

When Will Our Lives Be Worth the Investment?



The need to address gender-based violence (GBV) has never been more urgent. California's Governor and Legislature failed to invest in critical domestic and sexual violence prevention programming and services, amidst disturbing rises in violence. Two months ago, the United States Supreme Court officially overturned *Roe v. Wade*, effectively eliminating bodily autonomy for millions of women in this country and setting reproductive rights advocacy efforts backwards. At the same time, for months, schools, grocery stores, highways, and spas have been sites of mass murder by guns, prompting nothing but sympathetic tweets and requests for campaign donations to stay in power from legislators. **The safety of our bodies and communities has lost political will.**

When those "in power" fail to address and invest in solutions to gender-based violence, they are shrugging their shoulders to the 188% increase in domestic violence reports agencies like the Family Violence Law Center have seen in just one year, the millions of women who will risk

their lives for abortion access, and the countless people who have been senselessly killed by militarized civilians. Why? **Because gender-based violence is a root cause of other forms of violence.** Ignoring this fact means that opportunities to **reduce risk factors** and **increase protective factors** are lost. Risk factors such as exposure to violence between parents and attitudes condoning strict adherence to traditional gender roles often underlie harmful behavior (i.e. mass shootings and forced pregnancies). The more lost opportunities to intervene early and consistently across one's lifespan **will only result in the expansion of and increase in severity of risk factors**- endangering everyone.

The *Roe v. Wade* decision opened the floodgates to new waves of interpersonal and state violence. States across the nation have already closed reproductive service centers, criminalized abortions, and even incentivized abortion bounty hunters. The fear and bloodshed that will result from this decision, denying a woman's right to

denying a woman's right to choose, is unfathomable. **This is state sanctioned gender-based violence and violation of human rights.** The impact on interpersonal violence is difficult to miss. Even under Roe v. Wade, reproductive coercion had been a longstanding abusive tactic. But now, with zero federal protections, painstaking hurdles to abortion access, and criminal penalties on the line, the consequences of reproductive abuse will be even more grave.

Not even gun violence, which directly affects more than just those able to become pregnant, can embolden those in "leadership" to change. Point to the wide access to paramilitary weaponry, the rise in America's incel movement, or the grips of white supremacy, and you will realize how many of these factors responsible for gun violence in America are root causes of gender-based violence. This is not a coincidence. **Gender-based violence is, expressly, about exerting power over others** on the basis of gender: empowering men and disempowering women and gender-expansive people. The exertion of power over others is oftentimes a primary goal of those who commit gun violence. While the motivations behind the Atlanta spa shootings may, on the face of it, contrast from the little we know of the Buffalo supermarket shooting or the Uvalde school shooting, the takeaways are clear: the intersection of guns, control, toxic masculinity, and power can be lethal. Addressing gender-based violence through sustained, effective investments and programming **can have a positive ripple effect across all forms of interpersonal and community violence.** Targeting both prevention and intervention, across the lifespan is crucial to seeing any discernible improvement in the safety and health of our

communities. **However, we need funding to achieve this.**

Funding such as the:

- \$15 million ongoing investment in domestic and sexual violence that Governor Newsom rejected this year
- \$16 million investment in gender-based violence prevention and intervention that the Alameda County Board of Supervisors rejected this year

It is only through ongoing and/or non-piecemeal investments that we can start to **change cycles of violence.** Providing comprehensive resources allows community-based organizations to expand the reach of programs, develop meaningful relationships with clients, and provide a wider spectrum of support services- **increasing the number of and availability of protective factors.**

We need our state and local elected officials, stakeholders, and decision-makers to, once and for all, memorialize the importance of gender-based violence prevention and intervention work in their budgets. Because, at the end of the day, **if a budget is our moral document, what do we want it to reflect about our shared commitment to survivors, their families, and communities?**

