Senators Garrett, Bisignano, and Schultz:

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) opposes SSB 1004 and urges you not to advance this bill.

ICADV represents 22 crime victim service provider agencies across Iowa and the collective experience of agency staff who dedicate their lives to supporting victims of violent crime, specifically survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Our providers routinely witness the pain and suffering of crime victims, as well as their stunning resilience in surviving repeated violent acts (often over the course of months and years), inflicted on their minds and bodies by people they know and care about.

Still, we oppose the death penalty. The government should not kill a human being as retribution or punishment, regardless of the crime. We do not condone, excuse, or defend the actions of those who murder but we speak from experience in saying committing violence does not deter violence or end the trauma of those harmed. We know this because some victims of gender violence are abused to the point where they commit crimes themselves, and even harm or kill others.

Again, we are not excusing murder and most survivors do not commit any criminal acts. But inflicting violence to prevent violence is ineffective, inhumane, and does not further the ideals of justice. Iowa does not need the death penalty to prove that killing is wrong or to protect public safety. People convicted of murder in Iowa spend their lives in prison.

Importantly, the price of getting it wrong is too high and already happens too often. The death penalty would perpetuate inequality in our justice system by disproportionately impacting people of color who are more likely to be given death sentences than their white counterparts who commit the same crimes.

ICADV urges you to reject this bill. We condemn violence and cannot support the death penalty as an exception to the violence we work to end.

Submitted Jan. 14, 2021 by:
Laura Hessburg; laurah@icadv.org; 515-490-5241
Public Policy Director, Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence