1. Title: Macroeconomic Shocks and Domestic Violence: Evidence from COVID-19

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3. Abstract:

Domestic violence (DV), defined as stalking, rape, or physical violence, is a global problem with 35% of women worldwide reporting experiencing DV (WHO 2017). In this project, our goal is twofold. First, we aim to look at COVID-19—a large macroeconomic and health shock—on an important outcome from a welfare perspective: domestic violence (DV). DV is an important outcome to study because it has large financial and health implications; DV survivors suffer reductions in earnings and poor health (Aizer, 2011) and the CDC spends $5.8bn annually on health costs related to DV (St. Jude House). Second, we also aim to test two interventions that are likely to determine pathways to aid victims of DV during a pandemic: one consists of providing labor market opportunities for women and a second one on providing information on how to identify and respond in DV cases.

We will sample 4000 women in the U.S. on the M-Turk platform and collect information on their financial, emotional, and relationship stress levels. Then, we provide two interventions. The first treatment will provide information on the National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH), where trained advocates are available to talk confidentially and provide resources on DV. We will also provide the NDVH’s resources on healthy relationships, legal help, and conflict resolution. The second treatment will provide a cash transfer to women for completing tasks on M-Turk; in this way we will increase women’s labor market opportunities at home.

Our results will shed light on two important questions: First, can information mitigate the effects of DV? Secondly, can labor market opportunities mitigate the effects on DV? Our goal is to look at the broad implications of COVID-19 on DV and illustrate policy opportunities to mitigate DV in the wake of an unprecedented macroeconomic shock.

4. Data description: To study coronavirus’ effects on DV, we use five important data sources: The National Incident Based Reporting System Series, the UNACAST Social Distancing Scoreboard, our M-Turk Survey, the Corona Data Scraper, and Climate.gov data.

5. JEL Codes for the project: J12, J16, I25, K38

6. Key words: COVID-19, domestic violence, stress, household bargaining