

April 6, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Chair Tracy Hall
Kalamazoo County Commission
201 West Kalamazoo Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49007



Dear Chair Hall and County Commissioners,

The undersigned organizations write to urge the Kalamazoo County Commission to approve the budget amendment allocating \$43,900 in funding to the YWCA Kalamazoo to help ensure that all Kalamazooans can access essential health care including doula services, abortion care, and gender-affirming care.

Since 1885, when YWCA Kalamazoo, the first YWCA in the state of Michigan, was formed, they have served as a primary resource for economic, gender and racial justice for all women, children, and families in Kalamazoo County. Continuing in this tradition, YWCA Kalamazoo is preparing to launch our nation's first comprehensive Reproductive Health Fund, an innovative pilot program that will expand access to reproductive, sexual, and gender-affirming health care services for low-income people, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), undocumented people, and the LGBTQIA+ community. The Reproductive Health Fund moves us one step closer towards ensuring every citizen in our county can live, work, and make decisions about our health and our future with dignity and economic security.

In its inaugural year, the Reproductive Health Fund will focus on addressing financial barriers to abortion, increasing access to doula care to promote maternal health and decrease the Black infant mortality rate, and supporting gender-affirming care by alleviating the costs associated with hormone treatment, Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), name changes, and with gender marker updates.

As the County Commission acknowledged in its proclamation declaring racism to be a public health issue in June 2020, systemic racism and other deeply embedded inequities resulted in racial disparities in health care outcomes and health care access. Many Kalamazoo County residents encounter obstacles to essential reproductive, sexual, and gender-affirming care and these barriers are often compounded by the high cost of care and lack of insurance coverage for essential health services. With the dual crises of a pandemic and severe economic instability, the need for affordable access to reproductive health care has grown more urgent. After surveying women and non-binary people in Kalamazoo in 2019, YWCA Kalamazoo found that 1 in 3 women faced barriers to accessing health care due to lack of insurance coverage and financial resources. Because essential health care services like doulas, abortion, and gender affirming care are unfortunately not covered by insurance in Michigan, people are forced to pay out of pocket and many are faced with the impossible choice of choosing between paying for basic needs such as groceries and paying for their health care.

We need initiatives like the Reproductive Health Fund that will allow each of us to access the essential health care we need to live and thrive, however much money we earn. The County Commission has a timely opportunity to join YWCA Kalamazoo in truly meeting the needs of our community by supporting the Reproductive Health Fund. We urge you to approve the budget amendment allocating funding to YWCA Kalamazoo to ultimately provide necessary health care services that also reflect the values of our county.

Sincerely,
Signed Community Organizations

YWCA Kalamazoo
ERACCE (Eliminating Racism & Creating/Celebrating
Equity)
Helping Other People Exceed (HOPE) Thru Navigation
Merze Tate Explorers
Metropolitan Kalamazoo NAACP
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan
Rootead Enrichment Center
Senator Sean McCann, 20th District
Twenty Hands Maternal Infant Health Program
WMU Homer Stryker MD School of Medicine
All* Above All
National Institute for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan
Rootead Enrichment Center
ACCESS REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE
Advocates for Youth
Catholics for Choice
Chicago Abortion Fund
Center for Reproductive Rights
Central Michigan University College of Medicine —
Medical Students for Choice
CityMatCH
Feminist Women's Health Center
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's
Reproductive Justice Agenda
Jane's Due Process

Keep Abortion Safe
Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health
(MOASH)
Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network
(MUUSJN)
Midwest Access Coalition
Mothering Justice - Detroit, MI
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Council of Jewish Women
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Partnership for Women & Families
Northland Family Planning Centers - Sterling Heights,
Westland, Southfield, MI
One Fair Wage Action
Pearl Street Counseling - Grand Rapids, MI
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Power to Decide
RAISE High Road Restaurants
Reclaim - Southeast, MI
Scotsdale Women's Center (SWC) - Detroit, MI
The Doula Project
The Women's Centers
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
We Testify

cc: Vice-Chair Tami Rey
Commissioner Zachary D. Bauer
Commissioner Jen Strebs
Commissioner Veronica McKissack
Commissioner Jeff Heppler
Commissioner Roger Tuinier
Commissioner John H. Gisler
Commissioner Dale Shugars
Commissioner Mike Quinn
Commissioner Fran Bruder Melgar