



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence  
**ACTIONALLIANCE**

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## 2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### INVESTING IN SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Virginia has been using federal grant dollars to invest in a small number of evidence-informed sexual and domestic violence prevention programs for more than 15 years. These programs use best practices in public health to not only reduce risks, but to build protective factors and resilience for all young people, in order to prevent violence before it can occur.

**Given the limited availability of federal funds, only 16 out of Virginia's 65 sexual and domestic violence agencies are currently able to engage in prevention work in their communities.** This is not enough to sustain or expand vital sexual and domestic violence prevention programming across the state. In a recent survey of agencies, many reported that they do not have a full-time prevention staff member and that they would need between 51-75k per year to support a dedicated position in the community.

#### *What are we asking for?*

- ✓ Legislation to establish the *Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Prevention Program* to authorize dedicated staff positions and new grant programs.
- ✓ A budget request of \$5 million as initial funding for the program with 85% of funds awarded to community-based sexual and domestic violence agencies for prevention programming.

### EXPANDING HOPE CARD ACCESS FOR SURVIVORS STATEWIDE

The Hope Card Program allows anyone who has a non-temporary valid civil protection order to obtain a card summarizing the protection order's critical information. A Hope Card is not a substitute for the order; it offers victims a durable and convenient means of carrying pertinent information regarding an existing order. The design of the Card combines law enforcement's immediate need for information in response to a domestic violence incident with a victim's need for safety, convenience, and wraparound services.

#### *What are we asking for?*

- ✓ An annual budget item to cover the cost of the total estimated amount for the Supreme Court of Virginia, Office of the Executive Secretary to implement the Hope Card Program in all trial courts statewide: \$81,062 each year or \$162,124 per biennium.

### PREVENTING INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDE

In an average month, 50 women are shot to death by intimate partners in the United States. Most intimate partner homicides in Virginia are committed with the use of a firearm. Recent data from the Virginia Office

of the Chief Medical Examiner indicate that 64% of all intimate partner violence homicide victims were killed with a firearm.

***What are we asking for?***

- ✓ Proposal to adopt uniform court practices in cases of final family abuse protective orders where respondent possession, transport, and purchase of firearms are prohibited. This proposal establishes the requirement for a judicial mechanism to certify that respondents of final JDR court protective orders have relinquished access to or possession of firearms, including concealed carry permits issued by a circuit court.

**PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE FOR VIRGINIA FAMILIES**

We should all be able to be there for our families when they need us most. But right now, too many working families don't have the opportunity to take paid leave to receive treatment for a serious illness, support a sick family member, or care for a new child. Paid leave means not having to choose between your job and your family. Years of public health research on effective strategies to prevent sexual and intimate partner violence tells us that strengthening economic supports for families, including expanding access to paid family and medical leave, reduces financial insecurity and prevents violence.

***What are we asking for?***

- ✓ Legislation to support the Virginia Employment Commission in establishing and administering a paid family and medical leave program. Under the program, benefits are paid to eligible employees and funding is provided through premiums assessed to employers and employees.

**RATIFICATION OF THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (ERA)**

Without the ERA, the U.S. Constitution does not explicitly guarantee that the rights it protects are held equally by all citizens without regard to sex. The ERA would not only provide a clearer judicial standard for deciding cases of sex discrimination, but it would also provide a strong legal defense against any rollbacks on significant policies that ensure greater gender equity like Title IX, the Violence Against Women Act, etc.

***What are we asking for?***

- ✓ A joint resolution to make Virginia the 38<sup>th</sup> and final state needed in order to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

**OTHER 2020 LEGISLATIVE ITEMS THE ACTION ALLIANCE SUPPORTS:**

- ✓ Expanding statewide access to forensic nurse examiners/trauma-informed medical services for survivors in the aftermath of an assault;
- ✓ Ending the trauma-to-prison pipeline and overcriminalization of youth of color by enacting the Healthy Youth Secure Care Legislation;
- ✓ Promoting safety and justice for immigrant survivors by providing access to drivers permits and in-state tuition to all immigrants in Virginia regardless of immigration status;

- ✓ Passage of the Healthy Youth Act and comprehensive healthy relationship and sexuality education for young Virginians;
- ✓ Reducing Virginia's Maternal Mortality rates by extending post-partum Medicaid coverage to a year after birth, allowing home visits to be reimbursed by Medicaid, and studying the possibility of covering doula services under Medicaid;
- ✓ Including *any act of violence, force, or threat against an intimate partner or an intimate partner's child* as a factor in child custody determinations



For more information on these or other priorities contact Jonathan Yglesias at 804-377-0335 or email [jyglesias@vsdvalliance.org](mailto:jyglesias@vsdvalliance.org)