

## **Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence - OPPOSE HF 583 taking away civil rights for Iowans**

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) urges legislators to reject **HF 583** a bill that removes protections against discrimination for transgender Iowans. This bill *takes away* rights that were added to the Iowa Civil Rights Act almost 20 years ago and impacts other laws and policies protecting against discrimination. This bill allows discrimination against transgender people in employment, housing, staying at hotels, starting a bank account or getting a credit card, obtaining government documents, accessing government and non-government services, seeking safety and protections from violence, and more.

We believe this bill is harmful, unnecessary, and appalling. This bill specifically harms state efforts to ensure all crime victims can access support services and safe housing. It also undermines violence prevention efforts and public safety more broadly. Discrimination is a form of violence. It should surprise no one that individuals and communities who disproportionately experience discrimination, also disproportionately experience violence. Transgender Iowans experience extraordinary rates of discrimination, violence, and homelessness. Taking away someone's rights and protections increases danger for individuals and contributes to keeping violence alive in homes, workplaces, schools, and communities.

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence supports 22 local victim service provider organizations across Iowa, including 8 emergency shelters, providing support services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, child abuse, and families impacted by homicide. Federal grants remain the largest source of funding for this work. As a condition of receiving federal funding, agencies are required to ensure access to accommodations and services for all victims and to comply with non-discrimination provisions in federal law under the Violence Against Women Act, the Fair Housing Act, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, and HUD equal access regulations.

This bill puts Iowa victim service provider agencies receiving federal grant funding in direct conflict with federal law and grant obligations and importantly, for many victims, the confusion over whether they can access services creates a barrier to seeking safety and support.

In the past, due to a misplaced concern for safety, mothers fleeing with male children were turned away from shelters, leaving victims with children in greater danger and without access to help. In the past, men were turned away for the same misplaced safety concerns and now most men remain unwilling to seek services.

Since then, state and federal non-discrimination laws and policies were enacted to address discrimination and to help ensure all victims have access to safety and support. Iowa's domestic violence and sexual assault crisis and support centers have been safely serving violent crime victims for decades, including women, men, children, and transgender Iowans.

Even if federal and state law protections against discrimination are taken away, the intent and need for these laws remain because the discrimination these laws were designed to address still discourages crime victims from accessing services. Victim service providers are experienced professionals- meeting the needs of the person seeking services as well as protecting the safety of all individuals in their care is their paramount concern.

ICADV believes this bill makes it harder for crime victims to seek help, find safety, housing, and support, and it contradicts Iowa's commitment to ensuring the safety of all crime victims. Please reject this bill.

*Prepared comments - Public Hearing on HF 583; Feb. 27, 2025*

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