Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund (RRF) provides fast funding to grassroots organizations led by women of color, trans people of color, and low-income women and trans people in critical, unexpected, fights to protect and advance reproductive and social justice. A multi-issue fund, the Rapid Response Fund supports organizations on the frontlines, defending the most vulnerable communities with timely, flexible grants of up to $30,000 and an emphasis on funding in states and communities where women of color, transgender people of color, and low-income women and trans people-led organizing is under-resourced.

In 2019, the Rapid Response Fund awarded close to 30 grants totaling $187,500 to local and state-based efforts in Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, Nevada, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, and Washington as well as to several national efforts.

1. Gender Justice Nevada | State: Nevada | Grant Amount: $11,000

Gender Justice Nevada (GJNV), a participant in Groundswell’s Grassroots Organizing Institute, is dedicated to an intersectional approach to changing law, policy, and attitudes so that all Nevadans can live safely, authentically and free from fear, violence and mistreatment regardless of their sex/gender identity or expression. In 2018, GJNV and its allies won the passage of a policy explicitly protecting transgender and gender diverse students in the Clark County School District. This policy came after the state enacted a policy directing the state Board of Education to provide protections for gender non-conforming students, yet resources to support implementation of these policies have been slow to come. Support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund will help GJNV advocate for more resources to school
districts and monitor implementation of these policies to ensure the protection of gender non-conforming students.

2. **Access Reproductive Care – Southeast | Regional: South | Grant Amount: $6,000**

In April, Georgia’s state legislature ended its session with the passage of HB 481 – a fetal heartbeat bill that bans most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy. Similar legislation is sweeping across surrounding Southern and Midwestern states, including neighboring Alabama, which recently passed the most restrictive anti-abortion bill in the country that bans abortion in all cases, without exemption for rape or incest. The passage of HB 481 and other extreme anti-abortion bills in Southern states threatens abortion services not only in Georgia, but in the Southern region as a whole. The fast track pace of these bills is causing widespread fear among people who believe they cannot get abortions. To combat this, with support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund, Access Reproductive Care – Southeast (ARC-SE) will embark upon a Southern tour to talk to abortion clinics, organizations, and individuals to educate and strategize in response to Georgia’s anti-abortion ban. ARC-SE, a Catalyst Fund grantee and Grassroots Organizing Program (GOI) participant, is a woman of color-led organization that helps Southerners and their families navigate the pathways to access safe, compassionate, and affordable reproductive care by providing financial and logistical support and building power.

3. **Highlander Research & Education Center | Local: New Market, TN | Grant Amount: $6,000**

In March, the Highlander Research & Education Center suffered a devastating blow when one of its buildings was burned down and white supremacist graffiti was found that day on the premises. Highlander Center is a multi-racial social justice movement hub that for 87 years has been a political home for radical organizing and the Civil Rights movement. It stewards 200 acres of land and programming to support people of color-led and multi-racial movement work. Decades of archives from various social movements, including the Civil Rights era, were destroyed in the fire attack. Highlander Center is a catalyst for grassroots organizing and movement building in Appalachia and the South, which puts it in a highly visible position. It is also a fiscal sponsor of many social justice organizations across the South, including Groundswell grantees, so the loss of its main office has had far-reaching effects. With support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund, Highlander focused its attention on providing holistic and physical security, not only to its staff but to grassroots leaders who were heartbroken by the fire and also to address the loss of artifacts and irreplaceable documents.
4. Yellowhammer Fund | State: Alabama | Grant Amount: $5,000

In mid-May, Alabama passed House Bill 31, another “heartbeat bill” that effectively bans abortion in the state. HB 31 is just one of several anti-choice bills being moved in the state, and the Yellowhammer Fund is one of a small number of reproductive justice groups prepared to respond on the ground in AL. Yellowhammer Fund is a local abortion fund led by people most impacted by abortion restrictions: women of color, Black women, youth, LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities. As a volunteer-run fund operating with a small budget and part-time organizers, Yellowhammer Fund seeks Rapid Response support so that it can increase the capacity of its organizers to engage and organize more Alabamians on urgent abortion and reproductive health priorities.

5. Black Women for Wellness | State: California | Grant Amount: $3,000

In the United States, 700 women die each year from childbirth, and another 50,000 suffer severe complications – this is the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world. In California, Black women make up 5% of the birth cohort, but comprise 21% of pregnancy-related deaths. Black Women for Wellness (BWW), a Groundswell Fund Catalyst grantee and IVE participant, has written and secured a sponsor for proactive legislation with the goal of reducing the number of preventable pregnancy-related deaths. If passed, SB 464, the Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act, would do four things: require perinatal staff (licensed and unlicensed) to take implicit bias training, which includes learning about reproductive justice; ensure that additional information is included in death certificates so California can improve its tracking of pregnancy-related deaths; require the California Department of Public Health to collect and publish data on mortality and morbidity by race and county; and make an addition to the Patient Bills of Rights that would inform perinatal patients of how to file discrimination complaints. Groundswell’s Rapid Response funds is supporting BWW to carry out a legislative education day in Sacramento that will bring close to 100 Black women to the Capitol to meet with legislators, rally, and testify at a hearing to help continue advancing this life-saving legislation.

6. Kansas City Anti-Violence Project | Local: Kansas City, MO | Grant Amount: $2,000

The Kansas City Anti-Violence Project (KCAVP) focuses on anti-violence and anti-oppression work and, for the past thirteen years, has been the only youth and people of color-led organization offering youth LGBTQ programs in four bordering states: Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Iowa. In April, KCAVP organized with LGBTQ students to engage in a peaceful protest in response to an event hosted by Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), an anti-
LGBTQ student group promoting hate speech. YAF invited Michael Knowles, a conservative political commentator, to speak at the University of Missouri – Kansas City. Knowles’ speech aimed to ridicule LGBTQ students, and when students protested, campus security called local cops to intervene. As a result, a trans student was maced by police while other students were forcefully pushed out and pepper sprayed. At the same time, a transwoman organizing with the group was misgendered, dead named (when the name given at birth is used instead of their chosen name), and vilified in an article released by school media. Rapid Response funding from Groundswell Fund will support the creation of healing space for students and organizing for the establishment of a speaker review board to prevent events like this in the future.

7. **Hecate Society | National | Grant Amount: $2,000**

Desperate to escape extreme poverty, food insecurity, and many forms of violence—including persecution based on their sexual orientation and transphobia—a caravan of 6,000 migrants is traveling from the Caribbean, Central America, and South America to the United States. In the first few months of 2019, the United States saw an influx of 144,000 migrants asking for asylum at the U.S./Mexico border. Hecate Society is a grassroots group of young, people of color, femme, and/or LGBTQ+ organizers working with refugee-run autonomous spaces in Tijuana, with teams in Minneapolis, Chicago, and Oakland. Much of Hecate Society’s work in the United States is in detention centers, working with LGBTQ migrants after they are released from detention and doing cultural organizing. Rapid Response funds will go to support LGBTQ migrants post-detention, and assist with Hecate Society’s implementation of a refugee stories project where LGBTQ+, femme, and youth refugees will produce their own narratives, bringing their voices and stories to the forefront. Hecate Society hopes to raise awareness of the exodus and how it is intertwined with Indigenous sovereignty and climate change, while accentuating the totality of people’s humanity, suffering, and most importantly their resistance.

8. **All* Above All | National | Grant Amount: $2,000**

In May, protestors came together at more than 500 events outside statehouses and courts in all 50 states, DC, and Puerto Rico, for the #StopTheBans national day of action to declare: “Enough is Enough!” All* Above All, along with other reproductive justice organizations, served as a core partner for the national day of action and the related Week of Solidarity to Defend Abortion. Seeking to act as a convener by bringing together reproductive justice organizations, All* Above All understands that holding a reproductive justice framework means that we must reach beyond legal protections for abortion and toward a future where everyone can nurture the families and communities they desire. It recognizes that the communities most harmed
by abortion bans have the expertise, experience, and power to lead everyone toward liberation. The week of solidarity highlighted the need to support the organizing work that has been led by people of color for many years. In response, All* Above All is developing a film to center those who are being impacted by abortion bans across the country and document the work of reproductive justice organizations in the South and Midwest, where abortion access continues to be under attack and young people, people of color, and LGBTQ+ folks are targeted and criminalized. The film, which will receive support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund, will be used as an organizing tool to uplift the reproductive justice movement and invite people to join existing grassroots efforts.

9. **The National Black Women’s Roundtable | Regional: South | Grant Amount: $7,000**

The recent anti-abortion measures have primarily targeted Southern states, including Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and North Carolina. Thankfully, these five states also have chapters of the National Black Women’s Roundtable (BWR), an economic and social justice organizing network led by Black women across the country. Recognizing that the fight continues even though these anti-abortion measures were passed, BWR seeks to spread the message that abortion is still available in these states as it fights on every front to ensure these laws are not enacted. Support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund will help these BWR chapters build, organize, strategize, and leverage their collective and individual economic and political power, with the goal of educating Black women and their families on the real impact of these new attacks on Black women’s bodily autonomy.

10. **Marsha P. Johnson Institute | Local: Dallas, TX | Grant Amount: $4,000**

Muhlaysia Booker, a Black trans woman who spoke up against violence towards trans people, was murdered in Dallas in May 2019. A month prior to her death, Muhlaysia had appeared at a press conference after being beaten in a parking lot, an attack that local police are investigating as a possible hate crime. This was unfortunately not the first such incident in Dallas: three trans women were attacked and two were murdered in Dallas alone in the year preceding Muhlaysia’s murder. Recognizing this violence as endemic, the Marsha P. Johnson Institute (MPJI) seeks to build a political agenda for Black trans people through organizing, advocating, creating an intentional community to heal, developing transformative leadership, and promoting their collective power. Groundswell’s Rapid Response funding will be used to support the local Dallas trans community in response to Muhlaysia’s tragic death through community meetings, connection to resources such as name change clinics and self-
defense training where members of the Black trans community can learn how to get out of, or de-escalate, a situation.

11. The Afiya Center | State: Texas | Grant Amount: $2,000

The Afiya Center (TAC), based in Dallas, TX, serves Black women and girls by transforming their relationship with their sexual and reproductive health through addressing the consequences of reproduction oppression. TAC is building upon its long history of educating and mobilizing community members around high rates of HIV/AIDS among Black women, and increasingly stepping into work around a broader set of reproductive justice issues. In 2018, TAC responded to increased anti-abortion activity in Dallas with a series of billboards that read “Black women take care of their families by taking care of themselves. Abortion is self-care.” This both amplified TAC’s work and generated a lot of attention and interest from communities ready to organize in a pro-choice framework. TAC has just launched the Black Women for Choice Institute, which equips Black women to get involved and participate in TAC campaigns. In response to an increase in anti-choice bills across the state, TAC will supplement its organizing work by building out an abortion fund; the fund will create additional entry points into TAC’s organizing work while also meeting the immediate needs of community members.

12. Trans Advocacy in Rural Places (TARP), a program of the Lavender Rights Project | State: Washington | Grant Amount: $2,500

In the midst of the high rates of economic instability, violence, and death experienced in trans and non-binary communities everywhere, there is a glimmer of hope shining from Washington State. In 2018, this state began allowing a third gender marker, “X”, on birth certificates. In the summer of 2019, the Washington Department of Licensing proposed a new rule that would extend this third gender option to Washington state identifications, including driver’s licenses and instruction permits. Yet, the rule is not ideal since it requires a doctor’s or counselor’s signature. The Department of Licensing scheduled three hearings over a month period in Washington State for the public to comment on the proposed rule. During this short window of opportunity, the Trans Advocacy in Rural Places (TARP) program (which works to support, educate, and organize geographically isolated trans and gender diverse people around their legal rights) supported a rapid community organizing effort to mobilize the trans and non-binary public, particularly in rural Washington, to provide public comments on this rule. TARP successfully accomplished its goal to have the proposed rule passed with corrections, meaning the Washington state form will have no requirement for applicants to obtain a doctor’s or counselor’s signature. Groundswell Rapid Response funds supported this organizing effort.
and will also make it possible for TARP to follow up with legal rights info sessions to inform the public of their rights under this new rule.

13. West Fund | Local: El Paso, TX | Grant Amount: $10,000

West Fund, an existing Catalyst Fund grantee, is a Latinx queer- and youth-led organization in west Texas that advances reproductive justice through funding abortion access and engaging in public education and advocacy with its local community and partner organizations. After the white supremacy-motivated El Paso shooting in August, West Fund recognized this violence as an attack on their community and in response has been organizing to raise the voices of women, queer people, and gender non-conforming people of color. The Governor of Texas hosted roundtables to discuss the shooting, to which not a single woman was invited. In response, West Fund will organize a community-based counter-roundtable and invite diverse speakers, including its community members, as well as the Governor. Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund will support this event as part of West Fund’s longer-term organizing work, which seeks to engage and educate women and young people on various issues important to their communities.

14. Black Transwomen | Local: Dallas, TX | Grant Awarded: $4,000

Black Transwomen Inc., a national organization headquartered in Dallas, is entirely led by Black trans people and largely volunteer-run. It provides community members with resources for changing identity documentation and navigating systems to access healthcare, employment and to get basic needs met, as well as organizes and engages community members in policy advocacy. In response to the recent escalation in violence experienced by the Black trans community, Black Transwomen Inc. will focus additional resources on mobilizing communities in Dallas to end anti-trans violence. Groundswell Fund’s Rapid Response funding will help the organization provide support the community needs to better ensure they can access and navigate necessary resources.

15. Health Justice Commons | National | Grant Amount: $4,000

The Health Justice Commons (HJC) works at the intersections of racial, economic, gender, disability, and environmental justice to support marginalized communities to alleviate the devastating health burden of social injustice and environmental racism. HJC partners with grassroots organizations, progressive attorneys and healthcare providers as part of a broad movement for healthcare justice. After the recent death of queer Latinx disability justice rights leader, Carrie Ann Lucas, due to denial of life-saving medication by her health insurer, HJC
moved quickly to launch its “Know Your Medical Rights Grassroots Education and Medical Abuse Hotline Launch,” campaign. With support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund, HJC will use the multilingual hotline to collect and document stories of medical abuse, which will ultimately be used in impact litigation and class action strategies. It will provide know your medical rights and healthcare access advocacy online and in-person trainings in several cities in the fall of 2019, and host an online national convening to reflect on past work and strategize collectively the next stages of the campaign.

16. G.L.I.T.S INC - Gays and Lesbians in Transgender Society | Local: New York City | Grant Amount: $2,000

In July 2019, Layleen Polanco, a transgender woman, died at the Rikers Island Jail after experiencing an epileptic seizure while under solitary confinement. In response, community activists involved with G.L.I.T.S were invited to speak with transwomen at Rikers’ Trans Housing Unit. As a result of that initial visit, G.L.I.T.S. was granted permission to develop a restorative justice program for women incarcerated at Rikers’ Trans Housing Unit (THU). It will include educational programming centered on Stonewall veterans who ignited the queer liberation movement with the goal of empowering and amplifying the voices of LGBTQ+ community members behind bars. G.L.I.T.S is in the process of determining how to turn this programming into a bridge between women on the inside and the outside community to ensure that women are not isolated, feel inspired, and have somewhere to go once they are out. In this unstable political moment — with Rikers scheduled to be shuttered in 2026 and five new jails slated to be built around New York City — the support for trans women on the inside is critical.

17. Desiree Alliance | National | Grant Awarded: $2,000

In 2010, U.S. sex workers took part in the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva to address the harms they face, including hyper-policing, racial profiling, violence, a lack of equal protections under the law, and incarceration. That year, the first-ever recommendation to protect sex workers’ rights was accepted by the Obama Administration, which led to global awareness of the realities faced by sex workers. Desiree Alliance, a national sex worker of color-led organization, is preparing to hold the United States accountable for its shameful human rights records at the next upcoming United Nations Universal Periodic Review. With support from Groundswell Fund, members of Desiree Alliance will travel to New York for UPR meetings, where information, networking, preparation, and training will take place in advance of the UPR convention in March 2020. This will be a particularly important meeting, as gains made by sex workers are being actively stripped away
as the current administration increases the criminalization of sex work.

18. Sojourn Chaplaincy | National | Grant Amount: $5,000

The Trump administration has attacked trans rights virulently, including the recently failed attempt to push through the “conscience rule,” which would have allowed medical professionals to refuse to treat people based on their religious beliefs, dramatically impacting access to abortions and surgeries for trans people. Recognizing the immediate need to cultivate advocates for trans rights in healthcare settings, Sojourn Chaplaincy (a multi-faith spiritual program based out of the San Francisco General) started the Transgender Spiritual Care Initiative. This initiative fights healthcare discrimination against transgender people (and its disproportionate impact on transgender people of color) by training spiritual care providers and faith leaders, who are recognized as having moral authority in healthcare settings. Groundswell’s Rapid Response funding will enable six faith leaders of color and the coordinator to travel across the country to train other faith leaders and chaplains, who then work with healthcare staff, administration, and policymakers, to fight the ongoing attacks on trans rights.

19. The Center for Cultural Power | National | Grant Awarded: $6,000

With the fate of DACA still in question, and continued violence against immigrant communities, the current news cycle’s stories and images are reinforcing a constant state of fear for undocumented communities and families. “Flowers on The Inside,” is a project imagined by and featuring the work of undocumented artists in order to share stories and images that inspire hope and connection, recognizing the humanity and compassion of undocumented communities and families.

The Center for Cultural Power (formerly known as CultureStrike) commissioned five undocumented and formerly undocumented artists to create five images - all with a primary motif of flowers - to be printed as postcards that show support and solidarity directly to those inside of detention camps. The Center for Cultural Power hopes to move people to feel their own power to fight back against xenophobia, donate to organizations helping detainees, or opt in to volunteer as pen pals. By supporting this project, Groundswell Rapid Response Funds demonstrates the creativity and agency of migrant artists to influence the narrative about their communities. Further, this project is helping to strengthen a partnership that links gender, reproductive justice, and immigration organizations through cultural organizing and modeling what cultural power looks like.
20. Justice Teams Network | Local: San Vallejo, CA | Grant Amount: $5,000

The Justice Teams Network connects organizations and groups committed to eradicating state violence from communities of color. It advances state legislation that radically shifts the ways in which law enforcement engages with communities of color and supports local reinvestment campaigns that advocate for the redirection of resources toward employment, education opportunities, and public health-based responses to drugs and violence. The network is anchored by teams led by Black and Brown women in cities across California.

Justice Teams Network is organizing a response to the crisis of state violence happening in the city of Vallejo, a small city in Northern California with the third highest rate of residents killed by police per capita in the state. The public outrage at the recent assault of Adrian Burrell (an unarmed veteran) by a Vallejo police officer created an opportunity for broader conversation and organizing. Justice Teams Network recognizes that there is a relatively small window to capture people’s hearts and minds and mobilize them to respond to this violence. With the support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund, Justice Teams Network will organize and build relationships in the city of Vallejo with community members, including the victims and survivors of state violence.

21. Orleans Parish Prison Reform Coalition (OPPRC) | Local: New Orleans, LA | Grant Amount: $10,000

The Orleans Parish Prison Reform Coalition (OPPRC) uses education and organizing to decrease incarceration, increase oversight, and improve the conditions in Orleans Parish Prison in Louisiana. The Coalition successfully advocated for a 1,438-bed cap at the Orleans Justice Center as a condition of its construction in 2011; however, Sheriff Gusman has consistently pushed for additional beds since then. One way it has managed to add additional beds is through the illegal continued use of a Temporary Detention Center, that was meant to be demolished in 2017 after the new Justice Center was constructed. OPPRC seeks Groundswell Fund support to educate New Orleanians about a two-fold threat: one is the Sheriff’s longer-term proposal to build a new jail facility specifically for incarcerated people with mental health needs, and the other is a shorter-term proposal to house this same population in the Temporary Detention Center until the new facility is built.

22. COLOR | State: Colorado | Grant Amount: $10,000

Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR), a Groundswell Fund Catalyst grantee, works to enable Latinx individuals and their families to lead safe, healthy
and self-determined lives. With support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund, COLOR will increase its organizing work around two pressing issues, the 2020 Census and Public Charge. Public Charge is a policy that would block people from entry into the country based on who the federal administration deems to be a “public burden” and would then have them placed into immigration proceedings. At the same time, the administration pushed to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census, and while that push was unsuccessful, Colorado’s immigrant communities are still reeling from the impact of these two threats, with some community members disenrolling or forgoing enrollment from public benefits and safety net resources, out of fear. COLOR will conduct public education about the status of these threats and organize Latinx communities to respond.

23. Arise Chicago | Local: Chicago, IL | Grant Amount: $10,000

In Spring 2019, the Social Security Administration (SSA) sent 575,000 letters to employers listing workers’ names and social security numbers that did not match their records. Many employers panicked and summarily fired workers. While eventually SSA admitted that a worker being on the list did not indicate a worker’s immigration status, the damage was done. Arise Chicago, a 28-year-old worker rights organization, responded by launching a “No Match” education and organizing plan. In four short months, Arise has become a local and national leading expert on “No Match.” With support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund, Arise will respond to the next round of “No Match” letters expected to be sent out in Fall 2019, organizing workers and pressuring elected officials and consumer protection and small business agencies to educate businesses and protect jobs.

24. South Florida Healing Justice Project | Local: Miami, FL | Grant Amount: $2,000

The South Florida Healing Justice Project is a grassroots organization responding to injustice through creation of safe, healing spaces for community members. It created #defendblackwomenfridays, a project that organizes direct funding to Black women who experience violence, such as Tammy Jackson, who was denied medical assistance and was forced to give birth in solitary confinement in a Broward County jail in April of 2019. With resources from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund, the Project will run an organizing retreat for its members, focused on political education and skills building around direct action and community organizing. These deeper skills will strengthen the work of the Project, and their broader efforts with the Justice for Tammy coalition.
25. Transgender Education Network of Texas | State: Texas | Grant Amount: $10,000

When Tracy Single, a trans woman, was murdered in July 2019, it took two weeks and relentless advocacy by community members for her to be identified. Recognizing the rising rate of murders of members of the trans community in Texas, and the prevalence of members of the trans community with incorrect or nonexistent ID’s, the Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT) and partners are developing an ID program to address these concerns. The ID program will operate in five major cities in Texas through partnership with community LGBTQ centers, colleges, and trans-affirming homeless shelters. Through this program, which will be supported by Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund, members of the trans community will be able to share information needed if they were to go missing or are found, as well as information they want printed on their ID (e.g., name, pronouns, contact information, a picture). TENT will compile the information, create the ID, and send it directly to the person or a local community center where they can pick it up. TENT will also create a database so it can share relevant contact information with the police in the case of an emergency to speed up the process of identifying a person and contacting loved ones.

26. Black Excellence Collective | Local: New York City | Grant Amount: $5,000

Trans and gender non-conforming individuals inside juvenile jails and detention centers across the country vividly describe the harsh conditions and abuse they face inside these facilities. This year, organizers in New York reported an increase in violence and criminalization of Black and Brown trans and gender non-conforming people, including reports of sexual abuse in detention and jails. The Black Excellence Collective (BEC) is group of Black trans and queer organizers with a mission to empower trans and queer people of color through art, education and public intervention. The support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund will help the BEC to organize a summit with a focus on sexual health, HIV, STI and reproductive issues, among other issues impacting trans and gender non-conforming people inside juvenile jails and detentions. The summit will provide community members with resources and skills to create community solutions for trans and gender non-conforming communities who are often stripped of their dignity and autonomy especially when confined in various forms of detention.

27. Women’s Rights and Empowerment Network | State: South Carolina | Grant Amount: $10,000

In early 2019, South Carolina legislators introduced H3020 (“The SC Fetal Heartbeat Protection from Abortion Act”), which would outlaw abortion before most people know that they are pregnant. This radical and dangerous ban is similar to those recently passed in several other
Southern and Midwestern states. The South Carolina House of Representatives passed the bill in April. In an unprecedented move, the Senate leadership convened its committees during the fall, outside of regular session, to debate and advance the bill. The Women’s Rights and Empowerment Network (WREN), has begun to organize and educate the public about the bill, which the Governor has already indicated that he would sign, if passed. With support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund, WREN will expand their reach within communities of color, and provide the resources needed to support people of color-led grassroots organizations to participate in mobilization efforts related to the bill.

28. Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition | Local: Detroit, MI | Grant Amount: $20,000

The Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition (MEJC) works to achieve a clean, healthy, and safe environment for Michigan’s most vulnerable residents in alignment with the Principles of Environmental Justice. The Coalition consists of almost 40 organizations and members, representing frontline communities and their allies across the state. On the heels of the Flint water crisis, MEJC is organizing around the recent collapse of a uranium tainted site into the Detroit River, near the city’s drinking water lines. While the collapse happened at the end of November 2019, it took several days for the public to be notified. The coalition expects that as climate change impacts the river shoreline, more toxic sites could threaten the water supply. With support from Groundswell’s Rapid Response Fund, MEJC will organize community members to advocate for assessment of other waterfront sites and a stronger public communication plan should this happen again.

29. Southwest Women's Law Center | State: New Mexico | Grant Amount: $20,000

The Southwest Women’s Law Center (a statewide, non-profit legal advocacy organization that provides women and girls in New Mexico with the opportunity to achieve their full economic and personal potential) and Strong Families New Mexico (which works to ensure that all families have the rights, recognition and resources they need to thrive) are partnering to survey New Mexico’s Native American population about their views on abortion. This research is necessary because legislators whose constituency includes many Native Americans have commented that they would not vote in favor of House Bill 51, which would repeal an archaic law that makes provision of abortion care in New Mexico a fourth-degree felony, based on a belief that the Navajo Nation as a whole is against abortion. Yet attitudes about abortion care among the Native American population in New Mexico are anything but monolithic, and are in fact a very complicated tapestry partly due to the decades of healthcare failures experienced by Native American women and girls. With the support of Groundswell’s Rapid Response funds,
the Southwest Women’s Law Center will collect and analyze the findings from this research in order to inform these organizations’ strategies to maintain New Mexico’s current policies that secure safe and legal access to abortion care.