



Today's egregious decision by the United States Supreme Court to overturn *Roe vs. Wade* sets birthing people and women's civil rights back 50 years. As the state's leading voice to end gender violence in Iowa for more than 35 years, we believe all people have the right to bodily autonomy and to determine what is best for themselves, including abortion and primary medical care. Ending a constitutional right to an abortion will not stop women and birthing people from seeking an abortion; it will *only* impact the safety and health of women who seek this procedure.

Abortion access is one of several fundamental rights under attack in the U.S., including our right to vote, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, and many other rights intertwined with our right to liberty in which *Roe v. Wade* was grounded. Restricting and prohibiting access to abortion is a first step toward imposing dangerous and harmful laws that once again disproportionately impact young women, Black and Brown women, low-income women, and LGBTQIA+ individuals – the same populations disproportionately affected by state-sponsored and gender violence.

Gender violence, including domestic abuse, sexual assault, and dating violence, is about power and control. It remains a persistent public health crisis due to epidemic levels of prevalence. 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 health services are essential to primary medical care for all women. Victims of domestic and sexual violence have an acute need for timely access to comprehensive reproductive health services, including abortion. Reproductive coercion occurs when a person who harms restricts the freedom of their partner to control their bodies, lives, and futures. Harmful partners use intimidation, threats, or violence to deny bodily autonomy. This includes rape, sabotaging contraception, and coercing a person to become pregnant and carry a pregnancy against their will.

Outlawing access to reproductive care threatens women's freedom and health and places victims of violence in greater danger. Privacy is fundamental for survivors seeking safety; they rely on this protection to feel safe seeking help and accessing services. With today's decision, the U.S. Supreme Court has compromised all Iowans' constitutional right to privacy and for survivors of gender violence, putting them at additional risk for harm.

Abortion services are essential healthcare, and having equal access – for all people, everywhere – is vital to their social and economic participation, reproductive autonomy, and the right to determine their own lives. Reproductive justice is a necessary component of gender equality and racial justice. Reproductive justice is only achieved when all people have the social, political, and economic power to decide their health, bodies, and sexuality.



Iowa service providers report that barriers to accessing abortion increase a survivor's risk for injury from a person who harms and undermines their health because it delays the ability to obtain care until later in pregnancy. Providers in rural areas report these opportunities are incredibly few and far between and the lack of access to transportation compounds the difficulty.

Safety is not the antidote to violence. **Self-determination** is. Women should be able to control their bodies, and safely and freely decide whether to become or stay pregnant. We believe in a future free from violence where we all have the freedom to determine our medical care needs, safely care for loved ones, and access the services that make that possible. Today's decision is detrimental to abortion rights and bodily autonomy, but we are not defeated. We will push forward and advocate for systems and policy change that will ensure all Iowans have the freedom to make their own decisions about their lives and futures.

#### **About the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) is the leading voice to end intimate partner violence in Iowa. Through our network of 21 statewide victim service programs, we provide comprehensive services to anyone who has been a victim of a violent crime – before, during, and after. We take a survivor-centered approach to victim services and believe community-based agencies and interventions, healthcare, educational, and government systems should work together, centering the voices and experiences of those historically excluded, to enhance safety for everyone. When this happens, everyone has the ability to reach their full potential, thrive, and live a life free from violence.

*Note: This statement uses “women” as shorthand for many of the people who are or may become pregnant, but people of all gender identities, including transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, may become pregnant, seek abortion services, and be equally harmed by this decision.*