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Iowa Supreme Court Hears Oral Arguments in Case that Could Undo Iowans Constitutional Right to Abortion

Des Moines, IA—A newly conservative Iowa Supreme Court today heard oral arguments in a case that could strip Iowans of their fundamental right to safe and legal abortion under the Iowa Constitution. The Court is expected to release its ruling in the case by the end of June.

The Court will decide whether to uphold an earlier ruling by the Court in a case that found a 72-hour waiting period unconstitutional and established Iowans' constitutional right to abortion. The current case regarding a similar 24-hour waiting period comes as federal abortion protections hang by a thread, as the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. If *Roe* falls, states would decide the future of abortion access. In the absence of federal and state constitutional protections, Iowa lawmakers would have the unchecked authority to further restrict abortion access, which Republicans legislators have made clear is their intention.

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Iowa, the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence joined Iowa Abortion Advocate Rue Monroe in a virtual news conference today to discuss oral arguments and the potential impact of the case on abortion access in Iowa.

“The stakes in this case much higher than just the medically-unnecessary 24-hour waiting period,” said Jamie Burch Elliott, Director of Public Affairs for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Iowa. **“At risk is Iowans reproductive freedom to decide when and how to start or expand a family. Instead of wasting time and taxpayer dollars on political overreach, lawmakers need to support health care that meets the needs of Iowans and their individually unique and personal circumstances. It is critical Iowans speak up and tell their state representatives they will not tolerate elected officials who want to take away the fundamental rights of the people they serve.”**

Lower courts have already twice ruled against this medically unnecessary waiting period, saying it indiscriminately subjects all people to an unjustified delay in care, regardless of the patient's decisional certainty, income, distance from the clinic, and status as a domestic violence or rape victim. The law, the court said, takes no care to target patients who are uncertain when they present for their procedures but, instead, imposes blanket hardships upon all women.

A district court judge said the law would have set up medically unnecessary obstacles for Iowans that would have delayed and even prevented them from obtaining care. That's because many people, in order to get abortion services, must find reliable transportation, drive for hours, take time off of work and arrange for childcare. Delays in abortion care, and required additional travel, would have effectively put abortion out of reach.

“Reproductive health services are an essential component of routine medical care for all birthing people, including abortion care,” said Dr. Maria Corona, Executive Director, Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence. **“Barriers to abortion access threaten the autonomy of all birthing people and eliminates health care options and reproductive freedom creating more harm and systemic violence.”**

“We trust survivors to make their own decisions, and we support survivors who become pregnant as a result of sexual violence whether they choose abortion, adoption, or to be a parent,” said Elizabeth Barnhill, Executive Director of the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault. **“People who commit sexual violence rob survivors of the right to decide what happens to their bodies. Restrictive abortion laws like the 24-hour ban continue this harm and make it more difficult for survivors to health from abuse. We hope the Iowa Supreme Court will make the right decision in this case, and trust survivors.”**

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Planned Parenthood Advocates of Iowa (PPAI) is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with a mission of fostering and preserving a social and political climate favorable to reproductive health. To meet this mission, PPAI engages in lobbying, issues education, and supporter mobilization.