



## PREVENT SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Currently, the Commonwealth invests \$0 toward the important goal of preventing sexual and domestic violence through primary prevention efforts. And with limited federal funds, only 16 out of our 65 sexual and domestic violence agencies (SDVAs) can engage in this life-saving work in their communities. [In 2020, policy leaders recognized the critical need to prevent violence](#) before it happens and established the first-ever state fund to support and expand these efforts. Unfortunately, this was one of the funding initiatives put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the enormous fiscal impact it had on our state budget.

However, the critical need to prevent violence has only become [more apparent](#) during this crisis:

- **We have seen the rates of sexual and domestic violence drastically increase as a direct result of COVID-19.** Beginning in March, Virginia's Statewide Hotline saw a 73% increase in contacts while over half of SDVAs reported an increase in demand for services and 87% reported significant shifts in work to address the complex and ongoing housing, financial, and safety needs during the pandemic.
- **Job loss has resulted in more survivors becoming financially entangled with their abusers** while safe and affordable housing remains in short supply. Requests for emergency shelter have increased dramatically, with one agency reporting an 150% increase in the number of families and survivors living in their shelter as compared to the previous year. For a majority of SDVAs, this upward trend is continuing into the Winter.
- **More teens and young adults are requesting sexual and domestic violence services than ever before.** As virtual classes began in the Fall, hotlines across the state received 23% more contacts and requests for services from survivors who are under the age of 24.
- Upward trends in overall hotline contacts have turned into significant increases in the number of survivors receiving face-to-face crisis intervention, advocacy, and counseling services; **in some communities, these increases reflect literally thousands more being served in 2020 in comparison to 2019.**

Now, more than ever, funding for sexual and domestic violence prevention work is urgently needed to counteract the effects of the pandemic and to undo family and community risk factors for violence.

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

- ✓ **Restore crucial investments** to the prevention fund by reallocating the original \$1.5 million per biennium, or \$750k annually, **for these life-saving efforts.**

## **REIMBURSE MEDICAL COSTS FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS**

A 2020 Health and Human Services study recognized that sexual assault survivors are expected to meet several burdensome requirements to obtain reimbursement for medical costs incurred through CICF, including reporting the crime to law enforcement within five days (unless good cause is shown).

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

A bill to exempt sexual assault survivors from the requirement to report to law enforcement to seek reimbursement through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF).

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## **IMPROVE RESPONSES TO WORKPLACE HARASSMENT**

Workplace harassment is a widespread problem, affecting workers in every kind of workplace and industry, and at every level of employment. However, low-paid workers—two-thirds of whom are women in Virginia—are especially at risk of harassment given the stark power imbalances they experience at work.

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

A bill to create a harassment definition and pathways to civil action by those who have experienced harassment and abuse in the workplace.

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## **PASS THE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EQUITY ACT (RHEA)**

Access to reproductive health care is critical for the health and economic security of survivors. Survivors need comprehensive insurance coverage for the full spectrum of reproductive health services, including family planning, abortion, and postpartum care, regardless of income, immigration status, gender identity, or type of insurance.

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

A bill to revise health benefit plans and the state plan for medical assistance to include specific reproductive health services.

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## **EXPUNGE CRIMINAL RECORDS FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING**

Many of those who have been trafficked were forced to commit crimes against their will. A vacatur statute would serve to clear wrongful convictions and expunge criminal records, making survivor access to resources like trauma counseling, housing, education, and employment easier.

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

A bill to allow victims of trafficking to vacate and expunge criminal convictions.

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## **BUILD DIVERSE COALITIONS TO END SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Virginia's Advisory Committee on Sexual & Domestic Violence needs new voices and alignment of responsibilities with the desired composition and direction of the sexual and domestic violence field.

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

A bill to alter the composition and function of the Advisory Committee to build a diverse and effective coalition on behalf of survivors statewide.