

NATIONAL NETWORK OF
ABORTION FUNDS

“HOPE IS A DISCIPLINE.”

— **Mariame Kaba**, Abolitionist and former NNAF Summit honoree

The death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg in September was only the most recent tragedy in the wave of natural and man-made disasters that have threatened abortion access this year. In the midst of this upheaval, we’re grounding ourselves in what connects our struggles and our solutions.

In the reproductive justice framework we’ve found the inspiration to hope and the discipline to act. It reminds us that alongside abortion access, we fight for healthy pregnancies and safe communities in

which to raise our families. The devastating impacts of COVID-19, the recession, and the climate crisis have fallen the most heavily on those least protected by our government, particularly Black families long dehumanized by state violence and environmental racism. Mariame Kaba’s words remind us of our collective power to bring a more just world into being.

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As we approach what may be the most important election of our lifetimes, we turn inwards and reflect on what abortion funds have always known: we need each other and we’ve got each other. Our hope is not naive. It is bound up in our long history of fighting for each other and caring for each other in equal measure.

When the federal government withholds the resources we need to survive and thrive, abortion funders like you act to fill the gap. You give to ease the burden of others. You organize to build the kind of lasting power needed to resist unjust laws and entrenched systems of racism and misogyny.

In this newsletter, you can see some of the work that we’ve done in 2020, informed by our hope for the future of abortion access and steadfast commitment to meeting the barriers of the current moment. With your support, we’re moving money to the ground through the Abortion Funds Crisis Relief Campaign organized in response to COVID-19 (read more on p. 3), the Collective Power Fund (read more on p. 2), and Operation Scale Up, our visionary new strategy to strengthen and scale abortion funds (read more on p. 3). **In addition to financial support, we’re investing in the leadership of abortion funds and individual members and holding space for our network to reflect, grieve, and plan.** All of that is inside these pages.

**“WE NEED
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We live with an uncertain future. But we hold tight to the certainty that abortion funds provide — that there are people who care, who will answer the phone, who will be the compassionate force that moves us towards a new reality.

Thank you for joining us.

OUR NORTH STAR: INVESTMENT IN ABORTION FUNDS

All of our granting models – the Collective Power Fund, the Abortion Funds Crisis Relief Campaign, and our new Operation Scale Up – are rooted in the wisdom and expertise of local abortion funds. Abortion funds know what callers in their communities need; it's up to us to make sure that funds have the resources they need to provide that support.

THE COLLECTIVE POWER FUND

On August 7th, 2019, after many conversations with abortion funds, callers, clinics, and you, our donors, NNAF launched a new direct abortion funding strategy: the Collective Power Fund (CPF). Through the CPF, we make grants to abortion funds that significantly boost cash-on-hand for abortions and practical support.

We committed to moving \$1 million through the Collective Power Fund this year, and with your help, we met our goal.

WHAT WE KNEW GOING INTO THE YEAR

Our membership encouraged us to prioritize abortion funds near clinics that border restrictive states, in states with no Medicaid coverage for abortion, or funds that support callers facing the most barriers, including those seeking a later abortion. They asked for a streamlined system for distributing abortion funding dollars, something that wouldn't add administrative burdens to their already full plates.

With that feedback in mind, we focused on the South and Midwest (where it's often hardest to get an abortion). We made the reporting requirements straightforward and the application process clear. Most CPF recipients received grants of \$30,000 – \$40,000. The average direct abortion funding budget is \$36,000; data from our annual Membership Enrollment survey shows that allows for only 35% of requests to be funded. These grants had an immediate and significant impact.

Read more about the Collective Power Fund here:
abortionfunds.org/collective-power-fund

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED AFTER ONE YEAR OF THE COLLECTIVE POWER FUND

1. The grants allowed funds to dramatically increase the amount of money they could pledge to callers.



"In 2019 we funded twice as much as we ever have and it is because of programs like this that have allowed us to expand our reach, re-open our helpline, and help everyone who calls."

— Stephanie Craddock Sherwood,
Women Have Options, Ohio

2. The trust built into the granting process allowed funds to spend money in the way that made the most sense for their callers and region.



"This money allows us to fund abortions with ease. It removes the kind of restrictions that leave so many callers behind."

— Meg Sasse Stern,
Kentucky Health Justice Network

3. The investment in funds' leadership allowed them to think expansively and generously.



"We are so grateful to have this grant, it represents almost double of our normal yearly budget, which has gone down significantly in the last decade. We are going to double our grant amounts next quarter to see if that is sustainable."

— Rosa Valderrama,
Broward Women's Emergency Fund

OPERATION SCALE UP

For many abortion fund callers, *Roe v. Wade* has never been enough. When abortion isn't covered by Medicaid, the average cost of the procedure alone is \$508, and many states have no clinic that provides abortion care in the majority of their counties, legal doesn't mean accessible. Every day, abortion fund staff and volunteers help callers attempt to bridge that gap.

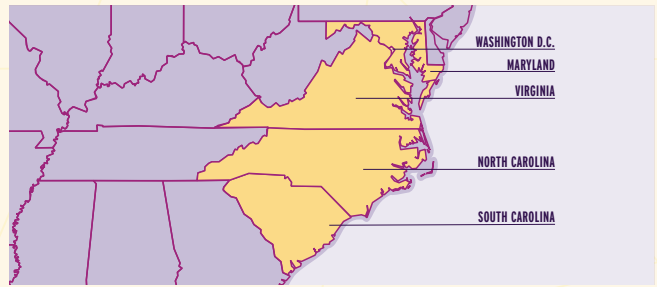
LIMITED RESOURCES, UNNECESSARY BARRIERS

Even though most callers identify their interaction with an abortion fund as overwhelmingly positive, the process can be time-consuming and stressful. Multiple calls may be necessary, and some callers have to secure pledges from several different sources.

In 2019, funds in our network served 62,933 people — more than any other year! — but they received over 200,000 requests for assistance. Abortion funds are doing incredible work with the resources they have, but those resources are limited.

We've spent years surveying funds, callers, and clinics, asking how this system can work better for everyone involved. We envision a future where one phone call will connect anyone seeking an abortion with a compassionate, knowledgeable case manager.

That's why we are proud to announce the next step in our vision for abortion funding support. We call it: *Operation Scale Up*.



TAKING THE HASSLE & HUSTLE OUT OF HEALTHCARE

Operation Scale Up offers a vision for abortion funding that will fully resource and connect abortion funds.

We're launching the program pilot with a cohort of five abortion funds: Baltimore Abortion Fund, Blue Ridge Abortion Fund, Carolina Abortion Fund, D.C. Abortion Fund, Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project. All five funds are located in Southeast, a region where states with significant restrictions to legal abortion border states that are more supportive of abortion access. Each of these funds will receive financial and technical support from NNAF. Critically, this program will allow each fund to increase their staff to at least four full-time employees. We know from our annual survey that funds with 1-2 staff serve an average of 427 callers. Funds with 3-5 staff members serve an average of 763 callers: **nearly double**.

Read more about Operation Scale Up here:
abortionfunds.org/osu-will-transform-abortion-funding

ABORTION FUNDS CRISIS RELIEF CAMPAIGN

The need for abortion doesn't stop during a crisis. Neither do abortion funds. In April, NNAF member abortion funds began to report significant increases in calls for assistance. In states where abortion was classified "non-essential" care, staff and volunteers worked around the clock to support callers as they traveled to clinics able to provide abortions. Funds opened new, secure communication lines to ease the burden of coordinating these trips and pool pledged dollars.

NNAF moved quickly to respond. **On May 12th, we announced the Abortion Funds Crisis Relief Campaign.** Our goal was to raise \$2 million for direct abortion funding. Before the month was over, we'd disbursed \$1 million to funds nation-wide. This

fall, we'll release the second wave of funding. In total, 82 funds have received an emergency boost to their budgets, with more to come.

Your commitment to abortion funding is what allows us to pivot quickly and respond effectively in times of crisis. You made it possible to move millions of dollars into the hands of those best-positioned to navigate abortion access barriers in their states and cities: the staff and volunteers of abortion funds.

Read more about the Abortion Funds Crisis Relief Campaign here: abortionfunds.org/crisis-relief-campaign-update

THE NEED FOR ABORTION DOE

Seven months ago, abortion funders and reproductive justice advocates across the nation were on high alert. A crisis with the potential to reshape abortion access loomed on the horizon. At the National Network of Abortion Funds, we dug in and prepared.

If the Supreme Court guts abortion access in their *June Medical Services v. Russo* decision, we thought, we'll be ready to support

abortion funds and their callers. Anticipating a potential surge in travel from more restrictive states, we worked to strengthen connections between funds and clinics within driving distance of one another.

Needless to say, the crisis that came wasn't the one we'd anticipated.

In the early days of the pandemic we weren't sure how long it would last. We didn't know what effect the virus might have on



ESN'T STOP DURING A CRISIS.

our organization, abortion funds in our network, or on the lives of the callers they serve. We did know that in times of crisis, the need for abortion funds only increases. Abortion fund callers are more likely to feel the burdens of lost wages, working through illness without paid time off, school and daycare closures, challenges paying rent, finding groceries, and more.

With your support, we turned to face this new challenge. We kept our mission and values at the forefront, prioritizing care for our network (funds, individual members, and staff), emergency

administrative support for funds, and moving as much money as fast as we could to member funds.

You can see how we took action between March and August below. This moment of grief, rage, and uncertainty continues, but the work we do together offers something to be proud of. We hope you feel the same way.

Read online: abortionfunds.org/network-crisis-response



CREATING SPACE FOR OUR NETWORK TO CONNECT

Since 2016, the community of NNAF individual members has grown to more than 1,500 people! In this moment, the collective power of our growing network is critical. Caring for each other, sharing resources, and organizing are all life-giving responses to the grief and uncertainty we face each day.

NNAF is working hard to create and steward virtual spaces for individual members to connect. One of the ways we've done this is to host community care calls.

Individual member Veronica Cordonnier (Texas Equal Access Fund) says: "I love these calls! They're about sharing with each other what's happening locally and aligning ourselves in community through learning."

Rhian Lewis (Vermont Access to Reproductive Freedom), agrees. "Right now my work life, my remembering-to-take-out-the-trash-life, my research life, my family and social life, all of that takes place at my dining room table at my laptop. This call created space to step back and reflect."

In addition to these informal and joyful community care calls, all individual members are invited to join regularly scheduled Political Education webinars. Over the spring and summer, we hosted several webinars covering topics you may have seen in the news or on social media: mutual aid and medication abortion.

Want to participate in a community care call or Political Education webinar yourself? Join us as an individual member!

Read more about individual membership here:
abortionfunds.org/about/member

REIMAGINING FUND-A-THON 2020

In February, abortion funds across our network put a bow on plans for their National Abortion Access Fund-a-Thon events. By March, COVID-19 had spread across the world. Out of care and concern, abortion funds cancelled in-person events after months of dedicated planning.

**FUND-A-THON
IS THE LARGEST
FUNDRAISER OF
THE YEAR FOR
MANY ABORTION
FUNDS.**

Fund-a-Thon is the largest fundraiser of the year for many abortion funds. They were counting on this revenue to replenish their abortion funding and operating budgets.

To support the network, NNAF shifted technical assistance offerings, providing communications and fundraising resources like templates, toolkits, and coaching for virtual events.

"There was a lot of momentum for Fund-a-Thon, but we had to pivot at the drop of a hat," recalls NNAF's Fund-a-Thon

coordinator, Keidra Chaney. "One of the things that has been so inspiring is the ingenuity and perseverance of funds."

Our Justice in Minnesota (home of the original and inspirational Bowl-a-Thon fundraiser for abortion access) was one of the funds that pivoted to a digital event, hosting virtual "Rage Yoga" classes. While not part of their original plan, the shift had unforeseen benefits.

"Our fundraisers were nervous about asking too much of their communities during this time of economic uncertainty," shared Our Justice board secretary, Stephanie Shea. "Holding a virtual class provided a way around that uncomfortable feeling because we could ask for suggested donations."

That creativity and versatility echoed throughout the network as funds hosted dance parties, DJ battles, karaoke, and other virtual events.

"There is a lot we can take away from this that funds can use in the future," says Keidra.



From L to R: Charmaine Lang (Individual Member, anchored with WI-Women's Medical Fund), Dusty Ginner (Northwest Abortion Access Fund), Stephanie Croney (DC Abortion Fund).

NNAF'S FIRST POLICY COHORT DRAWS TO A CLOSE

In a 2017 survey — long before COVID-19 made socially distanced medical care a national necessity — abortion funds ranked “increasing access to medication abortion” as their second highest policy priority, right after “repealing the Hyde Amendment.”

NNAF's inaugural Policy Cohort grew from the seeds of that survey. Offered for the first time in 2018, this pilot program

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supports abortion funds and NNAF individual members as they further develop their leadership in the policy arena. In the words of Policy Cohort member-leader Danielle Brewster, of Women in Need-California, “We want to do policy work that doesn't leave our communities behind.”

Twenty-two member-leaders from nine states joined the first cohort.

Participants brought their on-the-ground organizing expertise and deep knowledge of their communities; NNAF staff offered support in the form of coaching calls, convenings, and shared resources.

Over two years, initial ideas blossomed into collaborative projects. For example, Northwest Abortion Access Fund developed a zine describing the typical process for accessing a medication abortion in Idaho. Chicago Abortion Fund is developing educational resources around self-managed abortion for their website. Carolina Abortion Fund, with

leadership from an individual member, is crafting self-managed abortion trainings and soundbath healing sessions for volunteers. Each project was developed with a specific audience in mind: neighbors, family members, friends, loved ones. Some plans have shifted in light of the pandemic, but the need for this work has only increased. The factors that made access to medication abortion a priority in 2017—lack of paid sick leave, childcare and shift work schedules, privacy in abusive situations, inability to go to multiple state-ordered appointments in a clinic—have been exacerbated by the global pandemic. Ongoing support from cohort members, the NNAF Policy Team, and individual donors like you means that this work will continue and evolve to meet community needs.

POLICY WORK THAT CENTERS COMMUNITIES, NOT COMPROMISE

The Policy Cohort model is part of NNAF's commitment to a political and cultural agenda guided by abortion funds and callers. After years of confronting — and conquering — callers' legal, financial, and logistical barriers, funds have deep expertise and sharp analysis to offer when it comes to expanding access to abortion. Decades of compromise and middle ground laws have not moved us closer to our goal of abortion without hassle or hustle, stigma or shame. Now is the time to act boldly, centering those most affected by barriers to abortion.

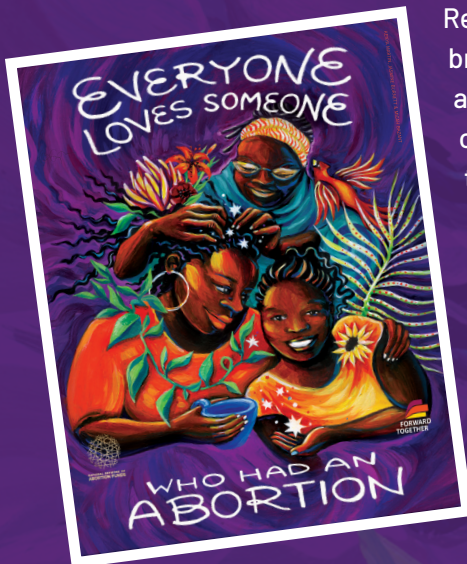
Read more about medication abortion here:
abortionfunds.org/medication-abortion



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Reframing abortion as a compassionate act with deep intergenerational roots brings us closer to undoing shame and stigma. Earlier this year, on the 47th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the National Network of Abortion Funds and organizing powerhouse Forward Together released the image at left, highlighting the power that's possible when people feel loved and supported in talking about abortions.

Independent abortion clinics provide the majority of abortions in the United States. That's why on March 10th – Abortion Provider Appreciation Day – Forward Together sent prints to independent clinics nationwide as a gift to those making abortion access possible, and a message of love and support for those having their abortions in independent clinics.

Learn more about the work of Forward Together at forwardtogether.org.
Support independent abortion clinics at abortioncarenetwork.org.

Want your own copy? Receive an 8.5 x 11in print when you become an individual member with the National Network of Abortion Funds in 2020!

[ABORTIONFUNDS.ORG/MEMBER](https://abortionfunds.org/membership)