



## **Statement in Response to HJR 5 – A resolution to amend the state’s constitution to say that Iowa does not secure or protect the right to an abortion or public funding of abortion**

We are deeply disappointed Iowa legislators advanced a resolution, HJR 5, to amend the state’s constitution to say that Iowa does not secure or protect the right to an abortion or public funding of abortion. Reproductive health services are an essential component of routine medical care for all women, and victims of violent crimes – domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking – have an acute need for timely access to the full range of reproductive health services, including abortion care. Restricting access to health care impacts all women but also exacerbate disparities in access to care in Iowa that disproportionately impact low-income women, especially Black, Indigenous and Women of Color.

As the state’s leading voice against intimate partner violence, we represent the collective experience of people who dedicate their lives to serving victims of violent crime. Approximately 1 in 4 women experience rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, and most first violent experiences occur before age 25. Reproductive coercion is an element of domestic violence that occurs when a male partner uses intimidation, threats or violence to impose his intentions upon a woman’s reproductive autonomy. This includes sabotaging contraception and coercing a woman to become pregnant and carry a pregnancy against her will.

Restricting and ultimately prohibiting access to abortion is harmful to women’s health and will not stop women from needing or obtaining an abortion. These policies have a far greater impact on the safety of health services women receive than whether women choose to terminate a pregnancy. And for victims of domestic and sexual violence – this bill negatively impacts their options for safety more broadly.

Iowa service providers report that overcoming barriers to accessing abortion care increases a survivor’s risk for harm from an abusive partner. Without access to abortion care many women return to abusive relationships they would otherwise leave and carry unintended pregnancies to term at great risk to themselves and other children.

Unintended pregnancy is the primary reason women seek abortion care. It also doubles the risk for domestic abuse during pregnancy. And, regardless of the prevalence of domestic violence, homicide by a spouse or intimate partner is the number one cause of death for pregnant women.

After a year that has challenged us all and created new hurdles to safety and self-determination for survivors of violent crime, we need to work together to dismantle barriers to services for all Iowans. Crime victims have an acute need for timely access to services that enhance safety and healing, including food security, housing and healthcare. Our end goal is not only for individuals to reach safety, it is for individuals to have the ability to determine their own futures and have access to the services that would make this possible.