

American Medical Women's Association Draft Position Statement: An Intimate Partner Violence Perspective on Protecting Abortion Access

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Position Statement: The American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) supports the right to a safe and legal abortion for many reasons, including to reduce harm from intimate partner violence.

Background: In 1973, *Roe V. Wade* was passed by the Supreme Court, granting federal protection over the right for people to receive a safe and legal abortion. Under interpretation of the Fourth Amendment's right to privacy, this decision supported the belief that a person's reproductive health care decisions are shared only between them and their medical providers. The overturning of *Roe V. Wade* will have devastating consequences for many, including people affected by intimate partner violence.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) can consist of many forms of abuse, including rape, sexual assault, contraceptive sabotage, and coerced reproductive decision-making and is associated with increased probability of termination of pregnancy (1). Additionally, people already experiencing poverty are those most at risk of IPV (2). A study published in the American Journal of Public Health found that those people who are denied access to abortion are more likely to have an income at or below the Federal Poverty Line within 6 months after the refusal of abortion services compared to those not denied (2). Additionally, due to that lack of financial freedom, people residing in states with strict abortion laws are more likely to stay with their abuser.

Forced pregnancy or "reproductive coercion" is often used as a weapon by abusive partners. Abusers will often refuse the use of or sabotage contraception (3). People experiencing IPV already face barriers in accessing safe and legal abortions (3). Without access to abortions, people experiencing IPV who find themselves facing unwanted pregnancies are at a greater risk of experiencing ongoing and increased physical violence over time by their abusers, with pregnancy creating an additional challenge to overcome when attempting to leave an abusive relationship (4).

Further, continuing unintended pregnancies has been associated with adverse health consequences including gestational diabetes mellitus, depression, weight gain, and obesity (5).

People who have sought and have been denied an abortion are also at an increased risk of life-threatening complications such as gestational hypertension, pre-eclampsia/eclampsia, and postpartum hemorrhage (6). Additionally, removing access to safe and legal abortions may result in maternal death from complications such as hemorrhage and sepsis following abortion services delivered outside of the medical system, a trend that exists in countries where abortion is restricted and or illegal (7). The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* will surely present complications for all birthing people. Those facing IPV will be affected greater than most; without safe, legal access to abortion services, pregnancy may ultimately mean life or death.

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