



# SisterReach

WE ARE THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

---

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: SisterReach Expands Work to Illinois Anticipating TN Abortion Ban

---

Press Contact:  
Cherisse Scott, CEO & Founder, SisterReach  
khalillah@sisterreach.org

### A Press Statement from our CEO & Founder, Cherisse Scott

**MEMPHIS, TN** -- Since 2011, my team and I at SisterReach have worked tirelessly to forward reproductive and sexual justice in Tennessee for the most vulnerable people in our state. That includes a deep focus on Black women, pregnant people of color, rural women, LGBTQIA+ individuals and teens of color whose reproductive health and sexual wellness has been the object of political terrorism, surveillance, population control, criminalization, and Christian Extremism.

We fought back in 2014 on Amendment One that removed the privacy provision from the TN State Constitution for abortion access, educating and mobilizing Black community members in Memphis to the polls. That same year, we led a messaging strategy highlighting the danger of the Fetal Assault Law on vulnerable TN pregnant people who navigated substance use disorder. And in 2016, we helped to defeat the continuation of that law. In 2019, we released our own research report on the impact of that law on marginalized TN women urging TN lawmakers to invest in the health and wellness of marginalized pregnant people, not criminalize them.

In 2015, we released a research report on the need for comprehensive reproductive and sexual health education (CRSE) for southern youth of color in opposition to the 2012 abstinence based mandate passed by conservative lawmakers. We interviewed teens, parents, and teachers who shared the need, concern, and rage regarding CRSE access being denied in public schools. We also launched our Vacation Body School workshop which is designed to work within churches to educate youth and adults about their reproductive and sexual health.

That same year, we launched our Faith & Advocacy curriculum which trains clergy, laity, and advocates who work in religious spaces to work from a reproductive justice lens, centering the most vulnerable in their communities and congregations. We have trained hundreds of clergy, laity, and advocates nationwide.

In 2019, we conducted and released a statewide poll seeking voters opinions on access to CRSE in TN public schools. Participants overwhelmingly supported access. Later in 2019, I testified before the senate judiciary committee about the impact TN's 6-week abortion ban would have on Black and other marginalized communities. I

also called out the legislature's Christian Extremist and hypocritical policymaking, highlighting how the republican super-majority had practically abandoned poor Tennesseans who in many cases wanted to continue their pregnancies and expand their families, but could not afford to. To chastise me, my mic was cut off and court officials were summoned to remove me from the floor.

In 2020, SisterReach revamped our local Safe Sex Kit program to an online program due to COVID-19, because we knew our base needed to be in control of their ability to parent and protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections. We also opened our food and clothing pantry "Pearl's Pantry" to help low and no income Memphians who required that type of support with dignity and respect. Due to lack of consistent funding, we recently reduced the reach of these much needed programs.

**SisterReach has been consistent, unapologetic, and steadfast in our commitment to harm reduction, racial and gender justice, direct service, and compassion for the most vulnerable in Tennessee. Our expansion to Illinois is no exception of this fact.**

Today, Tennessee's draconian abortion ban goes into effect, impacting thousands of Tennesseans and residents from surrounding states who have depended on abortion access here. This law will make no exceptions for rape or incest - the harsh reality for thousands of Tennessee women, girls, and pregnant people. We also anticipate legal ramifications for pregnancies that result in a miscarriage. There is no way of escape for those who navigate intimate partner violence or sex trafficking. And TN abortion providers could face up to 15 years in prison if TN lawmakers believe that the expertise of the provider is in direct conflict with the law they have passed.

Over the last year, my team and I have been preparing for this day, building funding partner and stakeholder relationships in Illinois. Today, we announce our new practical support fund: *The Illinois Reproductive Justice Pipeline Fund* which will support the practical needs of pregnant people from Tennessee (lodging, transportation, food, childcare support) and surrounding southeastern states to access abortion care in IL or any other sanctuary state.

Our work in Illinois is two-fold. We stand ready to support southeastern residents' abortion care needs, while supporting Black women, teens, and families on the south and west sides of Chicago - offering Black-led reproductive justice leadership and analysis which has been void in the Chicagoland area since 2011.

We need your help. We cannot do this much needed work without your individual support and the support of our philanthropic community. Support our work today. Help us to continue being reproductive justice champions in the Southeast, and now in the Midwest. Special thanks to the **Chicago Foundation for Women** for making the first investment in our IL work and success.

**We have your back Tennessee. Period.** And I am so excited to bring Black-led RJ back to Chicago - where my career in reproductive justice began 18 years ago.

Onward!

###



[DONATE NOW](#)

SisterReach | 2811 Clarke Road, MEMPHIS, TN 38115

[Unsubscribe cherisse@sisterreach.org](#)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by cherisse@sisterreach.org powered by



Try email marketing for free today!