

## ICADV Statement in Response: **Iowa Supreme Court's Upholding of Abortion Ban Endangers Women's Health and Autonomy**

It is a dark and devastating day in Iowa as the state's Supreme Court announced that Iowa's abortion ban law enacted in 2023 can soon take effect while the lawsuit challenging the abortion ban proceeds. A temporary injunction blocking the law from taking effect has meant access to abortion up to 20 weeks of pregnancy has remained available in Iowa. However, the Iowa Supreme Court decision today sends the case back to the District Court with instructions to lift the injunction. This process usually takes at least 21 days, so although abortion remains legal in Iowa during that time, the decision today means that abortion as early as six weeks of pregnancy – before most individuals even know they are pregnant – will soon be illegal in Iowa.

Today's decision will not stop women from seeking abortions, however, it will negatively impact the safety of health services women receive and increase the danger for victims of violence by creating impossible barriers to accessing medical care. The so-called exceptions to Iowa's abortion ban for rape, incest, and medical emergencies are effectively meaningless- leaving pregnant people, including victims of rape and incest with no access to abortion care no matter how critical it may be to their safety, mental, or physical health, and future ability to have children or care for other children. The consequences of the Iowa Supreme Court's decision will result in revictimization, further trauma, and harm to victims of child abuse, rape, and domestic 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 laws that create medically unnecessary barriers to accessing abortion threatens women's freedom and health and places victims of violence in greater danger.

Gender violence, including domestic abuse, sexual assault, and dating violence, remains a persistent public health crisis at epidemic levels. Approximately 1 in 2 women experience rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, and, for most women, the first violent experiences occur before age 25.

Reproductive coercion occurs when a person who harms restricts their partner's freedom to control their bodies, lives, and futures. Harmful partners use intimidation, threats, or violence to deny bodily autonomy, including 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. Forcing a partner to stay pregnant traps them in an unhealthy relationship. Today's Supreme Court decision on abortion access is another form of power and control, effectively denying many women their right to essential reproductive healthcare services. Without timely access to abortion, many individuals return to abusive relationships they want to leave and carry unintended pregnancies to term at significant risk to themselves and other children.

Finally, restricting and prohibiting access to abortion is dangerous and harmful. It 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 gender violence.

Outlawing access to reproductive care threatens women's freedom and health and places victims of violence in greater danger. Iowa crime victim 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 that 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 state Supreme Court decision is detrimental to abortion rights and bodily autonomy, setting women's civil rights back 50 years.