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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Progress for workers, immigrants, and the planet during 2020 General Assembly**

RICHMOND, Va – The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) is pleased that the General Assembly accepted Governor Northam’s amendments to bills that VICPP championed that will help workers, immigrants, and the health of the planet. “Despite the difficulties we are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic, our Governor and legislators managed to enact legislation that will move Virginia forward,” said Kim Bobo, VICPP’s Executive Director.

VICPP is grateful to our legislators, coalition partners, advocates, and faith leaders from across the Commonwealth who worked tirelessly during the 2020 session advocating critical economic, racial, social, and environmental justice issues.

The following bills supported by VICPP had amendments that were approved yesterday, enabling them to become law:

**Minimum Wage Increase.** The General Assembly approved the Governor’s amendment to delay the implementation of the minimum wage ([SB7](#) and [HB395](#)) by four months, from Jan. 1, 2021 to May 2, 2021. Although the increase will be a bit delayed, Virginians will see the first increase about a year from now. This is an important step toward raising wages enough to support a family.

**Comprehensive Predatory Lending Reform.** VICPP worked closely with the Virginia Poverty Law Center and other partners to finally pass legislation to crack down on predatory lending. The Governor amended the predatory lending reform bills ([HB789](#) and [SB421](#)) and moved the enactment day forward from July 1, 2021 to January 1, 2021. This is a great improvement that VICPP helped advocate and it will save Virginians approximately \$50 million in fees.

**Environmental Justice.** The Governor amended the Environmental Justice Council bills ([SB883](#)) to add “disability” to the definition of environmental justice alongside “race, color, faith, national origin, and income.” In the Virginia Environmental Justice Act ([HB704](#) and [SB406](#)), he added clarifying language to the meaning of the bill. Virginia Interfaith Power & Light (VAIPL) and VICPP advocated the amendments to both bills.

**Energy Burden.** The Governor made some technical amendments to the bill to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and use some of the revenue to invest in energy efficiency ([HB981](#) and [SB1027](#)).

**Driver’s Licenses for All.** The Governor amended the bills that give people of differing immigration status the ability to obtain a Driver Privilege Card ([HB1211](#) and [SB34](#)) and made the cards look more like other licenses so immigrants are less likely to be subject to discrimination. VICPP and immigrant rights advocates still have concerns about privacy issues with this bill, but supported the Governor’s amendments as good improvements to the bill.

VICPP supported the following bills already signed into law (not on yesterday’s agenda):

**In-State Tuition.** VICPP worked with coalition partners (including VIIA, VACIR, NAKASEC, LAJC and the DREAM Project), for many years, to pass this law that allows all who meet the Virginia residency requirements to receive in-state tuition ([HB1547](#) and [SB935](#)). “Virginia has made history as the first southern state to implement this law, joining twenty states that offer in-state tuition to students who are undocumented. In these states, students, employers, and the entire society have realized tremendous economic and social benefits,” said Kim Bobo.

**Wage Theft Reforms.** VICPP championed bills to: create a private cause of action for wage theft ([HB123](#) and [SB838](#)), add protections against retaliation ([HB337](#) and [SB48](#)), strengthen the ability of DOLI to investigate wage claims ([HB336](#) and [SB49](#)), remove the piece work exemption from minimum wage ([SB78](#)), create a private cause of action for misclassification of workers ([HB984](#) and [SB894](#)), establish prohibitions on noncompete agreements for low-wage workers ([HB330](#) and [SB480](#)), remove the domestic worker exemption from minimum wage ([SB804](#)) and strengthen enforcement against misclassification ([SB744](#), [SB662](#), [HB1407](#), [HB1199](#)).

**Office of New Americans.** VICPP supported bills ([HB1209](#) and [SB991](#)) to create an office to welcome and support newcomers.

The 2020 General Assembly has made great progress toward making Virginia a more equitable, compassionate, and welcoming state. VICPP will continue to advocate for justice in the coming session and will work with legislators from both parties to move our Commonwealth forward.

*The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy advocates economic, racial, social, and environmental justice in Virginia’s policies and practices through education, prayer, and action.*

*VICPP is a non-partisan coalition of 750 faith communities working for a more just society.*