
Association of Black Women Physicians Statement Against Domestic Violence

The Association of Black Women Physicians (ABWP) mourns the tragic loss of Dr. Cerina Fairfax, a beloved dentist, devoted mother of two, and member of our community, who was killed by her husband, former Virginia Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax, in an act of domestic violence. Dr. Fairfax's death is a devastating reminder that domestic violence knows no boundaries. It affects women across all professions, educational levels, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Her loss, along with the recent deaths of other prominent women to domestic violence, underscores an urgent public health crisis that demands immediate and sustained action from the medical community and society at large.

The ABWP unequivocally denounces domestic violence in all its forms and stands in solidarity with all women who have experienced this devastating crime.

The Scope of the Crisis

Domestic violence, also known as intimate partner violence, represents a pervasive threat to women's health, safety, and lives. Nearly one in three women in the United States experiences physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime. One in four women experiences severe physical violence by an intimate partner, with consequences including injury, need for medical care, and post-traumatic stress symptoms.

Black women bear a disproportionate burden of this violence. While Black women comprise 14% of the U.S. population, they represent 31% of domestic violence fatalities and are three times more likely than White women to be killed by an intimate partner. Nearly 45% of Black women report experiencing intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Black women also experience more serious injuries, severe mental health consequences, and higher rates of homicide as a result of intimate partner violence.

Domestic Violence Affects Healthcare Professionals and Mothers

Dr. Fairfax's death highlights a reality that is often overlooked: healthcare professionals themselves experience domestic violence. Research indicates that approximately 31% of healthcare professionals report lifetime experiences of

domestic violence, with women healthcare professionals experiencing significantly higher rates than their male colleagues. Female dentists and other dental professionals face the same risks as other healthcare workers, yet their experiences have been largely ignored in the literature. Female physicians and dentists face unique barriers to seeking help, including professional stigma, concerns about career impact, and the misconception that education or professional status provides protection from abuse. It does not.

Dr. Fairfax was also a mother of two young children. Domestic violence has profound and immediate impacts on children who witness it. Approximately 16% to 25% of American youth are exposed to intimate partner violence in their lifetime, and exposure to intimate partner violence accounts for approximately 20% of all child maltreatment cases. Children exposed to intimate partner violence experience negative impacts on physical and mental health, relationships, and learning. They have higher rates of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, developmental delays, and emotional-behavioral difficulties. These children also have a higher incidence of experiencing or using violence in romantic relationships as adults, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of violence. Maternal exposure to intimate partner violence is associated with increased risk of low birth weight, preterm birth, and child health problems including diarrhea and malnutrition.

The Health Impact

Domestic violence is not merely a social issue. It is a critical health crisis with profound medical consequences. Women who experience intimate partner violence face increased risks of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, chronic pain, traumatic brain injury, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancy, and numerous other adverse health outcomes. Pregnancy represents a particularly vulnerable time, with domestic violence contributing to low birth weight, preterm birth, and maternal mortality. Homicide is the most common cause of maternal mortality and is usually perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner. Forty to forty-five percent of female homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner.

Over half of all female homicides are related to intimate partner violence. Critically, research shows that victims of intimate partner homicide often experienced

violence in the time preceding their deaths, highlighting missed opportunities for intervention.

Our Commitment as Physicians

As Black women physicians, we recognize our unique responsibility and opportunity to address this crisis. Healthcare settings provide critical touchpoints where women seek care, often multiple times throughout their lives. These encounters offer safe, private opportunities for disclosure, support, and connection to life-saving resources.

The ABWP calls upon all physicians and healthcare providers to:

- Routinely screen women for intimate partner violence in a safe, confidential, and trauma-informed manner
- Provide empathetic, non-judgmental support to survivors, recognizing that leaving an abusive relationship is a complex process that often requires multiple attempts
- Offer evidence-based interventions including safety planning, advocacy services, and referrals to specialized domestic violence resources
- Recognize the unique barriers that Black women face in disclosing abuse and seeking help, including systemic racism, medical mistrust, inadequate systems responses, and lack of culturally responsive services
- Support our colleagues in healthcare who may be experiencing domestic violence by creating safe spaces for disclosure and providing access to confidential resources
- Assess for intimate partner violence during well-child visits and prenatal care, recognizing the impact on children and the opportunity to intervene
- Advocate for policies and resources that support survivors and prevent violence
- Educate ourselves and our colleagues about the signs, health consequences, and appropriate responses to domestic violence

A Call to Action

Domestic violence is preventable. Every woman deserves to live free from fear, coercion, and violence. Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, nurturing environment. The ABWP commits to working alongside community organizations,

advocacy groups, legal systems, and other stakeholders to eliminate domestic violence and support survivors in their journeys toward safety and healing.

We honor the memory of Dr. Cerina Fairfax and her two children who have lost their mother. We honor all those we have lost to this violence. We pledge to transform our grief into action. We will not remain silent. We will use our voices, our expertise, and our platforms to demand change and to ensure that every woman, including our colleagues in medicine, and every child receives the care, support, and protection they deserve.

In Memoriam: Black Women Lost to Domestic Violence – April 2026

We honor the Black women whose lives were taken by intimate partner violence in April 2026 alone.

- **Dr. Cerina Fairfax** (April 1) – Dentist and mother of two, killed by her husband, former Virginia Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax
- **Nancy Metayer Bowen** (April 1) – Vice Mayor of Coral Springs, Florida, and the first Black woman elected to its city commission, killed by her husband, who has been charged with premeditated murder in what police classified as a domestic violence incident
- **Pastor Tammy McCollum** (April 6) – Fatally shot by her husband just hours after preaching an Easter sermon to her congregation
- **Qualeisha "Siditty" Barnes** (April 8) – Detroit rapper and nursing student, 14 weeks pregnant, allegedly killed by her boyfriend in an attempt to hide the pregnancy
- **Davonta Curtis** (April 8) – Transgender woman killed by her boyfriend
- **Ashley Robinson (Ashlee Jenae)** (April 9) – Popular social media influencer who died under suspicious circumstances in Zanzibar; her fiancé is currently being detained by authorities
- **Ashanti Allen** (mid-April) – Eight months pregnant, allegedly killed by the father of her unborn child, who has been charged with her murder

These women were healthcare professionals, elected officials, faith leaders, artists, students, mothers, and community members. They represent the full breadth of

Black womanhood – and the indiscriminate nature of domestic violence. Their loss is immeasurable.

We say their names. We honor their lives. We commit to action in their memory.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, help is available. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is available 24/7 at 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE) or by text at "START" to 88788.

Together, we can and must end domestic violence.

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