



CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF IMPACT

FALL 2025 NEWSLETTER & ANNUAL REPORT



GENDER JUSTICE

Dear Supporters,



MEGAN PETERSON
Executive Director
(she/her/hers)

“

WHAT KIND OF
STRATEGY CAN RISE
TO THIS MOMENT
WITH CLARITY
AND COURAGE?

”

Fifteen years ago, Gender Justice was founded on a vision that is both simple and radical: that no one's life should be limited by their gender. That your body, your identity, or your biology should never determine your worth or your rights.

That vision hasn't changed, but the landscape around us has. We are no longer facing isolated policy fights or legal setbacks. We are living through the rise of a coordinated, authoritarian movement—rooted in White Christian Nationalism—that is seizing control of who belongs to our democracy, who holds power, and who gets to live freely and safely.

We see it in ICE raids and militarized crackdowns. In the rigging of electoral maps to cement minority rule. In Supreme Court rulings that greenlight racial profiling, censorship, discrimination, and the denial of care. We see it in the ruthless executive actions of a second Trump administration: trans people being systematically erased from public life, reproductive care gutted, and extremists convicted of anti-abortion violence pardoned.

These threats aren't distant, they're here. The assassination of Representative Melissa Hortman and her husband by a religious extremist marked a heartbreaking turning point in Minnesota. Movements for abortion access and LGBTQ+ liberation have always seen violence, but here, in a state known for political civility, it shattered a sense of safety many of us had worked hard to protect and believed was real. Now, new fears follow leaders into the Capitol. Community gatherings require new precautions. What once felt distant has become undeniable: White Christian Nationalism isn't just shaping policy, it's fueling political violence and it's here.

At Gender Justice, we've spent the past year asking big questions: What does justice require of us now? What kind of strategy can help us rise to this moment with clarity and courage? The result is our new five-year strategic plan. It's bold, regional, and grounded in how power moves: from the values people hold and the stories they hear, to the systems and laws that shape their lives.

Our new case *Mudra v. Buffalo Wild Wings* exemplifies this strategy in action. The case drew national attention because it exposed a painful truth: anti-trans panic has made even the most basic parts of public life unsafe, particularly for Black and brown youth and LGBTQ+ people. Our client's story resonated far beyond Minnesota, reaching the floor of the Texas Legislature where pro-equality lawmakers cited it in debate as evidence of how bathroom bans fuel gender-based harassment.

In the pages ahead, you'll see how we're putting our new plan to work: deepening our legal impact, preparing for the next legislative session, advancing a strong Equal Rights Amendment in Minnesota, and building people power in North Dakota.

Thank you for standing with us.

Megan Peterson

Strategic Plan

From the Courtroom to Culture:
A Bold Strategy for Lasting Change

GENDER
JUSTICE

Snapshot of Our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

We know that durable change doesn't come from the courtroom alone. That's why our new five-year strategic plan weaves together legal strategy, narrative organizing, coalition building, and policy advocacy to defend our rights and build a future where everyone can thrive—no matter their gender.

Our Strategic Priorities:



Win Legal & Legislative Change: We'll continue to bring bold, precedent-setting legal cases and advance proactive legislation that protects bodily autonomy, expands access to care, and strengthens gender equity under the law.



Drive Narrative Organizing: Changing laws requires changing hearts and minds. Through storytelling, public education, and training, we'll equip everyday people to counter disinformation, challenge stigma, and shift public understanding.



Pass the Minnesota Equal Rights Amendment: We are working to enshrine gender equity, reproductive freedom, and LGBTQ+ rights into the Minnesota Constitution, where they can't be easily rolled back. Once passed, the ERA will be a powerful new tool to advance case law and defend against discriminatory policies in courts across the state.



Invest in North Dakota for the Long Haul: What happens in North Dakota reverberates nationwide. By building deep, long-term partnerships and presence, we'll support communities on the frontlines, challenge harmful bans and restrictions in court, and help shift the public narrative around gender and freedom.



Strengthen Our Organization: This work takes staying power. We'll invest in our staff, operations, and infrastructure to ensure we can meet the urgency of this moment while also preparing for the fights ahead.

GENDER JUSTICE BRUNCH

Join us as we celebrate 15 years!

The 2025 Gender Justice Brunch will feature an engaging conversation on the future of women's sports, equity, and inclusion with Layshia Clarendon (he/she/they) and Ashland Johnson (she/her), moderated by our Legal Director, Jess Braverman (any/all).

At a moment when extremists are manufacturing controversy and targeting trans athletes, this discussion will cut through the noise to highlight the real issues in women's sports—pay equity, racism, funding, and the right of all athletes to belong.

Last year's event sold out in advance, so be sure to reserve your spot today!

To purchase tickets and learn more, visit: genderjustice.us/brunch



Mudra v. Buffalo Wild Wings

This is what anti-trans panic looks like and why it puts us all at risk

You've likely heard the story by now. Eighteen-year-old high school student Gerika Mudra went out to dinner with a friend at Buffalo Wild Wings in Owatonna, MN. A server followed her into the bathroom, banged on the stall door, and demanded she prove she was a girl. Scared, trapped, and humiliated, Gerika unzipped her hoodie to show she had breasts. Only then did the waitress let her leave.

What happened to Gerika was not just wrong, it was illegal

The Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA) is one of the strongest such laws in the country. It protects people from discrimination in public places—like restaurants and bathrooms—based on race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and more.

When those rights are violated, there's a public agency empowered to step in: the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR). We filed two charges under the MHRA on Gerika's behalf with MDHR: one against the local Buffalo Wild Wings and one against the corporation.

And it struck a nerve

When we announced this case, Gerika's story quickly went viral—from *People Magazine* and *NBC News*, to millions of views on social media. It reached the floor of the Texas Legislature, where lawmakers cited it as an example of the harassment caused by bathroom bills. And in federal court, attorneys defending Minnesota's inclusive youth sports policies pointed to it as a real-world example of the invasive scrutiny that follows when anti-trans policies encourage people to police who belongs and who doesn't.

We think Gerika's story struck a nerve because it revealed something much bigger than one server or one restaurant. It laid bare how today's anti-trans panic—fueled by misinformation and exploited by politicians—doesn't stop at trans people. It spills outward, casting suspicion on anyone who doesn't conform to narrow, racialized ideas of what a woman is supposed to look like.

In Gerika's case, suspicion fell on a young biracial girl with short hair, when a server felt entitled to interrogate her body in a public restroom. That moment wasn't just one person's bias or one civil rights violation, it reflected the misogyny, homophobia, and racism that have long been used to police Black and brown bodies.



Public bathrooms should be safe for everyone.

Nearly **1 in 3** LGBTQ+ people have experienced harassment when using a public bathroom.

Nearly **60%** of transgender people have avoided using public restrooms out of fear.

Of **930** anti-LGBTQ+ incidents reported last year, over half targeted trans and gender-nonconforming people.

Whether you're a person being targeted for harassment or a witness, understanding how to respond in these situations with small actions can make a big difference.

Check out our Bathroom Safety & Bystander Support Toolkit:

genderjustice.us/bathroomsafety



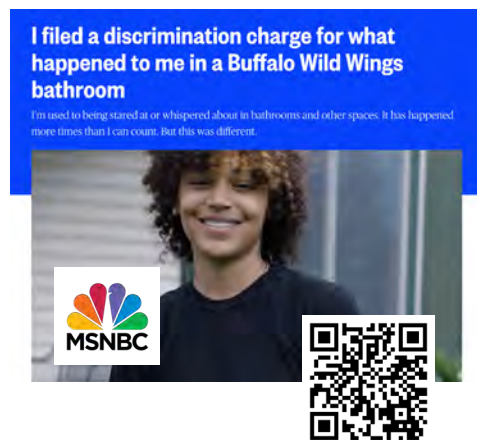
We've heard from so many people who saw themselves in Gerika's story. Stories of being stared at, questioned, followed. Stories of being told they don't belong. It's clear that what happened in that bathroom wasn't just a violation of one person's rights, it tapped into a collective story of being policed for simply being who you are.

But some stories never make headlines

There's another important truth we have to face with this story: when transgender women, especially trans women of color, are harassed in bathrooms, it doesn't usually go viral. It doesn't get national headlines. Far too often, it's ignored. And far too often, it escalates into violence.

That silence isn't accidental, it's part of a system that devalues trans and Black lives. A system that normalizes surveillance, excuses suspicion and violence, and defines womanhood through narrow and racialized expectations. And these systems rely on our silence to keep doing harm.

So when a story like Gerika's breaks through the noise, it's an opportunity. Share it. Talk about it. Advocate for trans and Black lives. Let it open up the conversations that too often stay hidden. The only way we shift this culture is by standing up for one another publicly, boldly, and without apology.



"It's my hope that by telling my story, Americans will recognize that this is in fact happening in our country — and that it could keep happening unless they use their voices to demand this invasive bigotry stops."

— Gerika Mudra, in her MSNBC op-ed

LEGAL UPDATES

Cooper v. USA Powerlifting: Fighting for Trans Inclusion in Sports

In December 2024, we held oral arguments at the Minnesota Supreme Court in *Cooper v. USA Powerlifting*, our case challenging the ban on trans women's participation in sports. We now eagerly await the court's decision, which could have far-reaching implications for trans rights in Minnesota.

T.D. v. Wrigley: Challenging North Dakota's Trans Healthcare Ban

In February 2025, we concluded our trial in *T.D. v. Wrigley*, challenging North Dakota's sweeping ban on gender-affirming care for trans youth. We expect a decision soon. This summer, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision in *U.S. v. Skrmetti* that allowed Tennessee's ban on gender affirming care for minors to take effect. Our case will continue forward, as it is challenging the ban on the grounds it violates the right to personal autonomy granted under the state constitution.

Reyzi Grace v. Academy of Holy Angels and the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis: Fighting LGBTQ+ Workplace Discrimination

Our lawsuit on behalf of Reyzi Grace, a staff librarian who was effectively terminated after coming out as trans, continues after our filing last fall. This case could not be more timely. As protections for trans people continue to be undermined, we remain committed to ensuring Minnesota is a safe haven where no one has to fear losing their job because of who they are.

Restoring Access to Abortion in North Dakota

In January 2025, the North Dakota Supreme Court denied the State's attempt to reinstate a near-total abortion ban, and in March 2025, the Court heard arguments to overturn a district court's ruling that struck down a 2023 abortion ban. For now, abortion remains legal in North Dakota while we await the Court's decision, but the fight continues.



North Dakotans Chart Their Own Path

In May, as the North Dakota legislative session came to an end, Gender Justice joined the North Dakota Human Rights Campaign (NDHRC) and community partners to host the first-ever People's Session—a grassroots gathering where everyday people came together to set a legislative agenda rooted in fairness, dignity, and opportunity rather than division.

While state lawmakers spent the 2025 session debating who could use which bathroom and what books kids could read, North Dakotans were calling for something very different: affordable child care, paid family leave, access to health care, and the freedom to live their lives in peace. Instead of listening, lawmakers doubled down on divisive political fights that do nothing to strengthen families or communities.

The People's Session flipped that script. People came together to share their stories, identify priorities, and begin shaping bold policy proposals that reflect the values of fairness, dignity, and opportunity.

Listening to North Dakotans

Ahead of the event, we shared results from a statewide poll that asked North Dakotans what issues matter most to them, and how they view their transgender and nonbinary neighbors, coworkers, and loved ones.

The results couldn't be clearer: North Dakotans want real solutions to real problems, not fear-mongering fueled by multi-million-dollar anti-trans campaigns designed to divide us. And when it comes to trans and nonbinary North Dakotans, the poll confirms what we've long known: most people want everyone to be treated with dignity and respect.

Building a People's Agenda

Held in Bismarck, the People's Session brought together community members from across the state with a shared vision for a North Dakota where all people can thrive.

Participants lifted up proposals like using the Legacy Fund to guarantee free school meals for all kids, raising the minimum wage to \$20 an hour, and establishing universal early childhood education. They also called

for protecting reproductive freedom—including contraception, IVF, and abortion—and ensuring LGBTQ+ North Dakotans are treated equally under the law by codifying same-sex marriage and protecting gender-affirming care.

Other ideas emphasized accountability and investment: creating a state-sponsored health insurance option, protecting rural hospitals, banning book bans, and raising teacher pay. Together, these community-driven proposals paint a vision of a state where everyone has a fair shot to succeed.

And this is only the beginning. In the months ahead, coalition partners will build on this momentum by convening community-led committees to translate priorities into concrete policy proposals. When the legislature reconvenes in 2027, lawmakers will have real solutions crafted by and for North Dakotans. Until then, our coalition will continue to grow, deepen community engagement, and keep the People's Agenda front and center.



THE REAL PRIORITIES OF NORTH DAKOTANS ARE BEING IGNORED:

What North Dakotans Really Want

- 84%** support affordable child care
- 80%** support expanded access to affordable housing
- 76%** support paid family, medical, and sick leave
- 76%** support increased funding for public education

On Equality & Fairness

- 91%** agree the government should stay out of transgender people's private business
- 84%** believe everyone should have the same rights and freedoms, regardless of gender expression
- 75%** say trans people should be allowed to be who they are
- 71%** support parents' ability to access health care and counseling for their transgender and nonbinary children

Looking Ahead to Minnesota's 2026 Legislative Session



As we prepare for the 2026 Minnesota legislative session, one thing is clear: defending our hard-won gains in reproductive freedom, LGBTQ+ rights, and gender equity has never been more urgent. Our priorities:

Equal Rights Amendment

The Minnesota Equal Rights Amendment would guarantee every Minnesotan the same rights under the law. It would provide the strongest possible protections against discrimination by the state based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, or sex—including pregnancy decisions, gender identity or expression, and sexual orientation.

Advocating for Safe and Supportive Schools for LGBTQ+ Students and Families

Alongside our partners, we are working to defend and strengthen laws that ensure schools are places where every student feels seen and supported. That includes clarifying the state's opt-out law so students cannot be excluded from learning about LGBTQ+ families, leaders, and community members, as well as advancing policies that promote inclusive curricula, safe environments, and equal opportunities for all kids to thrive.

Defending Against Attacks on Abortion

Year after year, the so-called "Born-Alive Bill" is introduced to target abortion providers and interfere with critical health care options for people facing complex and often painful decisions later in pregnancy.

Standing Up for Trans People

Last session, a bill was introduced that would have required elementary, middle, and high school girls to undergo invasive internal exams, blood testing, and chromosomal analysis in order to participate in youth sports. Not only is this policy morally wrong, it is also illegal under the Minnesota Human Rights Act. Unfortunately, we expect more anti-trans attacks like this next session and are prepared to fight back.

Protecting Redirection of State Funds to Anti-Abortion Centers

We will work to prevent taxpayer dollars from being funneled into deceptive crisis pregnancy centers that mislead patients and block access to real reproductive health care.



Why the ERA Can't Wait

Voices from the Minnesotans for Equal Rights Coalition

Minnesota has been a North Star for progress. We've defended abortion access, protected trans lives, and expanded care when other states did the opposite. But with Trump back in the White House and attacks on equality escalating, we're seeing how fast progress can be undone.

The truth is, our state constitution still doesn't explicitly protect all of us. That's why the Minnesotans for Equal Rights (MN4ER) coalition is growing, and why we're working to pass a strong, inclusive Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). In a time of mounting national threats, the ERA is how we make our rights permanent, bake equality into the foundation of our state laws, and protect what we've built from being rolled back.

Gender Justice is proud to be part of this movement, alongside partners who know how deeply inequality shapes people's lives. We spoke with two MN4ER members—Gene Martinez (he/him/his) from The Arc Minnesota and Tenzin Choesang (he/him/his) from Future of Us—about what the ERA means in their communities, and why it can't wait.

MINNESOTANS FOR EQUAL RIGHTS



Gene



Tenzin

What does your organization do, and what communities do you work with most closely?

Gene: The Arc Minnesota is a statewide advocacy organization serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We provide public policy advocacy, grassroots engagement, individual advocacy, and a variety of housing and other support to individuals in the disability community to ensure they can have a quality life in the community. We were formed in the late 1940s and are headquartered in St. Paul with regional offices in St. Cloud, Rochester, Mankato, and Moorhead.

Tenzin: Future of Us (formerly Asian American Organizing Project) is an organization that believes in empowering young Asian Minnesotans, and unlocking their collective social and political power. The work at Future of Us is rooted in storytelling, advocacy, and community building, ensuring that young Asian Minnesotans are seen, heard, and influential in leadership and decision-making spaces.

When you hear "Equal Rights Amendment," what comes to mind?

Tenzin: The Equal Rights Amendment brings to mind the ability to live up to our ideals. That everyone, regardless of what they look like, where they come from, who they love, etc., deserves a fair shot and should not be discriminated against because of these factors.

Gene: The ERA means full access to rights regardless of sex, sexual orientation, disability status, race, religion, national origin, gender, and other factors. For people with disabilities, there are existing constitutional protections for due process and equal treatment under the 14th Amendment. There are also statutory protections like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504, and the Minnesota Human Rights Act. The Minnesota ERA would strengthen all of these existing protections by adding protections based on disability status to the Minnesota Constitution and making it easier to enforce disability rights laws.

A lot of Minnesotans think we already have equal rights under state law. Why do you think we need the ERA in Minnesota?

Gene: We believe it is critical to explicitly name these rights in the state constitution. Why? Because laws can change. Statutes can be repealed or weakened with a simple vote in the legislature, but constitutional protections are harder to undo, requiring a majority of all people who voted. Plus, while control of the

legislature frequently changes between parties, a constitutional amendment provides ongoing protections.

Tenzin: The Minnesota Constitution does not explicitly protect against discrimination based on the characteristics listed in the Minnesota ERA. There are a few laws and statutes that concern these groups or identities, but having it enshrined in our constitution not only makes it harder to get rid of, thereby making it much more effective, but also allows our state to continue in its affirmation to protect all Minnesotans. It's fair, equitable, and the right thing to do, and many people can agree that everyone should be treated with equal rights under state law.

Can you share a real-world example that shows why stronger protections in the constitution would make a difference for your community?

Tenzin: One important aspect of the Minnesota ERA is its emphasis on protecting reproductive rights. Studies we've conducted show that over 80% of young Asian Minnesotans support reproductive rights, in particular abortion access. This is similar to the national average of around 75%.

Additionally, the ERA includes a provision to ensure the state does not discriminate, which would ensure that immigrants, refugees, and limited-English speakers are aware of and able to enroll in state and federally funded public services, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), housing support, and/or refugee cash assistance.

Gene: The Minnesota ERA would protect reproductive autonomy for people with disabilities and safeguard decisions related to pregnancy, preventing the state from interfering in the reproductive choices of people with disabilities. Historically, people with disabilities were subject to forced sterilization laws. Having protections against forced sterilization and having reproductive choices like abortion are both necessary.

What would it mean to your community to see the ERA pass? What kind of message would that send?

Gene: It would send a powerful message: discrimination of any kind against individuals will not be tolerated! And that explicitly includes discrimination against people with disabilities. This work is intersectional. People with disabilities exist across every identity—race, gender and gender expression, sexual orientation, and more. The Minnesota ERA creates a stronger, more inclusive community by recognizing and protecting those overlapping identities.

Tenzin: The passage of the state ERA would be a great victory not only for the immigrant community, but for all Minnesotans. We would be able to see that our government listens to the people, as over 75% of the people support reproductive rights and abortion access. It would also show our community that our government also prioritizes the protection and needs of those most vulnerable and in danger of exploitation.

What would you say to someone who supports equality but isn't sure the ERA is really necessary?

Tenzin: We are encountering interesting—and, for many we serve, scary—times. A constitutional amendment prohibiting the discrimination of those who may be our family, friends, and neighbors isn't just a "feel good" gesture, but one that may have life-changing, long-lasting impacts across future generations of Minnesotan families and communities.

Gene: While it might be tempting to believe that existing federal anti-discrimination laws or the Minnesota Human Rights Act make a Minnesota ERA unnecessary, that would be a mistake. Why? Voting rights, affirmative action, DEI, and even recognition of past discrimination are being rolled back throughout the nation. As those federal laws are weakened, we need strong state-level human rights protections. The Minnesota ERA provides expanded protections to many people, and we need that to protect not only the disability community, but all groups who face discrimination.



Driving Sustainable Success

In yet another year of unprecedented attacks on trans rights and bodily autonomy, Gender Justice hasn't backed down. Your support has allowed us to meet this moment with the courage it requires—in the courtroom, in our state capitols, and in community with each other.

Because of your support, we're celebrating 15 years of precedent-setting legal wins, statewide policy changes, and forward-looking strategies that have furthered gender equity and justice for everyone in our region. You have powered this movement forward: helping us argue before the Minnesota Supreme Court for trans inclusion in sports, block every anti-trans and anti-abortion bill at the Minnesota Legislature, and organize and gather in North Dakota for the People's Session to hear what truly matters to folks in our region.

As we embark on the next chapter of this work, your support is woven into every page of our plans—fueling strategies to change harmful narratives around trans lives, pass the Minnesota ERA, and build the people power needed to achieve transformative progress across our region. Thank you for your partnership in this fight.

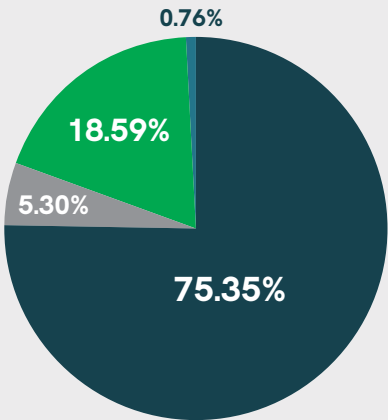


Fuel the Movement:
Donate online at genderjustice.com/donate

When Gender Justice Action (GJA) was created in 2022, the GJA board voted to use a July 1 - June 30 Fiscal Year calendar. For organizational efficiency, the Gender Justice board voted to move our 501(c)3 organization to the same fiscal year. To sync the previously staggered calendars, Gender Justice employed an abbreviated fiscal year from January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024. The financials below reflect that time period, and we will report on our first completed fiscal year in the 2026 newsletter.

Stub Year Gender Justice Revenue - 501(c)3

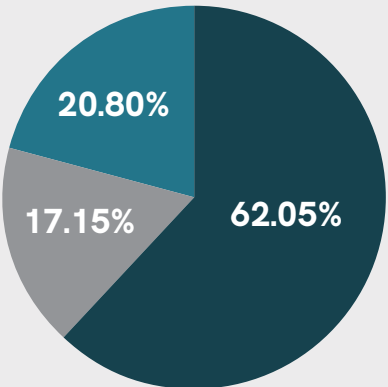
Revenue includes gifts that were pledged in the stub year for work in future years.



- Grants
- Individual Donors
- Program Income (including attorneys fees)
- Corporations, Organizations, & Law Firms

TOTAL: \$3,315,942

Stub Year Gender Justice Expenses - 501(c)3



- Program - Advocacy & Education, Legal (MN & ND), and UnRestrict Minnesota
- Fundraising
- General & Administration

TOTAL: \$2,179,317

More Ways to Give

Did you know that, according to the most recent data on charitable giving, grants for LGBTQ+ causes total only 20 cents for every \$100 awarded? Every dollar of your support helps us close that gap and powers the movement for LGBTQ+ liberation—thank you for seeing the value in our work.

Whether you give monthly, through your Donor Advised Fund, IRA, or stock, or by sharing your intention to leave a legacy gift to Gender Justice through your estate plans—we’re here to help you make it happen!

Find out more about all the ways you can support Gender Justice:

Visit genderjustice.us/donate or contact Director of Development, Anne Page, for a conversation about your giving.

anne.page@genderjustice.us
(612) 619-3685

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Change Elemental

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Contreras Edin Law PA

Cook Family Foundation

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Equality Federation

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If/When/How

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Medspira

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Minnesota Lavender Bar Association

Minnesota State Bar Association
- Minnesota Voice

Movement Voter Project

NTEN

Proteus Fund

Resilience Initiative

Robins Kaplan LLP

Rogers Family Foundation

ROYA LLC

Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation

Saul Ewing LLP

Smith Foundation

State of Minnesota Women’s Economic Security Act

Still Ain’t Satisfied, A Foundation

With Attitude

Tangelo Tree Consulting

The Jacobson Law Group

The Leaders Trust

The Nash Foundation

Vote Run Lead

Wanta Thome PLC

Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

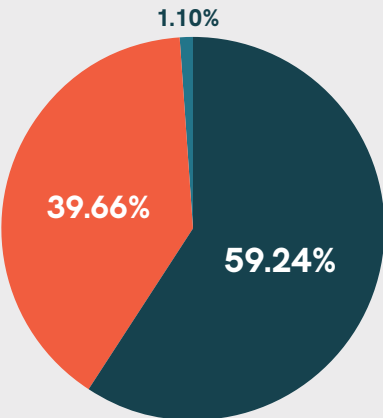
Women’s Foundation of Minnesota

Yield Giving

And all of the organizations, businesses, and individuals who give to Gender Justice!

FY25 Gender Justice Action Revenue - 501(c)4

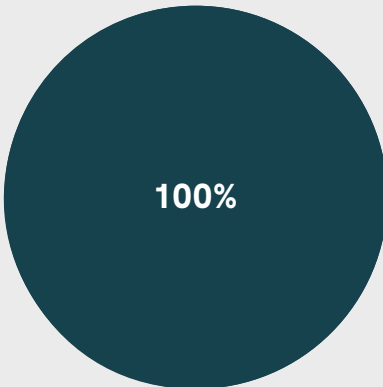
Revenue includes gifts that were pledged in FY24 for work in future years.



- Grants
- Individual Donors
- Special Events

TOTAL: \$227,157

FY25 Gender Justice Action Expenses - 501(c)4



- Advocacy & Electoral

TOTAL: \$378,196.73



ADVANCING GENDER EQUITY THROUGH THE LAW

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