

## Why we oppose "Marsy's Law"

As victim service providers who are members of the [Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#) and the [Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#), we unconditionally support victims and survivors of violent crimes. We believe appropriate public policies should be in place to provide survivors with a sense of justice and healing. However, we do not believe legislation like "Marsy's Law" (Senate Study Bill 3040 and House Joint Resolution 2003) can effectively meet the diverse needs of survivors and communities.

Marsy's Law proposes amending Iowa's constitution to grant crime victims a series of rights and protections, but provides no meaningful way to exercise those rights. In fact, Iowa law already includes comprehensive victim rights and protections. Before amending the constitution, we should ensure survivors are aware of their rights, and that they have adequate support for the systems and programs that enable them to access their rights.

**Although we believe Marsy's Law is well-intended, the language is unenforceable and creates false hope for survivors and their families. Additionally, we are concerned that Marsy's Law would divert resources away from systems and services that *can* meet the comprehensive needs of victims.**

As victim service providers, we provide survivors in all 99 counties with 24/7 free and confidential support and resources. Currently, the state of Iowa provides us with \$5 million in funding to go toward these services. This includes crisis counseling; assistance at crime scenes and during sexual assault exams; legal advocacy; housing assistance; and more. These services experienced a devastating budget crisis during the last legislative session with a 25 percent cut in state funds. Additional cuts are expected in the current legislative session, which will affect how much money our programs can access on the federal level. This uncertainty makes it difficult for us to support survivors, especially those living in rural counties.

**Meanwhile, \$5-10 million is spent by lobbyists passing Marsy's Law from state to state. That's more money than the state of Iowa invests in sexual assault and domestic violence services combined.** We have limited knowledge of the benefits or the cost such legislation would have in Iowa. We believe the price tag for this amendment is not in our state's best interest. We ask that our elected officials redirect their support toward comprehensive victim services that are already in place.

Crime victims and their families suffer terrible loss, and we fully support elevating their voices. Yet amending the constitution without funding the people and systems needed to ensure survivors can access services would be detrimental. The best way to help these survivors is with sustained funding of comprehensive services.

**We believe Marsy's Law is an ineffective response to the needs of Iowa crime victims.** Clearly, we stand with legislators who want to help survivors. We must continue to work together to address gaps within the current system. Instead of passing Marsy's Law, we urge policymakers to support a task force that explores and responds to these gaps in a way that centers victims and their experiences, and provides a meaningful response.

Sincerely,

**Ben Brustkern – Waverly, IA**

Executive Director, Friends of the Family  
*Comprehensive shelter services for 14 counties.*

**Melissa Cano Zelaya – Des Moines, IA**

Executive Director, L.U.N.A. (Latinas Unidas Services Por Un Nuevo Amanecer)  
*Comprehensive Sexual assault and domestic violence services for the Latino communities in Iowa.*

**Kimberly L. Clair – Tama, IA**

Sexual Assault Coordinator, Meskwaki Victim Services  
*Comprehensive sexual assault and domestic violence services for the Meskwaki nation.*

**Carson Eggland – Decorah, IA**

Executive Director – Helping Services – Domestic Abuse Resource Center  
*Comprehensive domestic violence services for 7 counties.*

**Kristi Fortmann-Doser – Iowa City, IA**

Executive Director, Domestic Violence Intervention Program  
*Comprehensive domestic violence and emergency shelter services for 9 counties.*

**Virginia Griesheimer – Ames, IA**

Interim Director, ACCESS – Assault Care Center Extending Shelter and Support  
*Comprehensive emergency housing assistance, sexual assault and domestic violence for 6 counties.*

**Nelly Hill – Cedar Rapids IA**

Director of Domestic Violence Victim Services, Waypoint  
*Comprehensive domestic violence services for 7 counties.*

**Deb Hogan – Sioux City, IA**

Outreach Coordinator, Council on Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence  
*Comprehensive domestic violence and emergency shelter services for counties in Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota.*

**Mary Ingham – Mason City, IA**

Executive Director, Crisis Intervention Service  
*Comprehensive domestic violence and sexual assault services in 15 counties.*

**Hibo Jama – Des Moines, IA**

Executive Director, Nisaa African Family Services  
*Comprehensive domestic violence and sexual assault services for African Immigrant and Refugee communities in Iowa.*

**Laurie Jensen – Des Moines, IA**

Domestic Violence Services Coordinator, Children and Families of Iowa – Domestic Violence Services  
*Comprehensive domestic violence and emergency shelter services for 2 counties.*

**Shari Kastein – Sioux Center, IA**

Executive Director, Family Crisis Centers  
*Comprehensive domestic violence services for 17 counties.*

**Jacquie Kehoe – Spencer, IA**

Executive Director, Centers Against Abuse and Sexual Assault  
*Comprehensive sexual assault services for 19 counties.*

**Brenda McBride – Fort Dodge, IA**

Executive Director, Domestic/Sexual Assault Outreach Center  
*Comprehensive sexual assault, domestic violence and emergency shelter services for 20 counties.*

**Diane McKee – Council Bluffs, IA**

Executive Director, Catholic Charities Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program  
*Comprehensive sexual assault, domestic violence and emergency shelter services for 9 counties.*

**Ashley Odom – Davenport, IA**

Director of Survivor Services, SafePath Family Resources  
*Comprehensive sexual assault, domestic violence and emergency shelter services for 5 counties.*

**Nancy Robertson – Oskaloosa, IA**

Executive Director, Crisis Intervention Services  
*Comprehensive sexual assault and emergency shelter services for 12 counties.*

**Adam Robinson – Iowa City, IA**

Executive Director, Rape Victim Advocacy Program  
*Comprehensive sexual services for 9 counties.*

**Johna Sullivan – Adel, IA**

Executive Director, Crisis Intervention and Advocacy Center  
*Comprehensive sexual assault and domestic violence services for 10 counties.*

**Joey Taylor – Dubuque, IA**

Executive Director, Riverview Center  
*Comprehensive sexual assault services for 14 counties.*

**Lorraine Uehling-Techel – Ottumwa, IA**

Executive Director, Crisis Center & Women's Shelter  
*Comprehensive domestic violence services for 14 counties.*

**Mira Yusef – Des Moines, IA**

Executive Director, Monsoon United Asian Women of Iowa  
*Comprehensive domestic violence and sexual assault services for the Asian/Pacific Islander communities in Iowa.*

**Kimberly Andresen-Reed – Des Moines, IA**

Executive Director, Transformative Healing  
*Comprehensive sexual assault services for LGBTQ communities in 4 counties.*