



We are angry and deeply disappointed the Iowa Supreme Court ruled that the state's constitution does not include a fundamental right to abortion in their decision on a case challenging a medically unnecessary mandatory 24-hour waiting period for abortion. The Supreme Court did not take a position on whether the 24-hour waiting period law should be upheld which allows Planned Parenthood to continue its legal challenge to the law in District court. However, since the Supreme Court reversed the lower court's decision, the 24-hour waiting period law goes into effect while the legal challenge to the law continues.

Right now, abortion remains legal in Iowa, but this devastating ruling makes it easier for Iowa legislators to restrict or prohibit access to abortion because the Court dramatically lowered the level of constitutional protection for abortion rights. This decision comes just before the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to issue a significant ruling regarding the federal constitutional right to abortion.

Restricting and prohibiting access to abortion is dangerous, harmful, and exacerbates disparities in access to care that 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.

The unnecessary 24-hour mandatory delay law undermines the personal decisions women make about what is best for their lives and the well-being of their families. This insulting and burdensome requirement will not stop women from deciding to have an abortion; it will negatively impact the safety of health services women receive and increase the danger for victims of violence.

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. Imposing medically unnecessary barriers to accessing abortion threaten women's freedom and health and places victims of violence in greater danger.

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 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 woman to become pregnant and carry a pregnancy against her will.



Preventing a partner from having an abortion is abuse and forcing a partner to stay pregnant keeps someone trapped in an unhealthy relationship. A 24-hour mandatory delay is another form of power and control and effectively denies many women their right to abortion. Without timely access to abortion, many individuals return to abusive relationships they wanted to leave and carry unintended pregnancies to term at significant risk to themselves and other children.

Iowa service providers report that overcoming 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. A medically unnecessary 24-hour waiting period will result in severe and sometimes insurmountable barriers to abortion. It forces women to travel long distances, make multiple trips to health providers, and dramatically increases health care costs. It is difficult to find a safe window to travel for services when a person who harms is controlling their time, mobility, and finances. 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, including safely and freely deciding whether to become or stay pregnant. We believe in a future free from violence where we all have the freedom to control our bodies, safely care for loved ones, and access the services that make that possible.

Eliminating access to abortion care because of disagreements over personal health care decisions is harmful to women's health, irresponsible public policy, and does not reflect the reality of people's lives.

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.