

# NOW, LOVE

## LEARNING, CONNECTING & TAKING ACTION: Women's Health Issues in Louisiana

FULL REPORT

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## INTRODUCTION

### ABOUT NOW, LOVE

NOW, LOVE (New Orleans Women Living Their Values Everyday) was founded in 2017, bringing together women of diverse economic, ethnic, racial, religious and generational perspectives. We envision an informed community that advocates for and supports the core values of our democracy: justice, respect, inclusion, anti-racism, integrity, honesty, and integrity. Our work is to learn, connect, act, and inspire, both on the local and national level.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

During 2019-2020, NOW, LOVE's work is again funded by the Packard Foundation and will highlight women's health issues in Louisiana. As a step in fulfilling the goals of the grant, the organization chose to gather the opinion of Louisiana women leaders about these health issues.

As shown through background materials gathered for this report, as well as the words of these leaders, Louisiana ranks extremely low in critical and health-related factors including: the health status of women, the safety of women, and the economic status of women. In ranking after ranking, Louisiana comes last or near the last in the country. The experience of Louisiana women is summarized by the Institute for Women's Policy Research: Political Participation (D-); Employment and Earnings (F); Work and Family (C); Poverty and Opportunity (D-); Reproductive Rights (D); Health and Well-Being (F).<sup>1</sup>

While parallel rankings are not available for Orleans Parish, we note that Orleans Parish has the highest level of income inequality in the state (Louisiana ranks almost last in the country for wage gaps)<sup>2</sup>. The poverty rate in Orleans is 25.4% compared to 19.6% in Louisiana and 13.4% national average. In 2013<sup>3</sup>, 45.2% of families with female householder in Orleans Parish were under the poverty level compared to 37.1% in Louisiana and 30.3% in the country.

Throughout the state, and especially in Orleans Parish, with its 60% African American population, all of these statistics point to a great concern for health disparities among women of color.

Written reports and articles provided background information for this research. The heart of the report reflects the insights of 13 women/organizations, primarily health activists, who agreed to discuss the challenging dynamics of health issues for Louisiana women. The information was gathered through eleven (11) in-person or phone interviews which averaged about 30-45-minutes and two (2) written statements, covering the following questions:

- What are the 5-7 priority issues of women's health and why?
- What do leaders see as signs of progress?

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<sup>1</sup> *Status of Women in the United States, Participation in Government, Louisiana, 2015*

<https://statusofwomendata.org/wp-content/themes/witsfull/factsheets/factsheet-louisiana.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.livestories.com/statistics/louisiana/orleans-parish-gini-index-income-inequality>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/UPDATED-NOLA-Community-Health-Improvement-Final-Report.pdf>

- How can women with diverse perspectives move forward together?
- Who is doing good work on each issue and what are the promising strategies?
- How can NOW LOVERs be MOST supportive?

### **Women Interviewed**

- Florence Andre, Founder, NOLA4Women,
- Jennifer Avegno, Director, New Orleans Health Department
- Julie Schwam Harris, Activist, Legislative Agenda for Women
- Cathy Lazarus, Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Records, LSUSM
- Caroline Meehan, Director, Gov and Community Relations, Volunteers of America
- Councilwoman Helena Moreno's staff: Andrew Tuozzolo and Sadye Finkel
- Tiffany Netters, Executive Director, 504 HealthNet
- Lauren Perry, Executive Director, The Beautiful Foundation
- Petrice Sams-Aboudin, Executive Director, Planned Parenthood
- Denise Shervington, Founder/CEO and Lisa Richardson, Chief Impact Officer, Institute for Women and Ethnic Studies
- Syrita Steib-Martin, Executive Director, Operation Restoration

### **Women Who Submitted Written Answers**

- Karen Carter Petersen, Louisiana State Senator
- Charmaine Caccioppi, United Way and Chair of Louisiana Women's Research and Policy Commission

### **Other Outreach**

We reached out to four additional women who either did not respond or indicated they did not have the time to participate and also to Republican representatives that NOWLOVE met with, but again received no response.

## FIVE QUESTIONS

### WHAT ARE THE 5-7 PRIORITY ISSUES OF WOMEN'S HEALTH? WHY?

Women's health issues are inextricably linked with the underlying economic, safety, and cultural concerns in Louisiana; i.e., the social determinants of health. These factors have led to the extreme health disparities<sup>4</sup> that many of our citizens experience, especially women and especially in Orleans Parish.

Multiple issues were raised by our interviewees, some of them to be highlighted in the current legislative session (see appendix for list of 2019 bills). The most frequently cited issues for women's health:

- **Economic Insecurity.** This includes minimum wage, closing the pay gap, paid family leave and tax policy justice. Louisiana has the largest pay gap between women and men in the country.
- **Violence Against Women.** Louisiana ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for the rate of women murdered by men (2.42 per 100,000 females)<sup>5</sup>. Also, in 2018, there were 744 victims of trafficking reported in Louisiana, 678 female and 710 related to sex trafficking<sup>6</sup>.
- **Mental Health/Trauma.** Mental Health is negatively impacted in women particularly as a result of the intersection of race, gender, poverty discrimination. Louisianans have a high level of poor mental health days, but little access to treatment – only 38.2% of adults with mental illness receive any form of treatment.<sup>7</sup>
- **Maternal Morbidity and Mortality/ Birth Outcomes**<sup>8</sup>. Black non-Hispanic women are 3-4 times more likely to die during childbirth in Louisiana (#1 in the nation). Infant Mortality Rate is 8.16 per 1000 live births vs the US national rate of 5.98.
- **Reproductive Rights.** The Louisiana governor recently signed SB184, a highly restrictive anti-abortion bill.

Specific Disease processes that women are vulnerable to include the following. Because of the culturally defined role of family caretaker, many women do not prioritize their own care and early disease processes can go undetected. Interviewees have found women saying they don't feel worthy of good health care.

- Heart Disease
- Breast Cancer
- Reproductive-organ related cancer
- Autoimmune Diseases
- Osteoporosis

<sup>4</sup> <http://ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/672/n/241>. Louisiana Department of Health. Minority Health.

<sup>5</sup> <http://vpc.org/studies/wmmw2018.pdf>. When Men Murder Women. Violence Policy Center. September 2018. Downloaded May 7, 2018

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dcf.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/searchable/Child%20Welfare/PlansReports/Human%20Trafficking%20Report%202019.pdf>. Human Trafficking.... Annual Report. February 2019 Department of Children and Family Services. Downloaded May 7, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/issues/ranking-states>;

[http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/sites/default/files/state/downloads/CHR2017\\_LA.pdf](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/sites/default/files/state/downloads/CHR2017_LA.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Center-PHCH/Center-PH/maternal/2011-2016\\_MMR\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Center-PHCH/Center-PH/maternal/2011-2016_MMR_Report_FINAL.pdf). Louisiana Maternal Mortality Review Report, 2011-2016.

- Fertility Issues
- Diabetes
- Depression/anxiety
- Dental Health Care

Other concerns noted by our interviewees:

- Access to substance abuse treatment
- Access to reproductive care
- Early childhood education
- Mentoring for girls
- Sex education
- Cost of Pharmaceutical Prescriptions
- Creating Control of Local Taxes
- Health and Insurance Literacy
- Overtreatment
- Aging - Osteoporosis, Loneliness
- Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities
- Medicaid Expansion

## WHAT DO LEADERS SEE AS SIGNS OF PROGRESS?

In light of the massive disparities that characterize our health system, the interviewees clearly indicated that our **health issues require long-term, consistent and strategic advocacy**. As Tiffany Netters (504HealthNet) indicated, “There is so much to do. We must make sure we’re not just putting on “band-aids.” Karen Carter Peterson’s office wrote, “In order to perceive success or productivity one must contribute to the expansion of care to women in all communities...”

There are important efforts being made to turn the tide. One of the most important has been statewide **Medicaid Expansion** (called Healthy Louisiana in our state), which according to Dr. Jennifer Avegno, was a game changer for women. Though it will take a few years to see the full results of preventive care, many more people have a primary physician and increased access to care. While the expansion program is growing at an unexpected rate (especially in Orleans Parish) and was recently challenged to remove 30,500 ineligible recipients, the expansion allowed Louisiana to provide critical care to nearly 500,000 people aged 16-64 whose income is 138% below the poverty level. The program has reduced the state’s uninsured rate to below the national average, making it imperative that we protect Medicaid coverage in our state<sup>9</sup>.

An important new funding opportunity has emerged through the work of NOLA4Women. After three years of community conversations, NOLA4Women has established the **GreaterNola4Women Fund**, the very first fund in the city to invest specifically in solutions to benefit women and their families. In addition, with funding from the Kellogg Foundation, the Greater New Orleans Foundation and NOLA4Women are launching the **New Orleans for Maternal and Child Health Initiative** ([nola4women.org/a-healthy-city](http://nola4women.org/a-healthy-city)). This initiative’s goal is to create a network of donors within the philanthropic community dedicated to improving the health status of women and families in our community. This stream of funding has the potential to help local organizations, who have critical needs for funding. NOLA4Women has three strategic goals: Improving Access to HealthCare, Accelerating Opportunity, Addressing Trauma/Increasing Security.

It is possible that the groundwork of NOLA4Women led several interviewees to state that there is **growing awareness of the concerns of women** in the city, that women groups are “popping up” and have the potential to be powerful. Our interviewees underlined the need to enlarge the conversation among the public and professionals, locally and statewide. 504HealthNet is using a March of Dimes grant to conduct listening sessions. Planned Parenthood and The Beautiful Foundation also expressed that every opportunity to have **storytelling conversations about life experiences** is important, especially across ethnic groups and across those with diverse views. These conversations with diverse women are needed both to educate professionals and the public and to ensure that policy makers are responding to the challenge of health disparities in our city and state.

The primary focus of discussions was the **collaborative conversations among agencies** which are taking place, especially about trauma (mental health), maternal morbidity and health needs. Our interviewees in no way covered all the collaborations taking place in the city and state, but highlighted these few and the public and professional education which is currently taking place:

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/louisiana/articles/2019-02-08/louisianas-medicaid-expansion-reaches-500k-still-growing> OR <http://www.ldh.la.gov/HealthyLaDashboard>

- **TRAUMA & MENTAL HEALTH:** Many of our interviewees see mental health has a priority issue for women and children.
  - *City Council Committee on Trauma Informed Practice* co-chaired by Karen Evans (NO Children and Youth Planning Board), Denese Shervington (IWES), and Rev. Torin Sanders. Members include the Tulane Violence Prevention Institute and the City Department of Health. Should provide recommendations for trauma practice for children by August 2019.
  - *Louisiana Mental Health Coalition* is one year old. In four initial regional convenings they found that affordable housing and transportation are barriers to treatment and sustaining gains. The findings also pointed to the need for more services for children. Their intention is to maintain current funding and increase services in future legislation. LMHC Partners include: Advocacy Center of Louisiana, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans, Institute of Mental Hygiene, Kingsley House, Louisiana Center for Children's Rights, Louisiana Public Health Institute, Mental Health Association for Greater Baton Rouge, NAMI Louisiana, NAMI New Orleans, NAMI St. Tammany, New Pathways New Orleans, Orleans Public Defenders, St. Tammany Parish Government, Start Corporation, The Extra Mile, and Volunteers of America.
  
- **MATERNAL MORBIDITY & MORTALITY.**
  - The Black Maternal Morbidity Collective: Birthmark Doulas, National Birth Collaborative, MCH Coalition, Newcomb, School of Public Health. Also: BirthWeek, UC Berkley – Center for Reproductive Rights and Justice Conference;
  - Louisiana State Department of Health: Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies Advisory Council, (Representative Stephanie Hilferty, 2018), and the Perinatal Quality Collective.
  - NOLA Department of Health focuses on maternal issues, believing that these maternal issues can affect generations.
  
- **HEALTHCARE.**
  - 504HealthNet is making specific efforts to address some of the health-related issues of women in two ways: 1) negotiating with Uber to accept Medicaid payment for medical transportation; 2) Working with NO Tourism & Hospitality to ensure access to health care for hospitality workers, especially aging workers. They have funded a fulltime navigator for these important low-wage workers, who often face sexual assault, discrimination, disparity.
  - The NO Department of Health supports the health of all where they live, learn, work and play with special focus on the social determinants of health, equity, and vulnerable populations
  - *United Way. Health.* United Way, in particular listed several issues that they are pursuing to increase women and children's health: Better screenings, Better health coverage, Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies Advisory Council, Genetic Counselors, Brochures for patients diagnosed with breast cancer.
  - *Exercise and Access to Green Space.* Organizations are working towards getting women moving and providing more self-care.

- **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.** Our interviewees cited The City of New Orleans Health Department as a leader in addressing violence as well as the United Way, Women with A Vision. Recent legislation addressed: Civil Actions relative to Domestic Violence, Attorneys fees, Firearms in stalking cases, Battery charges, Relinquishment of firearms in certain cases, Grandparent rights, Visitation and custody issues, Observation, filming or images, Mandatory reporting of certain crimes
- **CRIMINAL JUSTICE.** Nonviolent alternatives are needed to deal with crimes. Operation Restoration has several advocacy campaigns and pilot programs for incarcerated and women re-entry ([or-nola.org](http://or-nola.org)).
  - **Louisiana Incarcerated Women's Task Force** was established in 2018. The purpose of the task force is to undertake a year-long study of women's experiences while incarcerated and in the reentry process and provide policy recommendations to the Louisiana legislature. Members include 3 formerly incarcerated women, 2 judges and one District Attorney.
  - **Unlock Higher Education.** Increase educational access for individuals with criminal convictions. Goal is to restore the Pell Grant in prison, ban the box on college applications and remove Question 23 of the FAFSA.
  - **Primary Caretaker Court.** Operation Restoration is undertaking a pilot program within Judge Hunter's court. In this pilot, primary caretakers eligible for probation will be provided education, skills training, parenting education, drug treatment, safe housing, health access etc. If the program is completed by the woman, then the sentence can be dropped. This program has been launched with 3 women who have many issues (sex trafficking, homeless, mental health concerns). Operation Restoration wanted a fully funded program, but District Attorney Cannizarro fought it.
  - **Operation Restoration** is also starting a pilot program within prison with Birthmark Doula. When arrested, women are not required to have a pregnancy test.
  - **Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act** was passed May 2018. It provides for increased access to healthcare products for incarcerated women including sanitary pads, tampons, toilet paper, and hygiene products and restricts male staff from conducting pat down searches and entering areas where incarcerated women may be undressed to preserve the dignity of women in prison.
- **AGING.** Live at Home Coalition – AARP, The Advocacy Center, etc. goal is to rebalance funding and increase the state home waiver program, so that individuals do not need to be placed in nursing homes.
- **SUBSTANCE ABUSE.** There is political interest in the Opioid Crisis.
- **INTELLECTUAL & DEVELOPMENT DISABILITIES** – Volunteers of America has the goal is to raise reimbursement rate for caregivers. They work with the Community Provider Association to get funding back to 2008 level, then to get more protective legislation.

## HOW CAN WOMEN OF DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER?

NOW, LOVE has begun an initiative, CONNECT, LOVE to promote dialogue and understanding among conservative, centrist, non-partisan and progressive women. Thus, we were interested in our interviewees' experience of the challenges and opportunities to work with diverse perspectives in Louisiana.

### *Challenges to Working Together*

Almost all of the respondents indicated that the **challenges of inequity, racism, and poverty are at the heart of their work**. Advocates state that they work within a culture of discrimination and shame that creates huge disparities for women in Louisiana, stemming from historical racist and sexist legacies as well as religious attitudes, particularly around reproductive rights. They have found it difficult to have an in-depth conversation about inequity in this state, and face challenges working with diverse perspectives on women's issues.

The interviewees point to challenges such as:

- While New Orleans can be considered a "blue bubble," the rest of the state is considerably more conservative. In particular, much of the state legislature holds viewpoints that can be very challenging to progressive efforts. In addition, legislators often adopt legislation from another state without local community input.
- Women Republican legislators face strong opposition within their own party if they don't vote the party line
- People are subtle about creating barriers for change: set up a study, a commission, more meetings. These are often systemic distractions that block root change.
- The inequality within our state weakens us.
- At present, statewide and local groups have little or no connection with each other.

### *How to Build A Coalition*

However, interviewees see the strength in **building a coalition of diverse women** to create power in numbers. They indicated that it is important to create relationships where people feel safe enough to talk to each other, with five approaches to working with diverse ideas emerging in our conversations:

1. Accept that conservative groups may have excellent points of views that need to be brought to the table. The medical community may have conservative leanings, but have important perspectives about health that need to be understood.
2. Understand that individuals and organizations may see the role of government and social programs in different terms. Examples: For some, state money is not being used properly and people are paying too much tax. For others, the priority is that government money should be spent on the needs of people and creating access to services. Another example is that sometimes adoption programs are labeled by conservatives as primarily "an alternative to abortion," while progressives focus on the critical health services provided to women through the adoption birth process.
3. Balance social justice approaches with the business/financial rationale for policy decisions. Business rationale also requires better research/data to support funding for effective strategies/programs.

4. Approach coalition building from deep listening between individuals; connect people through their own stories.
5. Find issues that not only are recognized by women, but those that move them deeply to action.

In our work towards dialogue creation, NOW, LOVE is learning from several national organizations including Better Angels ([better-angels.org](http://better-angels.org)); Makeshift Coffeehouse ([makeshiftcoffeehouse.com](http://makeshiftcoffeehouse.com)), National Issues Forum ([nifi.org](http://nifi.org)), Changing the Conversation Together (CTC) ([ctctogether.org/about-us](http://ctctogether.org/about-us)) and others.

Two organizations that work directly with women are also adding to our understanding of dialogue: GALvanize USA ([galvanizeusa.org](http://galvanizeusa.org)) and Citizens SHE United ([citizensheunited.com](http://citizensheunited.com)).

GALvanize USA has conducted national focus groups with (white) women to understand barriers to women's involvement. Citizen SHE United, is a statewide organization that is dedicated to educate, empower and double the number of black women voting in Louisiana. Both point to the desire that women have to learn more about issues, and to have a safe space to dialogue and discourse about those issues that are most important to them.

We have challenges in our state to build trust among multiple interest groups. However, interviewees, as well as information from the bipartisan 2017 and 2018 Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission reports<sup>10</sup>, suggest that the following topics have potential for common ground across the ideological/ political continuum in Louisiana. Two of these (indicated by \*) were named also by Republican political leaders with whom other NOW, LOVE members met. Again, according to GALvanize, we need to find the issues that most move women to action:

- Prevent sex trafficking\* and reduce violence against women
- Fund early childhood care and education\*
- Prioritize self-care among women
- Provide access to health care
- Educate women about health and mental health issues and services
- Protect those with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Protect aging population
- Ensure Economic Self-Sufficiency (Equal Pay, Raise the Minimum Wage, Paid Sick and Family Leave, Job Scheduling, Affordable Childcare)
- Provide Workforce Training (Encourage STEM Training and Careers, Affordable Child Care)
- Support the Safety and Health of Young Women and Girls (Comprehensive Health Education, Reducing Teen Pregnancy, Reducing and preventing Human Trafficking, Access to Health Care, Reducing Sexual Assault)

Working with diverse perspectives is challenging, however, providing information and opportunities for dialogue and discourse will allow women to learn together and find common ground on the challenging issues we face.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.gov.louisiana.gov/assets/images/2019/LWPRC\\_2018AnnualReportONLINE.pdf](http://www.gov.louisiana.gov/assets/images/2019/LWPRC_2018AnnualReportONLINE.pdf)

## WHO IS DOING GOOD WORK ON EACH ISSUE?

Our conversations revealed that many people and organizations are doing good work and many need exposure and funding; the list below is not exhaustive. While many of the group and individuals provide direct services to women and families, many are also working in partnerships and coalition (as described earlier) to:

- Change the Political Culture
- Elect more women in local, state and federal offices
- Encourage issue education, advocacy and engagement in civic discourse, policy and elections, particularly about women and health disparities

### **African American Women Empowerment**

Institute for Women and Ethnic Studies  
CitizenSheUnited  
Women with a Vision  
Black sororities  
Urban League  
Project Butterfly

### **Aging / Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

Community Provider Association (IIDD)  
AARP  
Live-Alone Louisiana  
The Advocacy Center

### **Businesses with an understanding of pro-women policies**

Pan Am Life Insurance  
Brown Construction  
Acadiana EMS

### **Criminal Justice**

Royce Duplessis  
JP Morrell  
Natalie Simon  
Court Watch NOLA  
Wesley Bishop

### **Domestic Violence**

United Against Violence Coalition:  
NO Family Justice Center  
LA Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Louisiana Domestic Violence Prevention Commission  
United Way SELA's Public Policy Committee

### **HealthCare**

New Orleans Community Health Centers, especially Crescent Care and Daughters of Charity.

Khristi Bardell, Director of Family Health, Louisiana Public Health Institute  
Rebekkah Gee, Director, Louisiana Department of Health

### **Health Equity**

Alma Stewart, President, Louisiana Center for Health Equity  
Campaign for Equity  
Racial Equity Institute  
Academic Collaborative for Health Equity (LSU & Propeller)  
LA Center for Health Equity  
ONLINE course on Health Equity – Roots of Health Inequity.org  
Boston University: US Healthcare System  
Other videos: TED talks

### **HIV/Transgender Women**

Danielle Wright – Navigate NOLA /destigmatizing women with HIV/ Transgender women  
Planned Parenthood  
Women With A Vision

### **Louisiana Legislative Champions: 2018 United Way SELA report**

Representatives: Beryl Amedee, Larry Bagley, Joseph Bouie, Thomas Carmody, Gary Carter, Steve Carter, Stephanie Hilferty, Katrina Jackson, Patrick Jefferson, Edmond Jordan, Sherman Mack, Joseph Marino, Patricia Smith, Julie Stokes, Kirk Talbot, Polly Thomas, Malinda White  
Senators: Regina Barrow, Wesley Bishop, Troy Carter, Ryan Gatti, Ronnie Johns, Danny Martiny, JP Morrell, and Rick Ward.

### **Maternal and Child Health Issues**

NOLA4women  
Birthmark Doulas  
Catherine Theall – Tulane School of Public Health  
Project Butterfly  
Birthmark Doula

### **Maternal Morbidity**

Coalition on Maternal Morbidity  
Louisiana State Department of Health  
Butterfly/ Doulas

### **Pay Equity / Paid Family Leave**

JP Morrell  
Outside funding to support family leave legislation

### **Reentry of Women**

Operation Restoration  
Women with A Vision  
Fam and Friends of Incarcerated Children  
Catholic Charities  
AmeriCorps

The First 72+  
Hotel Hope  
Covenant House  
Hi Step Delgado  
United Way (financial literacy);  
AmeriCorps and certain businesses for jobs.

**Reproductive Health and Rights**

New Orleans Abortion Fund  
LIFT LA  
Legislative Agenda for Women  
Planned Parenthood  
Women with a Vision  
Eden House

**Tax Fairness**

Karen C Peterson  
Helena Moreno  
Together Louisiana

**Trauma Informed Mental Health approach**

IWES  
Family Justice Center  
Metropolitan Human Services  
Jewish Community Service Suicide Prevention  
Louisiana Mental Health Coalition  
Center for Restorative Approaches

**Other Advocacy Leaders**

Amanda Brunson, Director of Louisiana Office of Women's Policy  
League of Women Voters  
United Way  
Independent Women's Organization  
Melissa Flournoy  
National Council of Jewish Women  
Louisiana Budget Project – The Daily Dime  
Stacia Haynie, Ph.D., LSU Provost – judicial politics  
New Orleans Hospitality Workers Alliance

## HOW CAN NOW, LOVE BE MOST SUPPORTIVE?

This list is a combination of suggestions from our interviewees and NOW, LOVE members. We have organized these ideas into individual and group actions.

### What To Do As Individuals

- **Be engaged politically:** Canvass, write letters, email, call, protest, thank your representatives, subscribe to the Louisiana Daily Dime.
- **Analyze Root Causes of Issues.** Use Intersectional lens on every issue, i.e., learn who benefits, who suffers. Make sure we see issues clearly, without blinders. Understand how the status quo supports health disparities for women.
- **Create systems of compassionate support** for all women; encourage women to gain information and be aware of risk factors and preventive measures
- **Contribute to Existing Organizations:** Provide funding and volunteer support to organizations you care about

### What NOW, LOVE can do:

#### Approach our work with restorative, compassionate principles.

- Use compassionate listening and storytelling as a means to establish safety and to learn from each other. Our intended work with HistoryPin (StoryBox process) is an example of restorative listening that characterizes NOW, LOVE's approaches.
- Include a reflection on 1-2 of our values at every meeting, helping to reinforce these values in our work and individual lives.
- Partner with organizations doing similar work through cultural lens
- Contact women who were part of Welcome Table work or women who have had children murdered to come to meetings to talk

**Create a coalition of women** bringing democratic, independent, republican women together of all races and creeds.

- Our initiative Connect, NOW intends to create a coalition of diverse women has already started. Representatives of the organization are attending the upcoming Better Angels conference and are exploring other dialogue processes to support this effort.
- With Connect, NOW we could consider identifying a single issue such as infant mortality, health care for elderly, or an issue impacting most vulnerable populations as starting point in recruiting women. Also, seek Republican women legislators who voted with Democrats on issues such as dignity for incarcerated women or on pro-choice measure, etc. We can look at not only issues, but methods of dealing with the issue (big vs small government).
- Create a list of all groups supporting women's issues. If possible, create a coalition of these groups.

**Conduct educational forums to understand root causes, as well as mechanisms to increase involvement.**

- Through forums, summits, meetings, educate ourselves and others about the basic issues that impact women. In partnership with several organizations, we have plans to conduct a youth forum as well as educational forums over the next 18 months.
- NOW, LOVE's Addressing Racism Together (ART) provides women an opportunity to deepen their understanding of racism and intersectionality.

**Encourage Political Engagement**

- Encourage every member to be engaged in an area that they care about.
- Prepare members to attend upcoming candidate forums and raise issues related to women's health. Develop a list of key questions and fact sheets (gerrymandering, equal pay, other issues)
- Do a letter -writing campaign to legislators about these key issue
- Repeat the building projections of our values with info on voting again in late September
- Develop a Speakers' Bureau of people who can speak on issues central to NOW, LOVE

## APPENDIX

Louisiana Legislation Relevant to Women  
2019 Legislative Session

BILL	AUTHOR	TOPIC	PROVISION
<b>HB133</b>	HOFFMAN	ABORTION	Revises the definition of abortion
<b>HB484</b>	CREWS	ABORTION	Establishes requirements for physicians and abortion facilities relative to medical records of women upon whom abortions are performed
<b>SB184</b>	MILKOVICH	ABORTION	Prohibits the abortion of an unborn human being with a detectable heartbeat.
<b>SB221</b>	MIZELL	ABORTION	Provides relative to abortion and the Woman's Right to Know law.
<b>HB425</b>	JACKSON	ABORTION / Constitutional Amendment	Stipulates that no provision of the constitution protects a right to abortion or requires the funding of abortion
<b>HB248</b>	C. BROWN	CHILDREN / CUSTODY	Provides for parenting coordinators in child custody proceedings
<b>SB109</b>	BARROW	CHILDREN / FAMILY SERVICES DEPT	Provides relative to youth in the foster care program.
<b>HB108</b>	PYLANT	CHILDREN / NEWBORNS	Authorizes the installation and use of newborn safety devices at infant
<b>HB363</b>	MARINO	CHILDREN / SUPPORT	Provides relative to the payment of child support during incarceration
<b>SB71</b>	T. CARTER	CIVIL PROCEDURE	Provides relative to interpreter for non-English-speaking persons in civil protective order cases
<b>HB197</b>	FOIL	CONTRACTS	Prohibits certain nondisclosure agreements in settlements involving the payment of public
<b>HB502</b>	EDMONDS	COURTS / FAMILY	Provides relative to the collection and distribution of court costs by the clerk of court for the Nineteenth Judicial District
<b>HB126</b>	MOSS	CRIME	Provides relative to a healthcare provider's required reporting of gunshot wounds and certain other life-threatening injuries to law enforcement
<b>HB180</b>	BAGLEY	CRIME	Creates the crime of interfering with emergency communication
<b>HB25</b>	MCMAHEN	CRIME	Provides a universal definition of "serious bodily injury" for purposes of Title 14 of the La. Revised Statutes injury" for purposes of Title 14 of the La. Revised Statutes

BILL	AUTHOR	TOPIC	PROVISION
HB476	JIM MORRIS	CRIME	Provides with respect to interference with the custody of a child
HB499	ABRAMSON	CRIME	Provides with respect to interference with the custody of a child
SB138	GATTI	CRIME / PUNISHMENT	Provides relative to the definition of "serious bodily injury".
SB145	JOHNS	CRIME / PUNISHMENT	Provides relative to human trafficking
HB187	LARVADAIN	CRIME / SEX OFFENSES	Provides enhanced penalties for the crime of video voyeurism under certain circumstances
SB23	PRICE	CRIMINAL PROCEDURE	Provides relative to temporary detention of a person in custody pending a bail hearing.
SB98	PRICE	CRIMINAL RECORDS	Provides relative to expungement
HB268	NORTON	CRIMINAL / PROCEDURE	Provides relative to the time periods within which to institute prosecution for sex offenses
HB376	HUVAL	CRIMINAL / PROCEDURE	Provides relative to sentencing when a defendant possessed, used, or discharged a firearm in the commission of certain offenses
HB131	COUSSAN	CRIMINAL / VICTIMS	Provides relative to interviewing crime victims and family members
HB85	BILLIOT	CRIMINAL / VICTIMS	Provides relative to criteria for making awards to crime victims
HB302	BOUIE	DISCRIMINATION	Enacts the Louisiana Employment Non-Discrimination Act
HB279	MARINO	DOMESTIC ABUSE	Provides relative to the transfer of firearms of persons who are prohibited from possessing a firearm in domestic abuse cases
HB36	STEFANSKI	DOMESTIC ABUSE	Provides relative to temporary restraining orders and protective orders in domestic abuse cases
SB146	MORRELL	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	Prohibits the incarceration of victims of domestic violence and sex offenses who refuse to testify against their abusers
SB156	RISER	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	Provides for access to criminal history information in civil cases of domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault.
HB289	NORTON	EMPLOYMENT	Provides relative to equal pay for women
SB136	MORRELL	EMPLOYMENT	Provides with respect to wage secrecy and pay discrimination
SB139	GATTI	EMPLOYMENT	Prohibits workplace bullying and harassment
SB155	T. CARTER	EMPLOYMENT	Constitutional amendment to establish a state minimum hourly wage of nine dollars, effective July 1, 2020, and authorize the legislature to increase the minimum wage by law.

BILL	AUTHOR	TOPIC	PROVISION
<b>SB186</b>	MORRELL	EMPLOYMENT	Creates the Louisiana Family and Medical Leave Benefits Act
<b>HB32</b>	P. THOMAS	EVIDENCE	Provides relative to the spousal confidential communications privilege
<b>HB489</b>	DUBUISSON	EVIDENCE	Provides relative to hearsay
<b>HB505</b>	COUSSAN	FAMILY LAW	Provides relative to parenting education programs and child custody
<b>SB196</b>	MORREL	GAMING	Authorizes local governments to charge a fee on certain gaming winnings to fund local early childhood programs.
<b>HB536</b>	HILFERTY	HEALTH CARE / FACILITIES	Provides relative to the licensing of free-standing birth centers
<b>HB294</b>	CARPENTER	HIGHER EDUCATION	Provides for anonymous sexual assault climate surveys at public postsecondary educational institutions
<b>HB102</b>	JONES	HUMAN REMAINS	Provides relative to the disposition of the remains of a homicide victim
<b>SB89</b>	LUNEAU	INSURANCE RATES	Prohibits insurance providers from using credit reports and gender as basis for rate setting
<b>HB345</b>	STOKES	INSURANCE / HEALTH	Provides for coverage for breast and ovarian cancer susceptibility screening
<b>HB347</b>	STOKES	INSURANCE / HEALTH	Provides for the coverage of diagnostic imaging at the same level of coverage as screening mammograms
<b>HB370</b>	STOKES	INSURANCE / HEALTH	Provides relative to prescription drug benefits for persons with stage-four advanced, metastatic cancer
<b>SB238</b>	MIZELL	LAW ENFORCEMENT	Provides for abortion clinic employees to be mandatory reporters of human trafficking and certain sexual based crimes to law enforcement and provides for the additional postings of the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline information.
<b>SB28</b>	PRICE	LESSOR / LESSEE	Provides relative to residential leases and eviction Requirements
<b>SB172</b>	COLOMB	MARRIAGE	Mandates the minimum age for marriage shall be 18 years of age.
<b>HB412</b>	LEBAS	PUBLIC ASSISTANCE	Provides relative to certain public assistance programs
<b>HB63</b>	BOUIE	PUBLIC CONTRACTS	Requires that any contractor who enters into a contract with a public entity comply with the Louisiana Equal Pay for Women Act
<b>SB182</b>	HEWITT	SUITS AGAINST STATE	Provides for reimbursement of taxpayer dollars used to pay sexual harassment judgments or settlements.

BILL	AUTHOR	TOPIC	PROVISION
<b>SB4</b>	MORRELL	TAX/SALES	Constitutional amendment to exempt diapers and feminine hygiene products from state sales and use tax
<b>SB5</b>	MORRELL	TAX/SALES	Exempts diapers and feminine hygiene products from sales and use tax
<b>HCR2</b>	CARTER	U.S. CONSTITUTION	Provides for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment
<b>HB177</b>	PUGH	VITAL STATISTICS	Provides relative to certificates of stillbirth
<b>HB110</b>	POPE	VITAL STATS/BIRTH CERT	Provides relative to notice of information regarding paternity
<b>HB101</b>	J. HARRIS	WEAPONS/FIREARMS	Provides for the creation of the "Louisiana Voluntary Do Not Sell List"
<b>HB483</b>	G. CARTER	WEAPONS/FIREARMS	Provides for the seizure of firearms from persons who pose a risk of imminent injury to self or others
<b>SCR2</b>	MORRELL	WOMEN	Provides for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

## BACKGROUND MATERIAL

*The following resources document the status of women in Louisiana.*

### REPORTS

Bronson, Amanda. (May 2019). *2018 Louisiana Women's Policy Research Commission Report* (LWPRC). Commission Director is Amanda Bronson; Chair Charmaine Caccioppi with an additional bipartisan 22 women from across Louisiana<sup>11</sup>. The report represents a comprehensive look at achievements and recommendations for improving the status of women in Louisiana. Issues include: pay equity and pay transparency, minimum wage, paid family leave, early childhood care and education, STEM, violence against women, sexual harassment, criminal justice reform, maternal mortality, birth outcomes, access to reproductive and contraceptive services, access to screening and substance use and abuse services.

[http://www.gov.louisiana.gov/assets/images/2019/LWPRC\\_2018AnnualReportONLINE.pdf](http://www.gov.louisiana.gov/assets/images/2019/LWPRC_2018AnnualReportONLINE.pdf)

Department of Children and Family Services and Office of Women's Policy. (2019). *Louisiana Domestic Violence Prevention Commission 2018 Annual Report*. Recommendations include: increase data collection, especially re: strangulation and firearm transfer; increase co-location of health and advocacy services; increase public awareness of mild traumatic brain injury related to strangulation; continue statewide training efforts related to firearm transfer; work toward creation of consistent and comprehensive definitions of domestic violence

[http://www.gov.louisiana.gov/assets/images/2019/DV\\_Prevention\\_Commission\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2018\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.gov.louisiana.gov/assets/images/2019/DV_Prevention_Commission_Annual_Report_2018_FINAL.pdf)

DeSalvo, Karen. (January 2013). *New Orleans Community Health Improvement: Community Health Profile and Community Health Improvement Plan, New Orleans Health Department*. Retrieved from <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/UPDATED-NOLA-Community-Health-Improvement-Final-Report.pdf>. This report outlines a broad look at the New Orleans Health system with recommendations for Health. This is published about every 5 years and is in the process of being updated by Jennifer Avegno.

DuMonthier, Asha; Childres, Chandra; Milli, Jessica (2017). *The Status of Black Women in the United States*. Institute for Women's Policy Research Publication. Retrieved from <https://iwpr.org/publications/status-black-women-united-states-report/>. Discusses: [Access To Good Jobs](#), [Access To Higher Education](#), [Child Care & Early Education](#), [Civic & Political Engagement](#), [Family & Medical Leave](#), [Flexible Work & Fair-Scheduling](#), [Health & Well-Being](#), [Paid Sick Days](#), [Pay Equity & Discrimination](#), [Politics, Religion & Women's Public Vision](#), [Poverty And The Social Safety Net](#), [Racial & Ethnic Inequality](#), [Reproductive Health & Rights](#), [The Status Of Women And Girls](#), [Unemployment & The Economy](#), [Violence & Safety](#), [Women In Unions](#)

Gee, Rebekah (May 2019). *2018 Louisiana Health Report Card*. Retrieved from <http://ldh.la.gov/assets/docs/LegisReports/RS401262018HealthRptCard519.pdf.z> Reports on 10 areas: Healthy Louisiana Facts and Figures, Health Findings of Major Diseases, Cancer in

<sup>11</sup> Membership of Women's Policy Research Commission  
<https://www.cfprd.doa.louisiana.gov/boardsandcommissions/viewMembers.cfm?board=400>

Louisiana, Teenage Pregnancy and Birth Rates, Rates of Low Birthweight Babies, Suicide and Violent Deaths, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Incidence of Drug Addictions, Opioid Epidemic, Infectious Diseases. Retrieved May 8, 2019.

Gee, Rebekah. Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Public Health. (March 2016-March 2020. Revised December 2018). *Louisiana State Health Assessment and Improvement Plan: Creating a Blueprint for Our Future*. Retrieved from [http://www.ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/SHA\\_SHIP/SHA-SHIP.pdf](http://www.ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/SHA_SHIP/SHA-SHIP.pdf). This report outlines a broad look at Louisiana health status with stated health priorities: Support Behavioral Health, Promote Healthy Lifestyles, Assure Access to Healthcare, Promote Economic Development. Build Public Health Infrastructure, Plan Implementation and Monitoring.

Institute for Women's Policy Research. *Status of Women in the United States, Economic Status of Women, Fact Sheet*. (March 2018). Retrieved from <https://statusofwomendata.org/wp-content/themes/witsfull/factsheets/economics/factsheet-louisiana.pdf>. Women in Louisiana face the widest wage gap and the lowest earnings ratios, earning 69 percent of what men earn in those states.

Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2015). *Status of Women in the United States, Participation in Government, Louisiana*. Retrieved from <https://statusofwomendata.org/wp-content/themes/witsfull/factsheets/factsheet-louisiana.pdf> Awarded the following ratings in Louisiana in 2015: Political Participation (D-); Employment and Earnings (F); Work and Family (C); Poverty and Opportunity (D-); Reproductive Rights (D); Health and Well-Being (F).

Kieltyka, Lyn; Mehta, Pooja; Schoelimann, Karis; Lake, Chloe. (August 2018). *Louisiana Maternal Mortality Review Report, 2012-2016*. Retrieved from [http://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Center-PHCH/Center-PH/maternal/2011-2016\\_MMR\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Center-PHCH/Center-PH/maternal/2011-2016_MMR_Report_FINAL.pdf). Reviews incidence of maternal mortality and makes recommendations: Support, expand and sustain a robust PAMR process; Build a culture of continuous quality improvement; Reduce missed opportunities for prevention in the emergency room; Assure access to comprehensive reproductive and contraceptive services; promote readiness in women with chronic disease; Redesign perinatal care and inter-conception care to support fully integrated management of health and substance use disorders; Address inequities in social determinants of health to improve women's preconception health

Sport, Kim. *2018 Public Policy Committee Legislative Wrap-Up, United Way*. Retrieved from <http://www.unitedwaysela.org/sites/unitedwaysela.org/files/2018%20PP%20LA%20Legislative%20WRAP-UP%20-%20JULY%2018%2020188.pdf>. Highlights issues and legislative bills that were supported by United Way in 2018 including education, financial stability, health, domestic violence, sexual assault, community strengthening, justice reinvestment, human trafficking, foster care, and elder abuse.

United Way of Southeast Louisiana. (2018). *The 2018 Regional Alice Report*. <https://www.unitedwaysela.org/alice-report>

## ARTICLES

Lippincott, Jordan September 6, 2018. Louisiana Department of Health releases maternal mortality data and recommendations to guide improvements. <https://katc.com/news/covering-louisiana/2018/09/06/louisiana-department-of-health-releases-maternal-mortality-data-and-recommendations-to-guide-improvements/>. Announces the Perinatal Quality Collaborative, the Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies Advisory Council, and impact of Medicaid Expansion.

*Ravits, Sarah (2016). The State of Women's Health in The State. Louisiana Life Magazine.* <http://www.myneworleans.com/Louisiana-Life/November-December-2016/The-State-of-Womens-Health-in-the-State//> Retrieved April 10, 2019. Overview of Louisiana's women's health challenges and steps towards improvement.

Stein, Michael Issac. Report: State preemption laws disproportionately hurt women, people of color. *The Lens*, May 8, 2019. <https://thelensnola.org/2019/05/08/report-state-preemption-laws-disproportionately-hurt-women-people-of-color/>. A report from the Partnership for Working Families uses Louisiana as a case study to demonstrate that state laws that prevent local municipalities from creating minimum wage or affordable housing guidelines negatively impact women and people of color.

## ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

**Julianna D. Padgett**, Ph.D., LCSW is a semi-retired social worker with skills in facilitation, training, writing/editing, program and organizational policy development. A native New Orleanian, Dr. Padgett sustains a strong connection to the community and has had a longtime interest in participatory and conflict resolution methods, such as dialogue, mediation, restorative practice and group facilitation. She is president of her neighborhood association and on the boards of Community Mediation Services and Kinship Senior Center and a member of NOW, LOVE. Julianna is a former SUNO-School of Social Work faculty member and former assistant dean of Tulane School of Social Work.

**Betty DiMarco** retired in 2014 after 33 years, as a Judicial Administrative Assistant and Human Resource Manager, in U.S. District Court in New Orleans. She recently served on Mayor Cantrell's Forward Together New Orleans Transition Team on the Public Safety, Criminal Justice Coordination Subcommittee. Betty is co-facilitator of her neighborhood organization, Carrollton United, and serves on the boards of Community Mediation Services and Ubuntu Village and is a member of NOW, LOVE. Betty has been promoting and participating in Restorative Practices since 2000.