

NEWS RELEASE

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State's decision to stop federal pandemic-related unemployment benefit program announced as Iowa is in the midst of a crisis for crime victims

DES MOINES, Iowa – May 12, 2020 – We are deeply disappointed in yesterday's announcement that Governor Reynolds will be ending federal pandemic-related unemployment benefit programs on June 12, 2021. These benefits have provided a lifeline to Iowans for more than a year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been referred to as a "great equalizer," meaning, it can impact anyone at any time regardless of age, race, gender or socioeconomic status. But this virus has proven to be anything but this. In fact, it has exacerbated disparities within the systems individuals depend on – healthcare, shelter, food security and employment – and inequities that disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income Iowans.

As the state's leading voice against intimate partner violence, we represent the collective experience of people who dedicate their lives to serving victims of violent crime. Over a year into the pandemic, our programs are seeing an influx of survivors who are reaching out for support, including access to unemployment benefits to gain economic independence. According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence, 99 percent of survivors identify economic/financial abuse as a barrier to safety and self-determination. Often times, when a survivor reaches out for help, several factors have already gone awry and unemployment benefits are not available or are very small. We know through our Match Savings Program that just a few hundred dollars can make all of the difference for a survivor. Limiting access to systems and resources that can help to curb this form of abuse causes additional stress and harm for survivors, and makes them more vulnerable to violence and unsafe situations.

Today's announcement could not have come at a worse time as we are in the midst of a crisis for survivors. Impending funding cuts to Iowa over the next two years means our network of victim service providers – including our agency – may need to reduce staff and post-crisis comprehensive services, or, close their doors entirely. As a result, 28,000 fewer victims of crime will be supported.

Unemployment benefits alone will not solve the issue of financial abuse; we need long term systems change to provide economic security – increase in minimum wage, equal pay and paid sick/emergency leave – in order for survivors to build strong financial foundations. This loss of the increased benefit in unemployment is just one more blow to survivors who have already been victimized by the COVID-19 pandemic. Now is the time to expand structural solutions to address the epidemic of intimate partner violence, not discontinue vital resources that support and empower survivors in the future.

In Solidarity,

Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence Staff and Board of Directors

About the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) is the leading voice to end intimate partner violence in Iowa. Through our network of 23 statewide victim service programs, we provide comprehensive services to anyone who has been a victim of a violent crime – before, during and after. We take a survivor-centered approach to victim services and believe community-based agencies and interventions, healthcare, educational and government systems should work together, centering the voices and experiences of those most vulnerable in our communities, to enhance safety for survivors and their families. When that happens, everyone has the ability to reach their full potential, thrive and live a life free from violence ...
to the Last Girl.

To learn more, visit www.icadv.org or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/IowaCADV.