



2023 Legislative Priorities **WE SUPPORT**

Fund the phones! Sustain Virginia's Statewide Hotline

- ✓ \$1.2M in annual appropriations to DCJS for the administration of Virginia's Statewide Hotline for sexual and domestic violence survivors.

TALKING POINTS:

As federal funds become more volatile and fluctuate from year to year, a solution is needed to sustain the Statewide Hotline and ensure its services are accessible to all throughout the Commonwealth. In 2021 alone, the Hotline received 77,456 calls resulting in 30,731 adults and children receiving referrals to their local sexual and domestic violence agency for help with healthcare, legal, and housing needs. An annual investment of \$1.2M can fully staff the Hotline with sexual and domestic violence advocates and sustain life-saving coverage 24/7, 365 days a year.

Ensure safe and lawful firearms transfer for those subject to final protective orders and those convicted of domestic violence

- ✓ A bill to clarify and align protocol for firearms transfer across Virginia code sections.

TALKING POINTS:

State and federal law prohibits respondents to final protective orders and those convicted of domestic violence from purchasing, possessing, or transporting firearms. But right now, our courts and law enforcement have no way of ensuring that firearms transfer is happening, leaving victims vulnerable to increasingly lethal threats of violence. Aligning protocol across code sections will not only create greater clarity, but it will also support robust implementation of the laws statewide.

Close the dangerous loophole in Virginia's strangulation statute

- ✓ A bill to amend Virginia's strangulation statute to include the lethal act of suffocation.

TALKING POINTS:

Throughout the pandemic, both frequency and lethality of intimate partner violence has been on the rise. Suffocation is an increasingly used and lethal tactic employed by abusers. However, given Virginia's current definition of strangulation, the specific act of restricting oxygen to someone's airways is not captured under current law, allowing many abusers to evade criminal charges and prosecution after committing these incredibly dangerous acts.

Repeal VA's discriminatory prohibition on LGBTQ marriage

- ✓ Bills to repeal VA's constitutional provision defining marriage as only a union between one man and one woman

TALKING POINTS:

We support healthy relationships between consenting adults and believe that ALL Virginians have the right to safe, respectful, and violence free relationships and homes. Advancing equality and respect for LGBTQ Virginians is integral to creating a Virginia free from sexual and domestic violence. It's time to repeal VA's constitutional provision defining marriage as only a union between one man and one woman as well as the related provisions that are no longer valid because of the US Supreme Court decision in Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U.S. 644 (2015).

Expand economic supports for women, families, and children

- ✓ Bills to create a child-tax credit, family medical leave programs, and create greater access to conditions in which every family can fully thrive

TALKING POINTS:

Improving household financial security by investing in refundable child tax credits, paid sick and/or family leave, and childcare infrastructure has proven to reduce the risk factors for child abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence. Policies that strengthen economic security for families can go a long way toward reducing violence and enhancing conditions where every child has an opportunity to fully thrive.

WE OPPOSE

Presumptions for “shared parenting” over victim/child safety

- ☒ Any bills creating “shared parenting” presumptions in child custody and separation determinations.

TALKING POINTS:

Litigation abuse, particularly in the context of child custody and separation, is costly, lengthy, traumatic, and all too common for parenting survivors who attempt to leave abusive spouses. We strongly oppose any proposal that would create a presumption for “shared parenting” time in separation and custody determinations. Not only does this proposal dilute and trump factors intended to serve the best interests of the child, but it contradicts all best available research evidence which tells us that it’s not about the frequency of time spent with both parents, but about the quality of time spent with non-abusive parents.

Attacks on LGBTQ Virginians

- ☒ Any bills that deny LGBTQ Virginians a right to safety, dignity, and respect.

TALKING POINTS:

We believe that ALL Virginians have the right to safe, respectful, and violence free relationships, schools, and homes. Right now, in Virginia and across the nation, trans people are under attack. With bills that seek to restrict public access to facilities and services to “don’t say gay” bills, it is imperative that we advance equality and respect for LGBTQ Virginians. This is integral to creating a Virginia free from sexual and domestic violence.

Restrictions on abortion access for survivors

- ☒ Any bills limiting survivor access to healthcare, including abortion, in the aftermath of trauma.

TALKING POINTS:

A person’s sexual and reproductive health are directly impacted by experiences of sexual and intimate partner violence. Acts violence serve to remove power and agency making voice and choice imperative in the aftermath of trauma. We support full access to non-judgmental, safe, legal, affordable, and medically accurate sexual and reproductive health care for all survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence.