

# Comment Report

SJR 2

A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Iowa to protect life by declaring that the Constitution of the State of Iowa shall not be construed to recognize, grant, or secure a right to abortion or to require the public funding of abortion.

Subcommittee Members: Schultz-CH, Bisignano, Guth

Date: 02/01/2021

Time: 12:00 PM

Location: 217 Conference Room

**Name:** Chelsea Chism-Vargas

**Comment:** SJR 2, the proposed constitutional amendment, is one of the most extreme attacks on Iowans health in our states history. If it passes, the amendment would strip Iowans of the right to make private health care decisions, opening the door to a statewide abortion ban. Iowans deserve access to the full spectrum of reproductive health care and the ability to make the best medical decisions for their lives. I oppose SJR 2 and ask the subcommittee to NOT pass it. #WeWontGoBack #IStandWithPP

**Name:** Jane Robinette

**Comment:** SJR 2 is dangerous for Iowans. Abortions did not begin with Roe v. Wade or the Iowa Planned Parenthood case. Abortions will not end if this amendment passes and a ban is imposed. They will simply stop being safe and legal (and affordable). To paraphrase Iowa Rep. Holt's recent comments in another context: // The right to someones own life and the pursuit of their own destiny (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) cannot be separated from the right to physical integrity and reproductive autonomy, hence the fundamental right to choose abortion in our constitution. The fundamental right to control our own lives and destiny guaranteed in our U.S. Constitution cannot exist without the right to choose our lives. //This constitutional amendment would extinguish a pregnant person's most basic rights, would interfere with their health and wellbeing, and endanger the lives of Iowans. This will fall most heavily on those with the least means, further widening the inequality gap. Supporters of this amendment who are guided by religious beliefs have the right to their beliefs. but they cannot and should not enforce those religious beliefs on everyone else. That is not how freedom of religion or our democracy works.I urge you to focus your energies on improving the maternal mortality rate in Iowa, increasing access to maternity departments in rural Iowa, adding more OBGYNs, and making sex education and access to contraception more widely available. Those things will actually help people, unlike this dangerous constitutional amendment.

**Name:** Tracy Creason

**Comment:** Dear Senators,As a woman who needed to make a decision about abortion many years ago and having that access, I feel we should not be going backwards and should be supporting a persons right to reproductive healthcare. The right for a person to have an abortion is a decision they should be making, not the government and it should be a protected right in the Iowa Constitution. The proposed constitutional amendment SJR 2, is one of the most extreme attacks on Iowans health in our states history. If it passes, the amendment would strip Iowans of the right to make private health care decisions, opening the door to a statewide abortion ban. Iowans deserve access to the full spectrum of reproductive health care and the ability to make the best medical decisions for their lives. I oppose SJR 2 and ask the

subcommittee to NOT pass it. Please continue to support and expand my freedom. People have the right to choose what happens to their bodies. Iowans have the right to options for reproductive healthcare that is safe, affordable and free from judgement. As a woman, a mother and an Iowan, I urge you to vote to support me and family by VOTING NO on SJR2. #WeWontGoBack #IStandwithPP

**Name:** Melanie SNELL

**Comment:** SJR 2, the proposed constitutional amendment, is one of the most extreme attacks on Iowans health in our states history. If it passes, the amendment would strip Iowans of the right to make private health care decisions, opening the door to a statewide abortion ban. Iowans deserve access to the full spectrum of reproductive health care and the ability to make the best medical decisions for their lives. I oppose SJR 2 and ask the subcommittee to NOT pass it.

**Name:** Lisa Lima

**Comment:** Roe v Wade allowed it to be legal for a woman to protect her own bodily rights. This decision was based on the impact on women's health. It is detrimental to strip that away. The results will be horrific and undermine the value of a woman. A governing body should not be making an amendment that will halt 40 years of legal abortion rights.

**Name:** Nathan Oppman

**Comment:** Thank you for moving this legislation forward! It is essential that we seek to protect life and correct the Iowa Supreme Court overreach. Keep up the good work!

**Name:** Jim Lamb

**Comment:** My testimony is based on the premise of settled embryological science that at the moment of fertilization, a new and unique human life comes into existence. The primary purpose of government is to protect the lives of its citizens. The purpose of a constitution is to provide a structure for the government to do so. To say that the Iowa constitution actually guarantees the right to choose to have human life, unborn little boy and girl Iowans, killed runs contrary to the very purpose of the document itself, not to mention running contrary to nature and natures God. Compassionate Iowans can do better for Iowas women and girls than pretend they have a right to choose to have their babies killed and their own hearts wounded.

**Name:** Danny Carroll

**Comment:** Thank you Senators for your prompt attention to the need for this resolution. The court decision in June 2018 that somehow "found" a right to abortion in the Iowa Constitution, that had escaped notice since 1857, has brought about the need for this senate file. To the average citizen it would have seemed more reasonable to have found a right to life as opposed to a right to abortion. Regardless, the constitution was effectively amended by the court in 2018, contrary to the normal amendment process outlined in that document. Please advance this senate resolution and allow the people to consider the matter as opposed to a few judges who did so, by delivering their "opinion". Thank you.

**Name:** Amy Winters

**Comment:** It's important to have funding n support of women's medical care.

**Name:** Jenn Dreier

**Comment:** SJR 2 is an attack on our health care rights. Bans on abortion don't stop abortions. They stop SAFE AND AFFORDABLE abortions. Iowa needs to put more into supporting woman's healthcare, not stripping woman of their healthcare.

**Name:** John Cook

**Comment:** Please oppose SJR 2. A woman's healthcare decisions should be between he and her

doctor, NOT the Iowa legislature. Thank you for considering my request.

**Name:** Lindsay Park

**Comment:** Do not soil our constitution with this right wing extremist antiscientific intrusion into Iowans' medical care and privacy. If you cared about "life" you wouldn't also be trying to restore the death penalty to cruelly kill actual human beings. Fetuses are only potential human life, and their bearers have the say, not grandstanding legislators

**Name:** Carla Burdock

**Comment:** You people need to spend your time on better things than regulating women's health care! I am 77 years old, have never had an abortion and obviously never will, but firmly believe that I nor you can make life decisions for others and especially women who find themselves in situations that are so traumatic that they would have to consider this. Leave it between them and their doctors. If it is so completely dire a situation, they will find a way to get it done and it could have much worse consequences! If you need a list of my wishes of things for you to work on, I will happily send them along! You do not have educations in medicine nor education, so stay out of making laws on both accounts! For God's Sake, you can not even put a rule in place to put a piece of cloth on your mouths and enforce it !! Your body, your choice !!! Does this only apply to what affects you????

**Name:** Joyce Brown

**Comment:** Good afternoon, Senator Schultz and members of this Sub Committee. My name is Joyce Brown, I live in Ottumwa, and I represent myself, a woman hurt by abortion I support SJR2. It is shocking that abortion has been protected as the only form of domestic violence and abuse against women and children. According to the Elliott Institute, 63% of abortions are pressured, pushed on women, as their only healthcare reproductive option. The abortion industry and lobby; lies, denies and covers up the risks, complications and links of abortion on women's lifelong health. Abortion not only kills children, but many of their moms, literally and figuratively. I know firsthand. I supported abortion. My decision, so personal, led me to abort many children over 11 years. Never once was I told of the ANY possible side effects and how my life might change, even after just, ONE abortion. It's been 32 years since my last abortion and I have experienced many side effects. It does feel inappropriate to be sharing this but you need to know. Recently, I was diagnosed with bilateral ovarian cancer. Why didn't they warn me? Five months of cancer treatment has changed me physically and emotionally. This included chemotherapy which altered me as my long blond hair fell out in clumps and from the tears I shed, as this is part of a woman's identity. Though today I am no evidence of disease, I live with its side effects of neuropathy in my hands and feet, fatigue, chemo brain, etc. and have to apply for social security disability. I will never physically return to who I was just months ago. I had no idea how far reaching abortion complications would affect my life. Through me, see the others who unknowingly battle various forms of cancer because of abortion. The supreme court is dead wrong. The right to kill children (and their moms) is not in the constitution. Help protect life & defend the women of Iowa, I ask you to Support SJR2. Thank you.

**Name:** Laura Hessburg

**Comment:** The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (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 direct service 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. ICADV urges you to oppose SJR 2, amending Iowas constitution to say the State of Iowa does not secure or protect the right to an abortion or require public funding of abortion. Reproductive health services are an essential component of routine medical care for all women, and victims of domestic and sexual violence have an acute need for timely access to the full range of reproductive health services, including abortion care. The link between intimate partner violence and negative reproductive health consequences is profound. Restricting and ultimately prohibiting access to abortion is harmful to womens health and will not stop women from needing or obtaining an abortion. These policies have a far greater impact on the safety of health services women receive than whether women choose to terminate a pregnancy. And for victims of domestic and sexual violence this bill negatively impacts their options for safety more broadly. Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive, abusive, and threatening behaviors. 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. Importantly, approximately half of intimate partner violence occurs in unmarried relationships. Reproductive coercion is an element of domestic violence that occurs when a male partner uses intimidation, threats, or violence to impose his intentions upon a womans reproductive autonomy. This includes rape, sabotaging contraception, and coercing a woman to become pregnant and carry a pregnancy against her will. Iowa service providers report that overcoming barriers to accessing abortion care increases a survivors risk for harm from an abusive partner. Without access to abortion care many women return to abusive relationships they would otherwise leave and carry unintended pregnancies to term at great risk to themselves and other children. Unintended pregnancy is the primary reason women seek abortion care. It also doubles the risk for domestic abuse during pregnancy. Women with a history of domestic violence are 4 times more likely to be abused during pregnancy than women in relationships that were not violent prior to pregnancy. And regardless of the prevalence of domestic violence, homicide by a spouse or intimate partner is the number one cause of death for pregnant women. Safety is not the antidote to domestic violence. Selfdetermination is. Our end goal is not only for individuals to reach safety, it is for individuals to have the ability to determine their own futures and have access to the services that would make this possible. Erecting barriers to accessing safe and essential health care services functions exactly like reproductive health coercion. And for victims of domestic and sexual violence it also makes their lives a lot more dangerous. Eliminating access to abortion care because of disagreements over individual health care decisions is harmful to womens health, bad public policy and does not reflect the reality of womens lives. Please reject SJR 2.

## **Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence Statement Opposing SJR 2**

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (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 direct service 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.

ICADV urges you to oppose SJR 2, amending Iowa's constitution to say the State of Iowa does not secure or protect the right to an abortion or require public funding of abortion.

Reproductive health services are an essential component of routine medical care for all women, and victims of domestic and sexual violence have an acute need for timely access to the full range of reproductive health services, including abortion care. The link between intimate partner violence and negative reproductive health consequences is profound.

Restricting and ultimately prohibiting access to abortion is harmful to women's health and will not stop women from needing or obtaining an abortion. These policies have a far greater impact on the safety of health services women receive than whether women choose to terminate a pregnancy. And for victims of domestic and sexual violence – this bill negatively impacts their options for safety more broadly.

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive, abusive, and threatening behaviors. 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. Importantly, approximately half of intimate partner violence occurs in unmarried relationships.

Reproductive coercion is an element of domestic violence that occurs when a male partner uses intimidation, threats, or violence to impose his intentions upon a woman's reproductive autonomy. This includes rape, sabotaging contraception, and coercing a woman to become pregnant and carry a pregnancy against her will.

Iowa service providers report that overcoming barriers to accessing abortion care increases a survivor's risk for harm from an abusive partner. Without access to abortion care many women return to abusive relationships they would otherwise leave and carry unintended pregnancies to term at great risk to themselves and other children.

Unintended pregnancy is the primary reason women seek abortion care. It also doubles the risk for domestic abuse during pregnancy. Women with a history of domestic violence are 4 times more likely to be abused during pregnancy than women in relationships that were not violent prior to pregnancy. And regardless of the prevalence of domestic violence, homicide by a spouse or intimate partner is the number one cause of death for pregnant women.

Safety is not the antidote to domestic violence. Self-determination is. Our end goal is not only for individuals to reach safety, it is for individuals to have the ability to determine their own futures and have access to the services that would make this possible.

Erecting barriers to accessing safe and essential health care services functions exactly like reproductive health coercion. And for victims of domestic and sexual violence it also makes their lives a lot more dangerous.

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

Please reject SJR 2.

*Senate State Government Subcommittee Statement; February 1, 2021*

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