
2022-2023

IMPACT REPORT



lift **LOUISIANA**

liftlouisiana.org

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am often asked what keeps me going in the face of so many challenges, and I reflect on that as we close out two of the most difficult years as an organization and as a community. The answer to that question is, well...YOU!

You have inspired us in so many ways. You showed up at the Capitol for Women on Wednesday in unprecedented numbers. You shared your stories, gave courageous testimonials at legislative hearings, sent thousands of emails to lawmakers, and demanded that Louisiana take action to address the harm caused by abortion bans and attacks on young trans people.

With you, we have achieved multiple proactive legislative victories that support pregnant and parenting people and expand access to birth control. We invested in training new leaders who will change the face of advocacy in Louisiana.

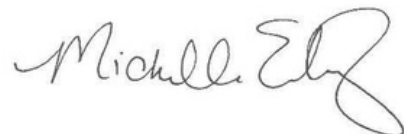
None of these achievements would have been possible without the support of our dedicated staff, advisory board, donors, volunteers, and partners. Your commitment to our vision has been instrumental in driving positive change, and we are truly grateful for your support.

Looking ahead, Lift is excited to expand our outreach and engage communities in deeper conversations about reproductive health, rights, and justice.

We know we have serious challenges ahead. But we will never stop working to build the Louisiana we deserve.

Thank you for being a part of our mission.

Michelle Erenberg
Executive Director



OUR VISION

We envision a liberated and equitable Louisiana where our laws are rooted in compassion and empathy. Regardless of race, gender, class, or ability, every individual enjoys autonomy, access to essential information and unrestricted resources, allowing them to make informed decisions about their reproductive futures.

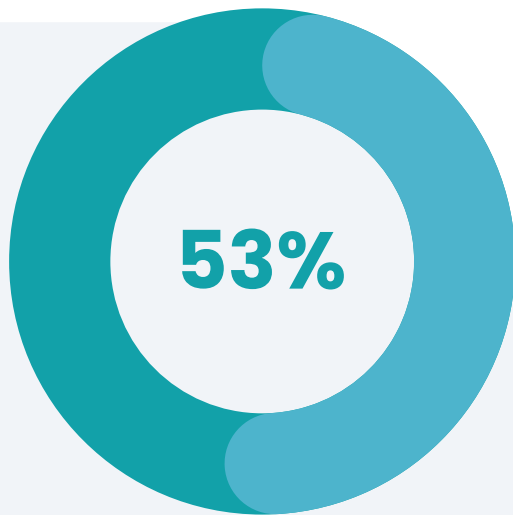
OUR MISSION

We build a better Louisiana for women, girls and gender expansive people by advocating for reproductive health, rights, and justice.



Activists at the U.S. Supreme Court

LOUISIANA SUPPORTS ABORTION ACCESS



of Voters support an amendment to the state constitution establishing the right to an abortion.



Activists at the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals

“Voters across the political spectrum have seen what abortion bans mean—patients suffering dangerous complications without treatment and doctors threatened with prison time—and they reject it. Most Louisianans now support a constitutional right to abortion. It’s time for our political leaders to listen to the people they serve.”

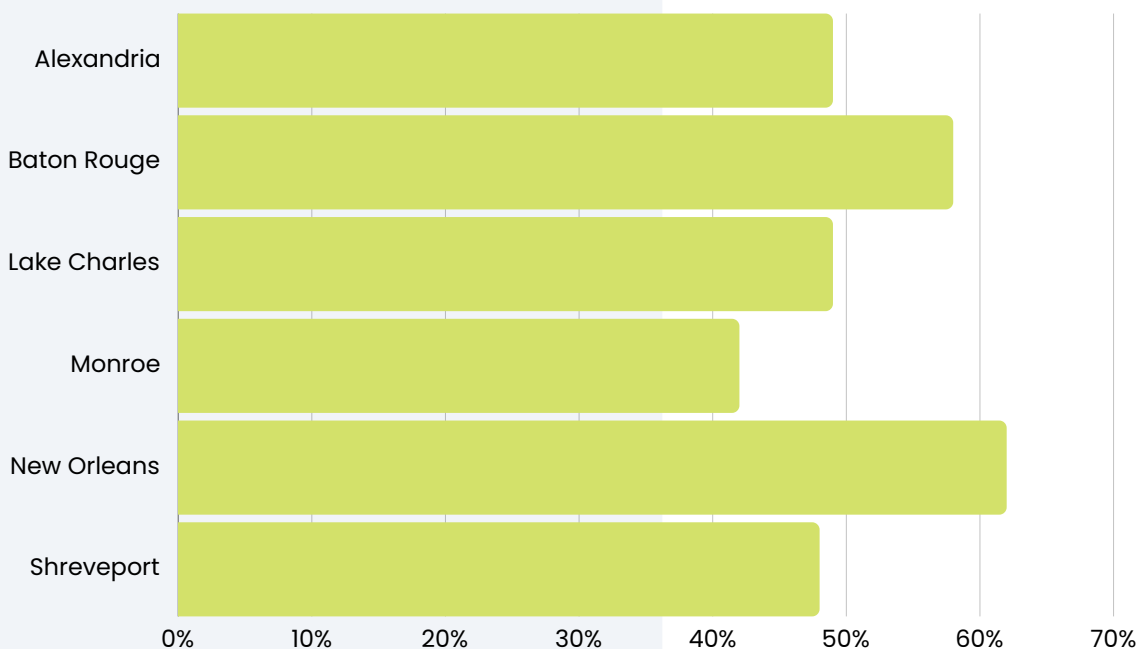
– *ACLU of Louisiana’s Advocacy Director Chris Kaiser*

For decades, anti-abortion organizations and politicians have said that the majority of Louisiana citizens **oppose abortion in nearly all circumstances**, and that a pregnant person must carry to term a pregnancy even if the pregnancy is non-viable or threatens their health. Promoting this opinion, these groups have lobbied the Louisiana legislature to pass medically unnecessary, restrictive laws, including a near total ban on abortion which took effect following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.

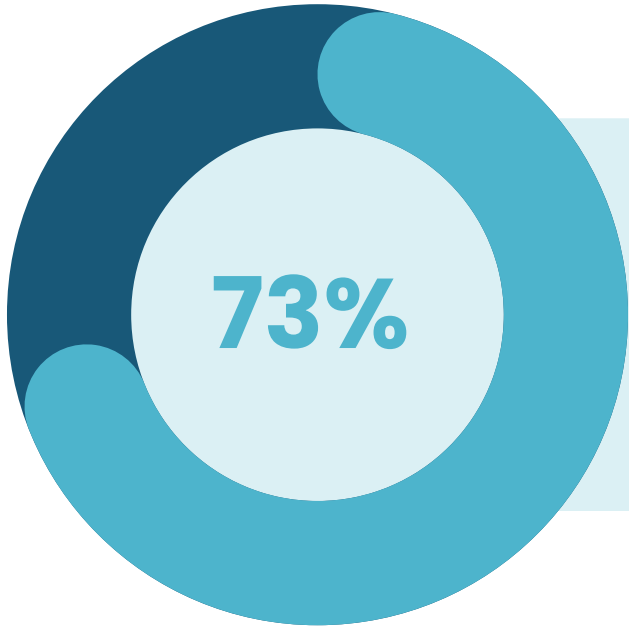
It was based on a lie. Lift Louisiana has shown that the majority of Louisiana voters overwhelmingly favor exceptions to current law, and would **support a change to the Louisiana Constitution to protect abortion rights**.

Lift along with our partners—Reproductive Health Impact (RH Impact), Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response (STAR[®]) Advocates, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Louisiana, and the Louisiana Coalition for Reproductive Freedom (LCRF)—commissioned a statewide poll of 1,000 likely voters that was conducted by JMC Analytics and Polling In April 2023. **Respondents' political affiliations were 38% Republican, 39% Democratic and 23% Independent.**

VOTERS SUPPORT FOR ABORTION ACCESS BY CITY*



*Even in the most conservative areas, these polling numbers reveal the dramatic increase in the number of people supporting access to abortion since the *Dobbs* decision.

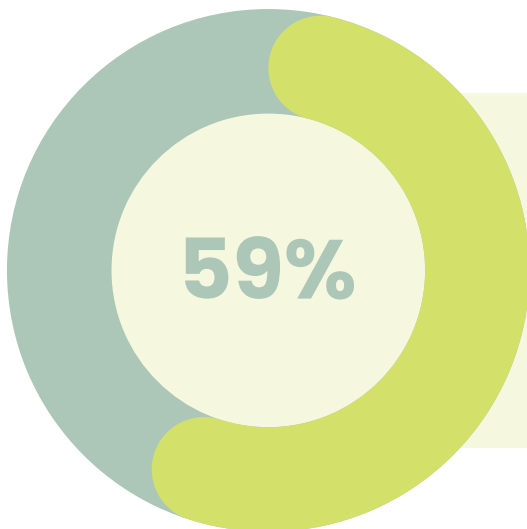


of Voters think a patient should be able to obtain an abortion if a doctor feels it is necessary to protect the patient's health

of Voters would support a law allowing abortion in cases involving sexual offenses, such as rape and incest



of Voters oppose prison terms for doctors, who perform an abortion



LIFT'S LEGISLATIVE WORK



Michelle Erenberg leads advocates on a tour of the Capitol

Advocating for changes to abortion ban, birth control expansion, improving maternal healthcare, addressing economic injustice and standing with the LGBTQ+ Community.

Lift Louisiana plays a **critical role** at the State Capitol during the legislative session and throughout the year. We advocate for legislation that uplift reproductive justice values, analyze and strategize on related laws, support allies, organize impacted persons and experts to provide testimony during legislative hearings, conduct advocacy trainings, and advise advocates, activists, and policymakers at all government levels.

Even when the odds are stacked against us, Lift stands up and makes sure no proposed legislation aimed at stripping people of their rights gets a free pass, and more importantly that the community's collective voice is heard. With each victory—be that enshrining in law a new right, or stopping a dangerous proposal— **we move closer to the ultimate goal of creating a better Louisiana for women, girls and gender expansive people.**

PUSHING FOR HEALTHCARE POLICIES THAT CHANGE LIVES

Even before Louisiana enacted its near total ban on abortion, the state was a dangerous place for people to give birth, especially if you were Black. For instance, our state has one of the **nation's highest maternal mortality rates with Black women dying at 3-4 times the rate of white women.** About one third of Louisiana parishes are considered maternal health care deserts with no access to a single obstetric provider. Louisiana has also failed to support pregnant or parenting people, including students.

Louisiana's first year of the near total ban on abortion has been disastrous. Stories of people with nonviable pregnancies being forced to carry those pregnancies to term or travel out of state to get the care they needed, have been heartbreaking. Although there are exceptions to preserve the life of the pregnant person or to address "medically futile" pregnancies codified into law, physicians are unclear about exactly what these exceptions mean. They are unworkable and cause some healthcare providers to delay providing care for fear that a wrong decision will land them in prison.

Lift led the charge to amend the abortion laws regarding pregnancy complications, remove the threat of prison for doctors and restore dignity and control to survivors of sexual violence by allowing them to decide, for themselves, whether to continue a pregnancy resulting from their trauma. Many physicians, advocates, and survivors provided informative and courageous testimony before the House Criminal Justice Committee for why these changes to the ban were critically necessary.

Unfortunately, these bills didn't receive a fair hearing. Many conservative members of the committee refused to even show up and listen to the voices of those who have been so deeply impacted by these dangerous laws. Despite all of our efforts, the committee rejected every proposal. We may have lost that round, but we are not backing down. **We know progress will be slow, but we will continue to push forward. And we celebrate our legislative accomplishments.**

SUPPORTING PREGNANT AND PARENTING PEOPLE

Lift supported Act 270, which requires private insurance companies to cover doula services before, during and after childbirth. We also supported Act 207 which expands Medicaid reimbursement to all pregnant people using Medicaid to include a midwife on their birth team.

Lift led the effort to pass Act 472, requiring public high schools adopt policies that accommodate pregnant or parenting students, including attendance policies that allow students to miss class for pre- and post-natal medical appointments, a child's illness, or legal appointments due to parenting. The law also requires schools to accommodate breastfeeding students.



EXPANDING ACCESS TO BIRTH CONTROL

Even as we awaited the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, **Lift was at work putting policies in place to help people prevent an unplanned pregnancy.** Working with our partners at STAR we passed Act 513, which requires all hospitals and healthcare providers to provide information about emergency contraception to sexual assault survivors and to provide Plan B to survivors upon request. We also passed Act 708, which ensures Medicaid coverage for a six-month supply of birth control dispensed at one time. **This allows people to have an extended supply of birth control, reducing the burden of monthly trips to the pharmacy.**



ADDRESSING ECONOMIC INJUSTICE

Most family breadwinners in Louisiana are women, who play a crucial role in the state's economy. However, two-thirds of minimum wage earners are also women, facing poverty and unequal pay compared to men in similar roles. Living on a minimum wage job is virtually impossible, especially as basic needs such as housing, food, transportation, clothing and other costs have significantly increased.

Lift proactively engages the public and policymakers to raise awareness about these pronounced economic disparities and advocates for impactful changes that foster financial stability, enhance gender equity, and uplift the economic prospects of more women and girls in Louisiana.

ELIMINATING THE PINK TAX



Governor Edwards signs Act 449, repealing the Pink Tax

After years of advocacy in the state legislature to end state sales taxes on period products and diapers, Lift successfully partnered with local governments in New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Shreveport to repeal local taxes on these items in 2020. **Building on that success, Lift passed Act 449, which took effect July 1, 2022, finally eliminating Louisiana state taxes on these basic necessities.**

STANDING WITH THE LGBTBQ+ COMMUNITY

Lift is proud to be part of the LocALL, a coalition of organizations and advocates unified with the mission of protecting and empowering LGBTQ+ individuals and communities across the state.

During the 2023 Regular Legislative Session, Lift opposed several bills targeting LGBTQ+ youth that mirrored similar hate bills introduced in other states.

HB 81, the so-called “Don’t Say Gay” bill, prohibits discussions of sexual orientation in public schools. HB 466 requires parental consent for public school students who want to use a name or pronouns that do not align with their sex assigned at birth. And allows teachers to refuse to use that name or pronouns, even if the parents approved. HB 648 bans medical professionals from providing gender-affirming care to anyone under 18 even with parental approval.

The legislature passed the three bills, but Governor Edwards vetoed them all. Unfortunately, lawmakers were able to override the governor’s veto of HB 648, allowing this dangerous bill prohibiting gender affirming care for young people to take effect on January 1st, 2024.

However, the LGBTQ+ community and supporters created a groundswell of support for LGBTQ+ youth, and the conservative-dominated legislature failed to overturn the Governors’ vetoes of HB 81 and HB 466, preventing those bills from becoming law.

Black Maternal Health

Louisiana has one of the nation's highest maternal mortality rates with Black women dying at three to four times the rate of white women.

01

Racial disparities

02

Lack of access to care

03

Structural racism

04

Bias & Discrimination

05

Socioeconomic Factors

Racial disparities 01

Black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women.

Lack of access to care 02

Black women are less likely to have access to quality prenatal care and are more likely to experience complications during their pregnancy.

Structural Racism 03

Structural racism and discrimination contribute to the high maternal mortality rate for Black women.

Bias & Discrimination 04

Black women may encounter prejudice and stereotyping from healthcare providers, leading to suboptimal care and communication.

Socioeconomic Factors 05

Black women may face higher rates of poverty and economic instability, all of which can impact their ability to access adequate healthcare and support during pregnancy.

SHIFTING POWER: TRAINING LEADERS FOR THE PRESENT AND FUTURE



Michelle Erenberg, Lakeesha Harris, Representative Delisha Boyd, Amisha Sharma, and Dr. Pheobe Askie.

To create a better Louisiana where our laws are rooted in compassion and empathy, respect individuals regardless of race, gender, economic class, or ability and support freedom, we need to change the power dynamic.

Lift's Leadership and Civic Engagement initiatives are crafted to empower individuals with the expertise, abilities, and self-assurance needed to emerge as impactful leaders and engaged citizens within their communities. **We promote a diverse array of leaders capable of advocating for their interests and pushing back when elected officials overlook or neglect them.**

CONSTITUENT TRAININGS

As part of our advocacy efforts, Lift encourages constituents to meet with their legislators, build relationships, and hold them accountable. **By providing a toolkit and training, we prepare citizens to have meaningful conversations with their legislators about the issues that are important to them.**

These connections can be crucial for future advocacy efforts and can lead to ongoing dialogue between constituents and elected representatives. **To build a powerful political movement, it's critical that legislators are truly hearing from their constituents, not just special interest groups.**

WOMEN ON WEDNESDAY



Lift ED with Trans Advocates at Women on Wednesday

Women on Wednesday creates a network of citizens who are ready, willing, and able to advocate for reproductive justice, and advance policies for women, girls and gender expansive people in Louisiana. Each week during the Louisiana Legislative Session, we host groups of advocates at the State Capitol to learn about proposed legislation, its potential impact, and how to influence it. Advocates also have the opportunity to attend committee hearings, meet with legislators, and experience firsthand how the legislative process works.

Sponsored by Lift and our partner, 10,000 Women Louisiana, the program ensures a sustained advocacy presence at the Louisiana State Capitol. **Women on Wednesday continues to grow and in 2023, 16 partnering organizations brought their members to the Capitol to participate in this educational and actionable weekly event.**



41
Cities/Towns
Attendees were from



484
Committee
Cards submitted



134
Attendees

POWER OF THE PROVIDER



Leaders of Medical Students for Choice at Tulane and LSU join Michelle Erenberg, Ellie Schilling, Dr. Ryan Pasternak, and Hannah Simon of LSU for Power of the Provider

Power of the Provider was created by Lift in partnership with Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center's Department of Adolescent Medicine and Physicians for Reproductive Health in 2017. The program connects medical providers and medical students with community-based reproductive health advocacy organizations to educate and empower physicians.

Since its inception, Power of the Provider has convened annual events, which have included advocacy and media relations training for medical students and CME-accredited training for medical professionals.

In November 2023, more than eighty providers, medical students, and advocates joined together at a reception to learn about our efforts to address the political interference in the provision of gender-affirming care and reproductive healthcare.

The program has proven to be very effective with a number of these providers and medical students continuing their advocacy by giving expert testimony at legislative and administrative hearings and providing continuing medical education to colleagues regarding reproductive health and sexual health education policy.

THEY CAN'T HIDE IN THE DARK: LIFT'S INVESTIGATIVE WORK



If we don't bring truth to light, then democracy can die in the darkness. Public trust and confidence in government institutions requires transparency into the activities, processes, and decision-making within government agencies. Knowledge of what agencies are doing and how tax-dollars are being spent is critical to advocating for public policy that truly serves the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Lift Louisiana is deeply committed to holding government agencies accountable for their actions and decisions. Through our investigative work, Lift provides information that is essential for safeguarding the rights and dignity of individuals affected by government actions.

Funding Lies:

Louisiana's Alternatives to Abortion Initiative Report 2022

This report outlines the development and public funding of Louisiana's Alternatives to Abortion Initiative, administered by the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), which diverts public dollars away from families in need and into anti-abortion pregnancy centers.

Pregnancy and Maternal Health for Incarcerated Women in Louisiana

The Louisiana Legislature passed House Current Resolution 85 in 2021, which requested the Louisiana Public Health Institute (LPHI) study the current policies in Louisiana's correctional facilities regarding pregnancy management and care and maternal health, and if these institutions were following state laws in regard to pregnancy and maternal health.

LPHI created a taskforce to conduct this study. Lift proudly served on the taskforce along with RH Impact, the Justice and Accountability Center for Louisiana, Birthmark Doulas, and Loyola University New Orleans, College of Law. Through public records, extensive research, and input from individuals with expertise in women's medical and mental healthcare, family services, and incarceration, including formerly incarcerated women, the taskforce produced a report in 2023 that highlighted the inconsistency and inadequacy of policies and programs for pregnant incarcerated people and that set forth recommendations for policy changes needed to address these issues.



STAR ADVOCATES HONORS LIFT AS A CHAMPION OF CHANGE



Lift Co-Founder Ellie Schilling, State Representative Delisha Boyd, and Lift Co-Founder & ED Michelle Erenberg

SEXUAL TRAUMA AWARENESS AND RESPONSE (STAR®) ADVOCATES is a leading nonprofit dedicated to supporting survivors of sexual trauma, improving systems response, and creating social change to end sexual violence, and is a collaborative and supportive Lift partner. In 2023, STAR selected Lift Louisiana as an honoree for its annual Champions of Change awards.

The award honors individuals and organizations that have demonstrated unwavering commitment, compassion, and support for sexual assault and trafficking survivors, making a profound impact on their lives and fostering a culture of healing and empowerment. The Champions of Change award recognizes and celebrates those who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to combat sexual assault, raise awareness, provide crucial resources, and promote a society free from the stigma and trauma associated with this pervasive issue.

Lift couldn't have been prouder to receive this award, alongside a diverse group of individuals and organizations from various backgrounds, all united by their common goal of supporting sexual assault survivors and effecting positive change within our communities.

2023 RBG AWARD NANCY DAVIS



Lift ED Michelle Erenberg & 2023 RBG Award honoree Nancy Davis

Lift Honors Nancy Davis with 2023 RBG Award for Fierce Advocacy on Behalf of Women. Each year, Lift Louisiana recognizes a dedicated advocate who has committed themselves to improving the lives of Louisiana's women, girls and gender expansive people. These awards are bestowed in honor of the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Nancy Davis knows firsthand what it means to be denied the right to make decisions involving her own body. In 2022, shortly after Roe was overturned, Nancy's doctor gave her devastating news about her pregnancy: her fetus was diagnosed with a rare skull abnormality that was incompatible with life. When Nancy was denied an abortion at her hospital in Baton Rouge, she was forced to travel nearly 1,500 miles to receive the basic reproductive healthcare she and her family deserved. This only compounded the suffering and trauma that Nancy and her family were experiencing.

The experience inspired Nancy to share her story with the public; turning her pain into action and inspiring countless people across the state. She organized a rally at the State Capitol to commemorate Roe in January 2023 and provided moving testimony at the Louisiana legislature. She also started the Nancy Davis Foundation to assist individuals who have experienced trauma as a result of a developmental defect during pregnancy.

This is the kind of fierce advocacy that we need to create a better Louisiana that supports reproductive rights, health and justice!

ALEX MOODY JOINS LIFT TEAM



Staff Attorney Alex Moody

Louisiana's policy landscape has always been hostile to reproductive health, rights, and justice and has consistently perpetuated the oppression of marginalized groups. Since the fall of *Roe v. Wade* and the implementation of Louisiana's criminal abortion ban, this landscape has been changing rapidly, creating fear and uncertainty as people here navigate choices about their bodies and lives. In the midst of this uncertainty, Lift welcomed Staff Attorney, Alex Moody, to the team. Since they started in April, Alex has worked to mitigate these harms through policy advocacy, public education, and community powerbuilding.

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