE SPONSOR: London Lamar BILL STATUS: FAILED.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: SisterReach's position is though the intent of this bill is to regulate lawful carry of a handgun without a permit, we are concerned that counties could empower unlawful profiling of individuals despite that individual's track record of nonviolence.

BILL NUMBER: HB2832/SB2756 REDUCE SENTENCING This bill authorizes an inmate to file a motion with a court of competent jurisdiction upon the completion of 50 percent of the inmate's incarcerated sentence to reduce their incarcerated sentence. Upon review of the motion, the court may reduce the inmate's incarcerated sentence. This bill further authorizes an inmate to request a review of their incarcerated sentence by a court of competent jurisdiction with proof of extraordinary and compelling circumstances, including non-retroactive changes of the law, racial disparity in the sentence, medical issues, and the fact that the inmate was sentenced as a juvenile. However, the approval of such a review is subject to the discretion of a court of competent jurisdiction and the recommendation of the applicable district attorney general. Upon a review of the request, the court may reduce the inmate's incarcerated sentence.

HOUSE SPONSOR: Karen Camper/SENATE SPONSOR: Raumesh Akbari BILL STATUS: FAILED.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: This bill is a step in the right direction to reduce already exacerbated sentencing of youth in the criminal justice system.

BILL NUMBER: SB1790/HB1844 FREE SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND LUNCH Present law requires each school board, unless a waiver is granted, to establish a school lunch program in every school under its jurisdiction, and a school breakfast program in certain schools under certain conditions. Each local education agency (LEA: Local education agency) operating a school breakfast program pursuant to this provision must be reimbursed by the state for any additional expenses to that agency that are incurred as a result of implementation of this law. This bill deletes the present law and substitutes, instead, the following: (1) Each local school board must establish a school lunch program and a school breakfast program that provide a free breakfast and lunch to each student enrolled in a school under the board's jurisdiction in accordance with rules promulgated under law relative to school nutrition standards. (2) The state must reimburse each LEA the cost of providing a free breakfast and lunch to each student enrolled in the LEA after all federal funds have been applied.

SENATE SPONSORS: Sara Kyle, Heidi Campbell/HOUSE SPONSORS: John Ray Clemmons, Aftyn Behn BILL STATUS: FAILED.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach supports food sustainability and opportunities for young people to have access to the nutrition they need despite income barriers. We applaud Rep. Clemmons for keeping Tennessee's children, their nutrition, and overall wellbeing at the center of his policy making.

BILL NUMBER: HB0427/SB0432 PETITION FOR EXPUNGEMENT This bill deletes the time it takes a person to file a petition for expunction, and who does not have any pending charges filed against the petitioner. If the petitioner has been charged with an offense at the time of filing the petition, then the petition must be held by the clerk until the pending charge is resolved.

HOUSE SPONSOR: John Ray Clemmons/SENATE SPONSOR: Sara Kyle BILL STATUS: Taken off notice.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: This bill is a step in the right direction to support ex-offenders and to correct the unfair criminal penalties for victims of human trafficking. This bill also bolsters opportunities for voter capability to person's who may have been disqualified due to the category of their crimes.

BILL NUMBER: HB2816/SB2396 GENDER TRANSITION PROCEDURES AND FUNDING This bill invades the privacy of individuals receiving gender transition treatment by requiring the medical facility to report the information to the health department.

HOUSE SPONSOR: Jeremy Faison/SENATE SPONSOR: Joey Hensley BILL STATUS: FAILED.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: SisterReach believes in an individual person's right and ability to make decisions for themselves and their sexual health and identity without governmental interference. We also believe that pitting insurance companies against the health needs of patients is unethical and overreaching.

BILL NUMBER: SB1728/HB1729 DEFINING ABORTION This bill provides exceptions to abortion pursuant to the pregnant person having reported the reason to law enforcement prior to terminating the pregnancy, in the case of physical or mental danger, or due to rape or incest. AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 39, Chapter 15; Title 63 and Title 68, relative to women's health.

SENATE SPONSOR: London Lamar/HOUSE SPONSOR: Yusuf Hakeem BILL STATUS: Withdrawn.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: SisterReach supports women or pregnant capable people's ability to make a decision to terminate a pregnancy without any person's or government's interference. However, we disagree that a rape or incest victim must be mandated to report such an offense to their provider or to law enforcement as the caveat to receive an abortion.

BILL NUMBER: HB2935/SB2747 MEDICAL ETHICS This bill provides that a medical practitioner, healthcare institution, or healthcare payer has the right not to participate in or pay for any medical procedure or service which violates the conscience of the medical practitioner, healthcare institution, or healthcare payer, as long as the exercise of this right does not impair the obligations, duties, or responsibilities required of the practitioner, institution, or payer under an existing contract. However, this right is limited to objections to a particular medical procedure or service on the basis of conscience. A religious medical practitioner, healthcare institution, or healthcare payer that holds itself out to the public as religious, states in its governing documents that it has a religious purpose or mission, and has internal operating policies or procedures that implement its religious beliefs, has the right to make employment, staffing, contracting, and admitting privilege decisions consistent with its religious beliefs, if such practitioner, institution, or payer is considered a religious corporation, association, educational institution, or society pursuant to federal law, and otherwise in compliance with the federal civil rights act. Amends TCA Title 33; Title 63 and Title 68.

HOUSE SPONSOR: Jeremy Faison/SENATE SPONSOR: Ferrell Haile BILL STATUS: Assigned to committees.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: recognizes this bill as an attempt to enforce implicit bias through religious discrimination by medical providers, institutions, and healthcare payers against the medical ethics of care delivery. Medical providers take the Hippocratic oath to "Do No Harm" yet this bill is not patient-centered and is another way to highjack the agency of patients who, even in cases of emergency, may be refused life-saving care or euthanasia (assisted suicide).

BILL NUMBER: SB1729/HB1728 AGGRAVATED STALKING W/RIFLE This bill expands an aggravated stalking offense to include the use of a purchased semi-automatic for the purpose of stalking. Amends TCA Title 36 and Title 39, Chapter 17.

SENATE SPONSOR: London Lamar/HOUSE SPONSOR: Yusuf Hakeem BILL STATUS: Taken off notice.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: We appreciate this bill as an act of intervention to prevent future violence perpetuated by a stalker.

BILL NUMBER: HB2936/SB2749 PARENTS RIGHTS What It Does: This bill provides that the liberty of a parent to the care, custody, and control of the parent's child, including the right to direct the upbringing, education, health care, and mental health of the child, is a fundamental right. However, this bill does not authorize or allow any individual to abuse, neglect, or endanger a child. As used in this bill, a "parent" means a biological, legal, or adoptive parent or an individual who has been granted decision-making authority over the child under state law. This bill provides that all parental rights are exclusively reserved to a parent of a child without obstruction by or interference from a government entity, including the following rights and responsibilities: (2) Such provisions must be construed in favor of a broad protection of the fundamental right of parents to the custody, care, and control of their children, including the right to direct the upbringing, education, health care, and mental health of their child; (3) If a child has no affirmative right of access to a particular surgical, medical, or mental health procedure or service, then such provisions do not grant that child's parent an affirmative right of access to that procedure or service on that child's behalf... **HEALTHCARE:** Except as otherwise provided by law or court order, this bill prohibits a government entity, healthcare provider, or other person from knowingly taking any of the following actions with regard to a minor without first obtaining the consent of a parent of the minor: (i) treating, professing to diagnose, operating on, or prescribing for any physical ailment, physical injury, or deformity; (ii) prescribing, dispensing, delivering, or administering any drug or medication; (iii) rendering certain psychological services; or (iv) rendering certain counseling services.

HOUSE SPONSOR: Jeremy Faison/SENATE SPONSOR: Farrell Haile BILL STATUS: Signed by Senate Speaker.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: Though the bill reads as if the rights of a parent are being supported to have full autonomy and protection of raising their child and making decisions on that child's behalf. It does not take into consideration the child's ability to be self-determining about their gender identity, sexual orientation, religious preference (or none), or other opportunities for self-determination or free will that child may have. Our recommendation is that a bill of this nature does not need to exist. Parents and children should be allowed to navigate often delicate decisions among themselves.

BILL NUMBER: HB1522/SB1479 BODY CAM OBSTRUCTION This bill more deeply penalizes a member of law enforcement who prevents the use of and blocks the view of their body camera. Amends TCA Title 10; Title 38 and Title 39.

HOUSE SPONSOR: G.A. Hardaway/SENATE SPONSOR: Sara Kyle BILL STATUS: Taken off notice.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach believes in transparency and supports accountability placed on law enforcement not to obstruct justice.

BILL NUMBER: HB2030/SB1912 UNLAWFUL EXPOSURE EXPANSION This bill aims to expand unlawful exposure laws by deeming it illegal to distribute artificially or digitally manipulated sexually explicit images of an individual that causes emotional distress. Amends TCA Title 39.

HOUSE SPONSORS: Justin Jones, William Lamberth, Clay Doggett, G.A. Hardaway, Joe Towns, Gloria Johnson/SENATE SPONSOR: Jeff Yarbro BILL STATUS: Assigned to committees.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach supports legislation that reduces violations regarding personhood. SisterReach is also concerned about false accusations and the possibility of hacking.

BILL NUMBER: HB2515/SB2405 AGGRAVATED PROSTITUTION DISCLOSURE Removes aggravated prostitution charges from public records of an individual charged with felony or misdemeanor whose aggravated prostitution offenses have been repealed. Amends TCA Title 39 and Title 40.

HOUSE SPONSOR: Senator Torrey Harris/SENATE SPONSOR: Senator Jeff Yarbro BILL STATUS: Taken off notice.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach supports economic justice at every intersection. This bill is a step in the right direction not to place undue financial burden on the innocent.

BILL NUMBER: HB1393/SB1010 PARENTAL ABUSE DRUG TESTING This bill requires that pregnant parents prove their guardianship through monitored drug testing over the course of six months. Amends TCA Title 4 and Title 37.

HOUSE SPONSOR: Torrey Harris/SENATE SPONSOR: Heidi Campbell BILL STATUS: Assigned to committees.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: SisterReach recognizes the delicacy of situations involving substance use disorder and child safety; and are hopeful that parents will have the comprehensive support of their medical provider and community. However, we do not subscribe to terminologies of abuse to a mental and behavioral health condition and ask that the language 'substance abuse' be amended to 'substance use disorder.'

BILL NUMBER: HB2502/SB2104 MEDICAL MARIJUANA OPERATIONS (1) A licensed medical marijuana grower acting within the scope of the grower's license to (i) operate a facility to grow marijuana for sale or transfer to a medical marijuana establishment, (ii) possess medical marijuana or medical marijuana-related products, and (iii) conduct public tours of the facility;...please see bill for continuation of bill language

HOUSE SPONSOR: Torrey Harris/SENATE SPONSOR: London Lamar BILL STATUS: FAILED.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach supports access to medical marijuana as a holistic regimen of healthcare.

BILL NUMBER: SB2195/HB2462 PUBLISHED EFFECTS OF CHEMICAL ABORTION This bill seeks to promote fear in individuals who may be seeking a chemical abortion by mandating reversal information be published on the health department's website. - Amends TCA Title 39; Title 63 and Title 68.

SENATE SPONSORS: Joseph Hensley, Richard Briggs/HOUSE SPONSOR: Esther Helton-Haynes BILL STATUS: Taken off notice.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: SisterReach believes abortion reversal is medically impossible and forcing medical experts to post erroneous information is unethical and dangerous. And it is an individual's right to reproductive and sexual autonomy without government interference or suggestive messaging for coercion.

BILL NUMBER: SB1719/HB1624 OVERDOSE GUILT BY ASSOCIATION This bill places responsibility on an individual who is aware of another individual experiencing a drug overdose but fails to call medical assistance. - Amends TCA Title 39; Title 53 and Title 63.

SENATE SPONSOR: Joey Hensley/HOUSE SPONSOR: Scott Cepicky BILL STATUS: FAILED.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: SisterReach believes that substance use disorder is a mental and behavioral health diagnosis and not abuse. Secondly, persons who navigate SUD (substance use disorder) should not be criminalized for their illness. A more appropriate remedy is to expand behavioral health support without punitive penalties to Tennesseans who navigate SUD. It is also unfair to potentially criminalize a person without medical knowledge for failing to recognize a medical issue.

BILL NUMBER: HB2816/SB2396 GENDER TRANSITION PROCEDURES AND FUNDING This bill invades the privacy of individuals receiving gender transition treatment by requiring the medical facility to report the information to the health department. - Amends TCA Title 1; Title 4; Title 33; Title 56; Title 63; Title 68 and Title 71.

HOUSE SPONSOR: Jeremy Faison/SENATE SPONSOR: Joey Hensley BILL STATUS: FAILED.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: SisterReach believes in an individual person's right and ability to make decisions for themselves and their sexual health. This includes a parent's autonomy regarding decisions for their child and their child's health.

BILL NUMBER: HB1661/SB2173 RESTRICTIVE READING This bill authorizes the residents of a district to circulate a petition for signatures for the purposes of prohibiting each library within a district from displaying, distributing, or making readily accessible to minors any content or material in possession of a library that is specified in the petition as not meeting contemporary community standards. Libraries - As introduced, enacts the "Restricted Access by Minors to Obscene Library Materials Act." - Amends TCA Title 10, Chapter 1 and Title 10, Chapter 3.

HOUSE SPONSORS: John Ragan, Jody Barrett/SENATE SPONSOR: Joey Hensley BILL STATUS: Summer Study.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: This bill is another attempt to erase and invisibilize literature about Black/African American history, analysis, and theory. It is also an attempt to enforce legislative or community bias or prejudice against the LGBTQIA2S+ community. This legislation is racist, homophobic, and transphobic, and continues to chip away at democracy in a society that is comprised of multiethnic and more than heterosexual individuals. In a democracy, individuals can access information and literature as they see fit.

BILL NUMBER: HB1948/SB2350 ANTI-DEI What It Does: Beginning with the 2024-2025 academic year, and continuing with each academic year thereafter, this bill requires the board of trustees of the University of Tennessee, the board of regents, and each state university board to ensure the following: (1) That each institution governed by the board does not establish or maintain a diversity, equity, and inclusion office...; (2) That its respective institutions do not compel, require, induce, solicit, or imply any negative direct or indirect consequences for the refusal of a person to provide a diversity, equity, and inclusion statement, nor give preferential consideration or treatment to a person based on the person's provision of a diversity, equity, and inclusion statement, nor give preference to any employment applicant, current employee, or participant in any function of the institution on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin; Please see bill for continuation.

HOUSE SPONSOR: John Ragan/SENATE SPONSOR: Joey Hensley BILL STATUS: FAILED.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: Because prejudice based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin are in full effect in Tennessee and nationally, it is the responsibility of the Tennessee State legislature to provide every protection to individuals representing these demographics to reduce instances of prejudice and bias. This bill allows legal discrimination and prejudice without consequence to the offender or protection to victims of these offenses.

BILL NUMBER: SB1811/HB2943 INDECENT EXPOSURE EXPANSION This bill seeks to amend the current code and include victims between the ages of 13-17 while previously only being applicable to victims less than age 13. Amends TCA Title 36, Title 39; Title 40 and Title 68.

SENATE SPONSOR: Sara Kyle/HOUSE SPONSOR: Joe Towns BILL STATUS: Signed by Senate Speaker.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: SisterReach does not support this bill in any way as it offers another opportunity for young people to be excessively criminalized in a state that already excessively criminalizes young people and disproportionately criminalizes youth of color. Our recommendation is for this bill to only be effective when the perpetrators are adults aged twenty and older.

BILL NUMBER: SB2880/HB2957 PARENTAGE FRAUD In present law, a person commits parentage fraud who seeks to establish another individual as the biological parent of a child in the person's custody with intent to deprive the individual of property or to prevent the child's actual biological parent from exercising parental rights to the child and the person knows that the individual is not the child's biological parent or seeks to be established as a child's parent based on the person's status as a biological parent of the child and the person knows that the person is not the child's biological parent. This offense is classified as a Class B misdemeanor. However, the above provisions do not apply when the child involved was conceived as a result of aggravated rape, rape, rape of a child, especially aggravated rape, or especially aggravated rape of a child; the child involved has been or is in the process of being adopted; or the victim of the offense was the defendant's spouse at the time of the offense. This bill deletes the above provisions entirely.

SENATE SPONSOR: Senator Sara Kyle/HOUSE SPONSOR: Representative GA Hardaway BILL STATUS: FAILED.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: We support the protections for biological parents, who have demonstrated no threat or danger to a child, to be granted parental custody of a biological child. However, we are concerned about the custody rights of parents who are not actively attempting to provide basic resources for the wellbeing of a biological child (i.e., child support, medical support, childcare support) being allowed unequivocal (leaving no doubt) rights to claim parental rights of that child.

BILL NUMBER: SB2488/HB2837 RECKLESS ENDANGERMENT DL REVOCATION This bill requires the court to revoke an individual's driver license if the individual is convicted of reckless endangerment that includes brandishing a firearm. - Amends TCA Title 39; Title 40, Chapter 33, and Title 55.

SENATE SPONSOR: Sara Kyle/HOUSE SPONSOR: Joe Towns BILL STATUS: Taken off notice.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: We appreciate attempts to reduce acts of road rage, interstate shootings, and other acts of violence of this nature. Curbing gun usage is a step in the right direction to ensure safety.

BILL NUMBER: SB2043/HB2572 AGGRAVATED RAPE WITH HIV This bill makes knowingly transmitting HIV included as an offense of aggravated rape - Amends TCA Title 39, Chapter 13, Part 5.

SENATE SPONSORS: London Lamar, Paul Rose/HOUSE SPONSORS: Ronnie Glynn, Antonio Parkinson

BILL STATUS: PASSED as Public Chapter No. 844.

SISTERREACH'S POSITION: Please Refer to SisterReach Letter * Letter on page 24

BILL NUMBER: HB2226/SB1832 MATERNAL ADDITIONAL ADVISORY MEMBERS This bill creates within the department of health ("department") the Tennessee maternal health equity advisory committee ("committee"). The committee is composed of eleven members appointed by the governor. In making appointments to the committee, the governor must strive to ensure that (i) members are appointed based on their demonstrated expertise, experience, and commitment to addressing maternal health disparities, with an emphasis on appointing members with experience working with grassroots or community organizations; (ii) appointees are representative of each grand division of this state, with representation of both urban and rural areas; and (iii) efforts are made to ensure that the unique needs and perspectives of minority women are represented by the membership. This bill provides that members serve a term of two years and that a member may serve multiple and consecutive terms. Vacancies on the committee are filled by appointment of the governor. Substituted for: House Bill No. 2226

SENATE SPONSOR: London Lamar/HOUSE SPONSOR: Harold Love, Jr. BILL STATUS: PASSED as Public Chapter No. 834.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: SisterReach believes that this bill is a great step in encouraging community organizations and healthcare collaborations. And this bill affords Black women and other marginalized parents' voices at the table to improve maternal health outcomes for birthing people.

BILL NUMBER: SB2385/HB2655 BLOOD TEST FOR LEAD This bill targets women and children who receive supplemental food assistance to be tested for lead. This bill also requires blood lead level testing for all children prior to attendance at public schools that service any combination of pre-kindergarten through grade twelve (pre-K-12) students.

SENATE SPONSOR: London Lamar/HOUSE SPONSOR: Jesse Chism BILL STATUS: FAILED in committee.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: We are concerned about the pattern of shortsightedness regarding Sen. Lamar's bill crafting that often has the opportunity to be later used to harm her constituents who more than not identify as Black/African American. And especially in the case of youth in juvenile detention not having agency of their bodies or blood samples because they are incarcerated. We are also open to understand more about the reasoning behind targeting certain mothers at the intersection of drug usage and growing pregnancy surveillance. We recognize that this bill failed in committee but are still concerned about future attempts in the resubmission of this bill for consideration.

BILL NUMBER: HB1895/SB1971 ABORTION TRAFFICKING This bill penalizes an adult who transports a minor with child across state lines for the purposes of terminating the pregnancy. - Amends TCA Title 8, Chapter 6; Title 29; Title 37 and Title 39.

HOUSE SPONSORS: Jason Zachary, Jeremy Faison, Rusty Grills, William Lamberth, Monty Fritts, David Hawk/SENATE SPONSOR: Paul Rose BILL STATUS: Signed by Senate Speaker.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: We believe in an individual person's human right to bodily autonomy without governmental interference. The TN government has already violated the human rights of pregnancy capable individuals in the state. Prohibiting Tennesseans from accessing abortion in other areas of the country where abortion care is legal and accessible is overreaching and gravely intrusive. Our recommendation is that a bill of this nature does not need to exist.

BILL NUMBER: HB1891/SB2097 SOCIAL MEDIA PROTECTION This bill requires a social media company to verify the age of an individual who (i) attempts to become an account holder, at the time the individual attempts to become an account holder; or (ii) is an account holder, within 14 days of the account holder's attempt to access an existing account. This bill requires the social media company to verify the express parental consent for the minor to become or continue as an account holder if the individual is a minor. Please read bill for further language.

HOUSE SPONSORS: William Lamberth, Mark Cochran, Jake McCalmon/SENATE SPONSOR: Jack Johnson BILL STATUS: PASSED as Public Chapter No. 899.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: Social media is inanimate and generally safe as a platform. However, what is not safe are people who abuse social media access for the purposes of criminal activity and violence. Though the language of this bill reads as protective, what is problematic is that lawmakers believe policymaking, in this case, is necessary and that parents do not possess the capability to monitor their child's internet usage and without governmental involvement. We also fear that this is another attempt to control what any person has access to on the world wide web.

BILL NUMBER: HB1675/SB2071 CAREGIVER REIMBURSEMENT Present law provides that a relative caregiver must receive payment equal to 50 percent of the full foster care board rate for the care of a child, if certain conditions are met but especially: (4) The relative caregiver's total household income does not exceed twice the current federal poverty guidelines based on the size of the family unit; and (6) The relative caregiver agrees to seek the establishment and enforcement of child support, including the naming of the father of a child for the purposes of paternity establishment. This bill removes (4) and amends provision (6) to provide instead, that, the relative caregiver agrees to cooperate with any child support proceedings initiated by the department of human services, including providing information relative to the establishment of paternity, if known.

HOUSE SPONSOR: William Lamberth/SENATE SPONSOR: Jack Johnson BILL STATUS: PASSED as Public Chapter No. 574.

SISTERREACH APPROVED: We support this bill as an economic justice-based bill on the part of the foster parent to adequately care for a child regardless of the standing compensation of a foster parent.

BILL NUMBER: HB1602/SB1577 MANDATORY CHILD INTERROGATION RECORDING This bill mandates that the interrogation of children be video recorded.

HOUSE SPONSORS: Jesse Chism, Mike Sparks, G.A. Hardaway, Gloria Johnson, Joe Towns, Lowell Russell, Ryan Williams, et. al./SENATE SPONSORS: London Lamar, Raumesh Akbari, Sara Kyle, Jeff Yarbro BILL STATUS: PASSED as Public Chapter No. 565.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: This bill does provide more protection of a child and parent when a child is interrogated without the presence of a parent or legal counsel than what currently exists. But the technical issue exception should mean that a child cannot be interrogated unless and until a parent, guardian or legal counsel is present. Our recommendation is to amend the language of the bill to ensure that a child is always protected regardless of the scenario at hand. We also recommend that law enforcement cannot hold a child in custody in case of suspicion for any alleged offense.

BILL NUMBER: HB1895/SB1971 ABORTION TRAFFICKING This bill penalizes an adult who transports a minor with child across state lines for the purposes of terminating the pregnancy.

HOUSE SPONSORS: Jason Zachary, Jeremy Faison, Rusty Grills, William Lamberth, Monty Fritts, David Hawk/SENATE SPONSOR: Paul Rose BILL STATUS: Signed by Senate Speaker.

SISTERREACH OPPOSED: We believe in an individual person's human right to bodily autonomy without governmental interference. The TN government has already violated the human rights of pregnancy capable individuals in the state. Prohibiting Tennesseans from accessing abortion in other areas of the country where abortion care is legal and accessible is overreaching and gravely intrusive. Our recommendation is that a bill of this nature does not need to exist.

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Senator London Lamar
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Suite 762 Cordell Hull Bldg.
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Phone: (615) 741-2509

RE: BILL: SB2043/HB2572

Dear Senator Lamar,

Thank you for reading this correspondence and for the work you are doing for tennesseans – especially those residing in shelby county. As the only reproductive & sexual justice organization in tennessee, and in consideration that sisterreach advocates and represents some of the most vulnerable tennesseans in the state, including but not limited to black women and youth, poor and rural women, lgbtqia+ people, and their families, we are especially concerned about the dangerous language in bill sb2043/hb2572.

Despite this bill's intended audience, black women, youth, and queer-identified people who live with and are disproportionately impacted by hiv/aids and are often living at the intersection of their diagnosis and other oppressive life circumstances will be most directly impacted by your bill. Our youth are already at a great loss attempting to navigate intimate relationships and experimenting sexually without the necessary tools they deserve regarding comprehensive reproductive and sexual health education that includes understanding and navigating healthy relationships, and boundaries. Other bills presented in this session like the indecent exposure bill hb2943/sb1811, will exacerbate instances of criminalization. And we have no faith in our criminal justice system, that any point of entry to criminalize youth of color will not be unjustifiably exaggerated. Your bill's language places them in direct line of such an exaggeration.

Black women and girls are disproportionately impacted by domestic/intimate partner violence, molestation, rape, and incest. In the metro memphis area, for every 14 women diagnosed with hiv, thirteen of those women will be black. Meaning that black women account for 93% of all women diagnosed with hiv in our city. The number of people living with hiv in tennessee was 19,523 (diagnosed); and newly diagnosed was 843 in 2021. These statistics are not widely informed by instances of aggravated assault, but by a lack of knowledge about one's health, lack of economic resources to obtain healthcare in a state that still refuses to expand medicaid, one that denied crucial hiv/aids funding, and irresponsibly forfeited title x dollars that would have saved the lives of thousands across the state.

As a former employee of this organization, i know you are more than familiar with our community reach, cultural understanding, and commitment to ensure optimum health and wellness for the people we serve. As you may already be aware, sisterreach has offered free hiv testing and connection to care since 2013 and has offered safe sex kits and comprehensive reproductive and sexual health education to our community since 2012. In the last 5 years, our harm reduction work has expanded to include syringe exchange, hepatitis c testing and connection to care, harm reduction kit distribution, emergency contraception and pregnancy tests. Our harm reduction programming has become more robust because the need for our services is even more crucial with memphis having among the highest new hiv transmission rates in the country.

Considering your bill's language, which states, "sexual offenses - as introduced, expands the offense of aggravated rape to include when the defendant commits rape knowing that the defendant is infected with hiv. - Amends tca title 39, chapter 13, part 5.)" Without considering the context and environment that most of your constituents are living, including navigating sexual health apartheid and lack of medicaid expansion on the part of conservatives, assigning such a punitive penalty to people who are not incentivized to invest in healthcare they cannot afford, or sexual health education they have been intentionally and strategically denied, is short-sighted and dangerous.

Conflating a criminal charge with a health diagnosis many people don't know they have, or aren't empowered to seek out care, is irresponsible. And further criminalizing a person's hiv status is counterproductive to ending the hiv epidemic in tennessee. It discourages people from being tested resulting in higher rates of hiv transmission. This bill is unnecessary as there is already a felony offense for criminal hiv exposure- which is problematic in and of itself. Further, a bill of this nature would also exacerbate the already disproportionate criminalization of black and latino/hispanic community members. Furthermore, hiv is a protected disability under the americans with disabilities act. On december 1st, 2023, the department of justice found that the enforcement of the aggravated prostitution offense and the enforcement of the lifetime sex offender registry requirement violated the americans with disabilities act. The offense specifically heightens punishment for plwhiv (people living with hiv). The doj has filed suit against the state as of february 15th for the violation. Sb2043/hb2572 would also be in violation of the ada as it heightens legal penalties for plwhiv solely for their disability status.

My colleagues have informed us of multiple attempts to reason with you around the dangerous impact your bill will have if passed and its adverse impact, especially among Black, brown, youth and queer Tennesseans – many of which in Memphis, are your constituents. I approach you, as a Black woman to a Black woman, who are both concerned about the sexual safety of every Tennessean while also equally concerned about the disproportionate spike of HIV among our communities.

That said, while the crafted bill might have been sponsored with assumably good intention, the results of the bill will disproportionately impact those living on the margins and increase criminalization of only those diagnosed and living with HIV across Tennessee. This bill expands the stigma of people living with HIV who are already experiencing discrimination, criminalization, homo and transphobia, misogyny, and misogynoir, as well as socioeconomic and health disparities at alarming rates.

SisterReach admonishes you and your co-sponsors to withdraw this bill in its entirety as it would require offenders charged with rape to receive an enhanced charge of aggravated rape when they are HIV positive. We respect and empathize with your concern for survivors of sexual violence and would like to lend our support in crafting and sponsoring future bills that protect and affirm survivors of sexual violence that do not further criminalize people living with HIV and those who are most vulnerable.

We have been working directly with our national partners at The Center for HIV Law & Policy, who have offered us unlimited access to their legal and policy expertise and resources to support us in assisting you in any way we possibly can to reach the most amicable and ethical resolve in this matter. SisterReach is committed to crafting and helping pass future bills that support the care and well-being of Tennesseans, while our current harm reduction efforts will continue encouraging and increasing HIV testing and

connecting people to care in Memphis and across the state. This includes supporting you and your colleagues with scientific-based education which includes proof that living with HIV is not a death sentence with early intervention, retention in care and modern technological advances which in turn can suppress HIV to an undetectable status.

We ask you to redraw SB2043/HB2572 and help us in ending the epidemic in Tennessee as well as work with us to create less harmful, but more impactful ways to affirm and help survivors. We look forward to hearing from you and a favorable response which supports fairness, equity, and equality for the well-being of all Tennesseans!

Respectfully,

*Cherisse A. Scott
CEO & Founder
SisterReach TN & IL
901.614.9906
www.sisterreach-tn.org
(end of letter **RE: Bill: SB2043/HB2572**)*



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-TN.org

Instagram: @SisterReach

Facebook: [Facebook.com/SisterReach](https://www.facebook.com/SisterReach)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SisterReach>

