
PUBLIC POLICY PLATFORM

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

Policy positions intrinsic to YWCA's mission are directed to elimination of racism and the empowerment of women and girls. Priority statements are also addressed to issues directly affecting the lives of women and children, especially those who reside in YWCA Madison housing or participate in its programs. These priorities were developed through interviews with YWCA staff as well as focus groups with YWCA residents, students, and YWebCA participants.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Housing is a basic human right. There simply is not enough affordable housing in Dane County to house and support individuals and families. Without stable housing, individuals and families are unlikely to meet other basic needs such as employment, food, clothing, and education.

Not only do we need additional affordable housing, we need resources and emergency funding to support people in maintaining their housing. Our homeless outreach and services must be detailed and comprehensive, utilizing best practices to help move everyone into housing.

FUND AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND PROVIDE WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT

- Fund Public and Private Affordable Housing

There is a dire shortage of affordable housing through the City of Madison and Dane County. The Federal Government, State Government, County Government, and City Government must prioritize funding that expands affordable housing, both by public and private landlords. Government funding for development of all housing projects should require that a substantial portion of new housing be affordable housing.

- Support Funding and Programming for Wrap-Around Services for Those Receiving Housing Assistance or in Low-Income Housing

Individuals receiving housing assistance should also receive supportive services, to help them stabilize their lives. This includes employment training and job placement services; access to comprehensive physical, mental, and dental health care, assistance in finding permanent stable housing; financial training, and more.

STOP CRIMINALIZING HOMELESSNESS¹ AND PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

- Stop Criminalizing Homelessness

¹According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, "the criminalization of homelessness refers to measures that prohibit life-sustaining activities such as sleeping/camping, eating, sitting, and/or asking for money/resources in public spaces. These ordinances include criminal penalties for violations of these acts."

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

² “Wisconsin’s Extreme Racial Disparity 2017,” from the Center On Wisconsin Strategy, or COWS: https://www.cows.org/_data/documents/1816.pdf

LGBTQ+ people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. They are frequently targeted by, and vulnerable to increased criminalization and abuse by, law enforcement. They regularly experience assault and violence in correctional settings.

³ Youths should not be arrested or detained for status offenses, such as truancy and curfew violations (and/or any other offenses that would not be crimes if committed by adults).

⁴ All correctional facilities should be required to be accredited with the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC).

⁵ “Out of Reach Report 2017, p.260” from the National Low Income Housing Coalition: http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2017.pdf

- Fund and Support Comprehensive Street Outreach

SUPPORT PRO-TENANT POLICES THAT ALLOW INDIVIDUALS TO QUALIFY FOR HOUSING AND MAINTAIN HOUSING

- Repeal Laws that Allow Individuals to Lose or Be Denied Tenancy Based on Reasons Beyond Being a Good Tenant

State law currently allows an individual or family to be denied housing or to be evicted from their current housing based on the number of police contacts the family has had at their home (regardless of reason for the visits), actions of visitors to the home (regardless of how tenants responded to, or if they were even aware of, said action), criminal history, including arrest record (regardless of whether the arrest lead to charges, regardless of the circumstances of the charges, regardless of how long ago they were).

- Require Local Governments to Rise Above State Rental Standards

Local City and County Housing Authorities throughout Dane County do not have to follow the above-mentioned state law. They must refuse to follow such policies that have a chilling impact on the ability of individuals of color and low income families securing housing. By refusing to follow the floor that the state law establishes, Housing Authorities can lead by example and show that these laws are not required to ensure the safety of our housing communities.

- Fund Emergency Support to Keep People in Housing
- End Housing Discrimination Based on Membership in a Protected Class

RACIAL JUSTICE AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Wisconsin has some of the worst racial disparities in the nation², and Dane County is one of the worst in Wisconsin. If we want to impact that disparity rate, we must interrupt and reform the systems in place that feed into the cycle of racism. People of Color are living in fear in our nation, and our community is no exception. In our cities, in our schools, and in our businesses, we must affirmatively disrupt the status quo.

REFORM THE POLICING OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR AND END RACIAL PROFILING

- Stop Over-Policing Communities of Color

Individuals and communities of color are disproportionately policed in Madison and Dane County. Policing should be equally distributed, and police officers should be equally present, in all communities. Communities of color should be included in the development of community policing policies. Individuals of color are racially profiled in our community; they are disproportionately stopped and questioned by police, either in their cars or in person. Finally, laws and policies to address community challenges (such as drug use and mental health challenges) must be equally offered to individuals of color.

- Mandate an Understanding of Structural Racial Inequity as a Competency for the

Hiring and Ongoing Evaluation of Law Enforcement

Law enforcement officers must be required to understand the communities they police and the impact of their policies on communities of color. Hiring policies should require applicants to demonstrate experience interacting with communities of color. Additionally, law enforcement annual trainings should include mandatory implicit bias and use of force/de-escalation training.

- Regulate Private Police and Security Guards

REFORM SCHOOL POLICIES THAT DISPARATELY IMPACT YOUTH OF COLOR

- Stop Criminalizing Youth³ in our Schools and Eliminate Zero Tolerance Policies

Youth of color are disproportionately pushed out of school, through suspension and expulsions, through arrests and police interaction, and through school disciplinary policies that do not address or acknowledge the underlying challenges students are facing. Schools must develop discipline policies that are restorative instead of punitive, do not suspend or expel students for non-violent actions, and prohibit or strongly restrict the presence of police officers in our schools.

- Eliminate the Criminalization of Girls of Color and Develop Programming and Services to Support Girls of Color
- Support and Fully Fund Public Schools

REFORM CRIMINAL & CIVIL JUSTICE SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

- Restrict Public Access to Wisconsin Court System - Consolidated Court Automation Program (CCAP) and Remove Listings of Dismissed or Expunged Charges

Landlords, employers, and other community members inappropriately utilize CCAP, denying housing and employment regardless of disposition of the charges, specificity of the charges, and length of time since the charges. Access to CCAP should be restricted to avoid inappropriate, and discriminatory, use. Individuals should also be able to easily, and affordably, request expungement of their CCAP record.

- Fund and Expand Restorative Justice, Community Court, and Other Alternatives to Incarceration Programs

Restorative Justice and Community Court programs that remove youth and young adults from the criminal justice system and instead hold them accountable to their community and peers, have been proven to better improve lives and reduce future wrongdoing. Instead of branding youth and young adults with criminal records that limit their ability to secure housing, education, and employment for the rest of their lives, they should be empowered to make better decisions by working with the community. These alternatives should exist in every municipal and state court.

- Reform Child Support Policies

- Eliminate Solitary Confinement and Unsafe Jail Conditions⁴

It is inhumane to incarcerate individuals in solitary confinement and isolation. The Dane County Jail must eliminate solitary confinement space and instead provide medical and mental health space to humanely treat and support those incarcerated. Incarcerated individuals should not be denied prescribed medications and should have prompt access to medical and mental health providers.

- Stop Suspending Driver's Licenses for Non-Traffic Violations and Ensure Uniform and Equitable Reinstatement of Suspended Driver's Licenses

EMPOWERMENT AND ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

Minimum-wage, full-time workers cannot afford housing in Dane County⁵, let alone support themselves and their families. We need policies and services that lift workers out of poverty and allow them to thrive in our community.

SUPPORT LOW-INCOME WORKERS

- Provide All Workers with Paid Family and Medical Leave

No one should have to choose between taking care of themselves or their family and keeping their job. All workers, regardless of the number of hours they work and regardless of their job title or employment status, should have paid medical leave to care for themselves or a family member. In addition, parents with long-term employment should be given at least three months of paid family to care for a newborn, or newly adopted, child.

- Increase the National and State Minimum Wage and Index it to a Living Wage

All workers should be able to support themselves and their families. Under the current minimum wage, full time minimum-wage workers cannot afford housing and food for their family. Both the National and Wisconsin minimum wage needs to be increase to ensure that working individuals can support their families. The wage also must be indexed to the cost of living in each community, so that it does not need government approval to increase with the cost of living. Disproportionately, women and people of color are paid minimum wage. Expand Affordable, Accessible, Quality Childcare Programming

SUPPORT JOB SEEKERS AND EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAMMING

- Fund Quality Employment Training Programs
- Provide Job Placement for Individuals Completing Employment Training
- Scale Public Benefit Assistance so that Individuals are not Suddenly Removed from Government Subsidies

FUND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS WORKERS

- Expand Affordable Mass Transit Options and Subsidize Mass Transit for Low-

Income Individuals

- Ensure Access to Free Wi-Fi Throughout Dane County

HUMAN DIGNITY AND EQUITY

YWCA Madison is committed to improving our community for everyone. In our policy platform, we have chosen to focus specifically on the issues that are of the greatest concern to the people we serve. However, there are many other policy needs that we care about and that are connected deeply to our mission. We have listed many of these areas in this section, and we pledge to work with, support, and uplift community partners who take the lead on these issues to ensure respect, dignity, and an opportunity to succeed are afforded to all.

OUR ELECTED LEADERS ON THE FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL LEVELS SHALL:

- Protect the Interests of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning Communities
- Oppose Deporting Undocumented Individuals and Stop Profiling Immigrant Communities
- Protect Women's Access to Abortion and the Full Range of Comprehensive Reproductive Health Care
- Enact and Enforce Laws that Protect Domestic Violence Survivors
- Enact and Enforce Laws that Protect Victims of Human Trafficking and Fund Services to Support Victims' Recovery
- Eliminate Drug Testing of Individuals Receiving Government Support for Housing, Food, Employment, Education, and all other Basic Human Needs
- Provide All Individuals with Access to Quality, Affordable, Comprehensive Health Care, including Mental Health and Dental Health
- Ensure All Individuals Have Access to Healthy Food and Clean Water
- Support Common-Sense Gun Control and Prohibit Guns in Closed Public Spaces Including Schools and Mass Transportation

POLICY REFORM

State, County, City, and School Board laws and policies need to go through a racial and equity analysis before becoming laws. All too often, well intentioned laws exacerbate already existing racial and gender disparities. Good intentions aren't good enough. Through detailed policy analysis, legislators can understand the impacts of their proposals and prevent bad laws from being implemented.

- Require Racial Analysis of Proposed Policies and Legislation

A CALL TO ACTION AND NEXT STEPS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

1. Educate yourself and others
2. Advocate with your elected officials and representatives
3. Support organizations that align with your values and priorities through volunteering or donating

A CALL TO ACTION AND NEXT STEPS FOR CITY, COUNTY, AND STATE LEGISLATORS

1. Educate yourself and your colleagues on the issues in this Public Policy Platform
2. Use an equity impact assessment tool that includes centering the voices of the people most impacted in all proposed legislation
3. Support and propose legislation that is aligned with the recommendations in this Public Policy Platform

YWCA Madison envisions a community where people of all racial, ethnic, socio-economic and gender groups are valued and included, and discrimination and injustice are eliminated. To this end, YWCA Madison provides leadership in our community to create social change for all racial, ethnic, gender and economic groups. Through YWCA programming and collaborative initiatives, individuals, families and the community at large are empowered to greatly improve their quality of life.

YWCA Madison is a
partnered agency of
United Way of Dane
County.



GET INVOLVED!