

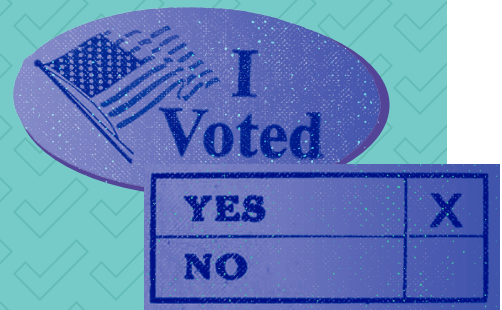


NATIONAL  
WOMEN'S  
LAW CENTER  
ACTION FUND



# 2022 Michigan Gender Justice Candidate Guide

**The NWLC Action Fund aims to inform the public about candidates' positions on issues affecting gender justice. We encourage voters to get informed, learn where their candidates stand, and to encourage candidates to adopt policy positions that support women and girls.**






# Michigan Secretary of State



Jocelyn Benson	Policy	Kristina Karamo
<b>SUPPORTS</b>	Protect and strengthen abortion and contraception access	<b>OPPOSE</b>
<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>	Fund affordable and accessible child care	<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>
<b>SUPPORTS</b>	Strengthen paid family and medical leave	<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>
<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>	Raise the minimum wage	<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>
<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>	Protect women, especially women of color, and others from discrimination and harassment in the workplace	<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>
<b>SUPPORTS</b>	Keep all children—including LGBTQI+ children—safe from discrimination and harassment	<b>OPPOSE</b>
<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>	Oppose censorship in school curricula	<b>OPPOSE</b>
<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>	Advance gun safety measures that keep schools free from gun violence	<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>
<b>SUPPORTS</b>	Expand voting access	<b>OPPOSE</b>
<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>	Build diverse courts that work for everyone	<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>
<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>	Strengthen and expand access to maternal health care	<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>
<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>	Strengthen and expand access to affordable housing	<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>
<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>	Protect and expand food security	<b>UNKNOWN POSITION</b>

NWLC Action Fund does not endorse candidates. These voter guides are an educational resource for the public and are not intended to be an endorsement of any candidate or political party. Candidates' positions on the issues are determined using recorded votes for and against legislation; statements from interviews, press appearances, press releases and candidate events; social media posts from verified accounts; and endorsements from organizations and associations.



**Champion:** This candidate has led legislative efforts addressing the issue, including introducing and/or co-sponsoring legislation; created an organization or association dedicated to supporting the issue; and/or made the issue stance a cornerstone of their campaign on their website or in speeches.

**Support:** A candidate is considered in support of an issue area if they have shown support for the majority of policies within the issue area.

**Unknown position:** We could not find a record of a clear policy position from this candidate during our research.

**Opposes:** A candidate is considered in opposition to an issue area if they have shown opposition for the majority of policies within the issue area.

## Jocelyn Benson – Secretary of State

### **Abortion**

- Codify the right to abortion in-state and support the creation of a nationwide right that stops abortion bans and guarantees that the right and access to abortion does not depend on where a person lives.
  - » Benson denounced the decision to overturn Roe. Benson [called the decision](#) a “devastating blow to freedom in America.”
  - » Benson has encouraged voting as a means of protecting reproductive rights. She has tweeted to underscore that voting is the way to ensure reproductive rights are protected.
  - » Benson has been named as pro-choice. In an [MSNBC interview](#), Governor Whitmer said “The good news is we’ve got three pro-choice women at the top of state office here in Michigan, and we are all absolutely committed to protecting a woman’s right to choose,” referring to herself, Attorney General Dana Nessel, and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson.
- Ensure that people’s access to health care is free from stigma, barriers, and restrictions, including abortion care, contraceptives, and maternal health care.
  - » Research into this candidate has yielded no statements indicating support or opposition
- Make sure quality pregnancy supports are accessible, affordable, and culturally competent for all - including protections and supports that advance the maternal health of Black and Indigenous women and pregnant people in Michigan.
  - » Research into this candidate has yielded no statements indicating support or opposition
- Safeguard and expand access to contraception.
  - » Research into this candidate has yielded no statements indicating support or opposition

### **Family Economic Security**

- Make millionaires and billionaires pay their fair share of taxes.
  - » Benson has not spoken or acted on tax issues.
- Help families with the rising cost of child care by investing in high-quality, affordable child care.
  - » Research into this candidate has yielded no statements indicating support or opposition
    - Benson supports child care and family leave policies within sports organizations. Benson chairs the Women in Sports Task Force, which released a [report](#) with policy recommendations including “Michigan sport organizations to adhere to and/or implement child care and family leave support programs to prevent/counter pregnancy discrimination, and offering grants and other resources to assist them in this regard.”
- Establish universal paid family and medical leave.
  - » Research into this candidate has yielded no statements indicating support or opposition
    - Benson supports family leave support in sports organizations. Benson chairs the Women in Sports Task Force, which released a [report](#) with policy recommendations including “Michigan sport organizations to adhere to and/or implement child care and family leave support programs to prevent/counter pregnancy discrimination, and offering grants and other resources to assist them in this regard.”

- Protect women, especially women of color, and others from discrimination and harassment in the workplace.
  - » Benson has not commented on policies to protect women from discrimination and harassment
- Create an economy that centers women and people of color and enables them to meet their needs, including affording stable housing and food access.
  - » Benson has not commented on affordable housing or food access policies.
- Pay workers fairly, including ensuring equal pay for all and raising the minimum wage to at least \$15/hour for all working people.
  - » Research into this candidate has yielded no statements indicating support or opposition
    - Benson defended the legality of a citizen petition to increase the minimum wage in Michigan. [Raise the Wage Michigan](#) submitted its petition to increase the minimum wage to \$15/hour by 2027 to Benson’s office and [she responded](#) stating “Both the Michigan Constitution and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protect Michigan citizens’ right to amend our laws or state constitution through direct citizen petitions.”
  - » EXTRA: Benson supports unions.
    - SEIU [has been an outspoken advocate](#) for raising the minimum wage

### **Education**

- Support students’ ability to learn and be themselves by keeping them safe from discrimination and harassment in school.
  - » Benson has not spoken or acted on the issue of discrimination and harassment in school.
- Oppose efforts to fuel divisions in our communities by vilifying and excluding transgender students.
  - » Benson identified attacks on transgender children as an important issue on the ballot this fall. “Our freedom to choose is one of a large number of attacks on rights that we’ve seen to trans kids, to people who are excluded and marginalized in society. So our rights and freedoms are on the ballot this fall,” Benson said.
  - » Benson helped pass legislation to allow transgender people to easily change gender on driver’s license. [At a news conference on this](#) rule, she stated “One of my goals is to reduce barriers for marginalized communities to participate fully in our society... The transgender community has faced both marginalization and violence without proper identification.”
    - Benson also helped develop a policy that allows for a nonbinary ID option. [At an event celebrating](#) the first day this rule went into effect, she stated “I am proud to offer state identification that bolsters the safety and accurately reflects the identity of more Michigan residents... For years we have been working with the LGBTQIA+ community, and upgrading our own technology, to make this possible in order to ensure that government works for all people of Michigan.”
- Oppose censorship of schools’ ability to teach truth, including about race and gender and how they have been used to divide us.
  - » Benson has not spoken or acted on the issue of censorship in schools.

- Safeguard students’ ability to live full, dignified lives free from gun violence.
  - » Benson tweeted in support of school safety. “Keeping kids safe in school is not a partisan issue,” she tweeted following the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas.
- Ensure full funding that meets every school’s needs - including schools building safer environments by prioritizing COVID safety measures.
  - » Research into this candidate has yielded no statements indicating support or opposition.

### **Democracy**

- Protect and expand access to the ballot and restore the Voting Rights Act.
  - » Benson believes that democracy should take precedence over the filibuster. She has been active on this view on social media, where she has [tweeted](#) multiple times that democracy should take precedent over the filibuster.
  - » Benson testified in front of the US Senate in support of the For the People Act. In March 2021, Benson [testified](#) in front of the US Senate Committee on Rules and Administration in support of the For the People Act.
- Unrig our democracy by ending corporate and PAC donations to extremist politicians who support voter suppression efforts.
  - » Research into this candidate has yielded no statements indicating support or opposition
- Ensure all voters have equal access to the ballot box and their votes are counted fairly, including expanded early voting days, language access protections for Limited English Proficient (LEP) voters, and a district map that empowers all voters.
  - » Benson denounced bills that would restrict voting rights. Benson: “Let’s be clear, Michigan’s elections are already among the most secure and accessible in the country. Our current ID laws work, and are part of a robust system to ensure that only eligible citizens are able to cast ballots in our elections. There is absolutely no evidence that this legislation would build on those current security protocols to increase the integrity of the system. But there is considerable evidence that it would make it more difficult for eligible citizens to vote.” “It’s time we call these bills what they are. They are not an effort to combat voter fraud. They are an effort to reduce voter turnout.” Benson, Nessel denounce effort to restrict voting rights and burden election officials ([michigan.gov](http://michigan.gov))
  - » Benson supports paid time off for voting. In the inaugural episode of her “[Read for November](#)” interview series, she spoke with the sponsors of [SB 1029](#) and [HB 6000](#) which would “require employers to provide paid time off for employees to vote.”
  - » Benson has made efforts to ensure those experiencing insecure housing or homelessness are able to vote
  - » Benson [underscored](#) that all US citizens at least 18 years old by Election Day are able to vote, even without an ID, and shared information on how someone may vote if they do not have a permanent address.

- » Benson [issued a directive](#) to local election clerks statewide prohibiting the open carry of firearms at voting sites. “Fair, free and secure elections are the foundation of our democracy,” said Benson. “I am committed to ensuring all eligible Michigan citizens can freely exercise their fundamental right to vote without fear of threats, intimidation or harassment. Prohibiting the open-carry of firearms in areas where citizens cast their ballots is necessary to ensure every voter is protected.”
- » Benson has committed to combat partisan gerrymandering. Regarding a lawsuit against the state alleging partisan gerrymandering by Republicans when Benson took office, she [said](#), ““It’s clear the court has found significant evidence of partisan gerrymandering, and the likely outcome would not be favorable to the state. It is therefore my responsibility to ensure a fair and equitable resolution for the citizens of Michigan that would save taxpayers money and ensure fair representation.”
- Reshape the makeup of the judiciary by working with federal lawmakers to nominate and confirm judges with a strong record of supporting gender and racial justice issues and who affirmatively declare they will uphold equality, opportunity for all, individual liberty, and the freedom to make personal decisions about our bodies and relationships.
  - » Benson has not spoken on federal judiciary nominations.



## **Kristina Karamo – Secretary of State**

### **Abortion**

- Codify the right to abortion in-state and support the creation of a nationwide right that stops abortion bans and guarantees that the right and access to abortion does not depend on where a person lives.
  - » Karamo believes abortion is child sacrifice and a satanic practice. Karamo: “Abortion is really nothing new. The child sacrifice is a very satanic practice, and that’s precisely what abortion is. And we need to see it as such,” Karamo, a community college professor, said in an October 2020 episode of her podcast “It’s Solid Food.” [Trump-backed Michigan secretary of state nominee said abortion is ‘child sacrifice’ - CNNPolitics](#)
  - » Karamo served on Right to Life of Michigan’s Black Leadership Committee. [About](#) (kristinakaramo.com)
  - » Karamo is a board member of an anti-abortion pregnancy crisis center. Karamo is a member of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Affiliate of [Stanton International](#). [About](#) (kristinakaramo.com)
- Ensure that people’s access to health care is free from stigma, barriers, and restrictions, including abortion care, contraceptives, and maternal health care.
  - » See above evidence.
- Make sure quality pregnancy supports are accessible, affordable, and culturally competent for all - including protections and supports that advance the maternal health of Black and Indigenous women and pregnant people in Michigan.
  - » Research into this candidate has yielded no statements indicating support or opposition
- Safeguard and expand access to contraception.
  - » Research into this candidate has yielded no statements indicating support or opposition

### **Education**

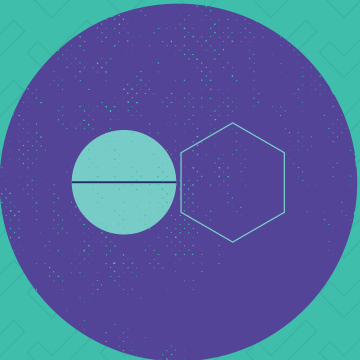
- Support students’ ability to learn and be themselves by keeping them safe from discrimination and harassment in school.
  - » Karamo believes trans people and those who support LGBTQ+ people are “[agents of Satan](#).”
- Oppose efforts to fuel divisions in our communities by vilifying and excluding transgender students.
  - » Karamo believes trans people and those who support LGBTQ+ people are “[agents of Satan](#).”
- Oppose censorship of schools’ ability to teach truth, including about race and gender and how they have been used to divide us.
  - » Karamo opposes teaching the truth in schools. A [CNN review](#) of Karamo’s podcast and writings found that
  - » Karamo is “opposed teaching evolution and called public schools ‘government indoctrination camps.’”

- Safeguard students’ ability to live full, dignified lives free from gun violence.
  - » Karamo has suggested that government regulation would not prevent gun violence. Following the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, Karamo [tweeted](#), “A person who hates or murders people for their ethnicity, is morally bankrupt. Our problem in America is a lack of morality. We don’t see human beings as inherently valuable, and engage in the sin of partiality. Government can’t fix this, only fear and love of God changes hearts.”
- Ensure full funding that meets every school’s needs - including schools building safer environments by prioritizing COVID safety measures.
  - » Karamo does not support the COVID-19 vaccine. A [CNN review](#) of Karamo’s podcast and writings found that she declared herself an “anti-vaxxer” in 2020

### **Democracy**

- Protect and expand access to the ballot and restore the Voting Rights Act.
  - » Karamo [believes](#) there is a “massive coverup” of 2020 election fraud.
  - » Karamo made false claims that she witnessed fraud on election night while observing ballots being counted in Detroit. *The Atlantic* [outlines](#) that Karamo “went on Fox News again and again to describe how illegal ballots supposedly had been tallied for Joe Biden at the TCF Center in Detroit, where she worked as a poll watcher. She testified before the State Senate that sacks of votes inexplicably had been dropped off there in the middle of Election Night. She suggested that Dominion Voting software had flipped Trump votes to Biden votes statewide. None of what Karamo described actually happened—as far as [anyone has been able to confirm](#).”
- Unrig our democracy by ending corporate and PAC donations to extremist politicians who support voter suppression efforts.
  - » Karamo has not commented on corporate and PAC donations.
- Ensure all voters have equal access to the ballot box and their votes are counted fairly, including expanded early voting days, language access protections for Limited English Proficient (LEP) voters, and a district map that empowers all voters.
  - » Karamo has tried to undermine democracy by [filing false claims of election fraud](#).
- Reshape the makeup of the judiciary by working with federal lawmakers to nominate and confirm judges with a strong record of supporting gender and racial justice issues and who affirmatively declare they will uphold equality, opportunity for all, individual liberty, and the freedom to make personal decisions about our bodies and relationships.

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