



## Policy Priorities for 2024 General Assembly

(Last updated April 12)

### Health Equity

#### *VICPP Leading*

***Unconscious Bias Training for Healthcare Professionals (SB 35, HB 1130).*** After a four year effort, the General Assembly (GA) finally adopted a requirement that healthcare professionals who deal with pregnant women be trained in unconscious bias. The PUSH Coalition that VICPP helped organize garnered strong bi-partisan support. Senate Co-Patrons: Senator Locke (D), Senator Head (R). House Co-Patrons: Delegate Hayes (D), Delegate Coyner (R). ***The bill passed with strong bi-partisan support, but the Governor amended the bills in ways that defeat the purpose of the bills.***

***Community Health Workers (HB 594).*** A Community Health Worker (CHW) is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of the community. Virginia is *not* among the 25 states that have created a sustainable pathway to fund CHWs. With the end of COVID-19 emergency funding, most CHWs connected to Local Health Districts will lose their funding in 2024. VICPP advocates money in the budget to support CHWs connected to local health districts. Budget amendment sponsors: Delegate Sickles (D) and Senator Aird (D). In addition, VICPP supports creating a process for Medicaid reimbursement for CHWs. Patrons: Senate Pillion (R) and Delegate Sickles (D). ***The conference committee budget and Governor's budget include money for the community health workers in local health departments but not for DMAS to study how to get Medicaid to cover costs of community health workers.***

#### *VICPP Supporting*

***Healthcare Coverage for Undocumented Children (SB 231, HB 970).*** VICPP advocated a bill to cover healthcare for the 13,000 children who would be eligible for Medicaid except for their documentation status. Work led by The Commonwealth Institute. Patrons: Delegate Tran (D) and Senator Hashmi (D). ***These bills were killed in the finance committees, and this initiative was not funded in the legislative or Governor's budget.***

### Criminal Justice Reform

#### *VICPP Leading*

***Limiting the use of attack dogs in prisons (HB 159).*** Most prison systems use dogs to locate contraband. Virginia uses attack dogs to “manage” people who are incarcerated. Between 2017 and 2022, people incarcerated were bitten by dogs 271 times. Some of these bites caused permanent damage. The next highest state had only 15 bites in the same time period. Patron: Delegate Seibold (D) and Chief Co-Patron: Delegate Webert (R). ***Passed the House and Senate with strong bi-partisan support. Signed into law by the Governor.***

***No cost communication (SB 378, HB 801).*** VICPP supported bills to provide no-cost communication (phones, videocalls and emails) between families and their incarcerated loved ones. VICPP helped lead a coalition effort on this work with other key organizations like the Legal Aid Justice Center, the ACLU, Sistas for Justice Reform, SALT, and the Humanization Project. Patrons: Senator Boysko (D) and Delegate Rasoul (D). ***A severely watered down version of the bill (“lower cost communication”) passed with bi-partisan support and was signed by the Governor.***

## VICPP Supporting

**Oversight (SB 456, HB 555).** There was money in the 2023 budget to set up an oversight office. In 2024, the office needed to be codified. The ACLU led the work. Patrons: Senator Marsden (D) and Delegate Hope (D). ***This bill passed with strong bi-partisan support and was signed into law by the Governor.***

**Second Look (SB 427, HB 834).** This bill provided people who are incarcerated with long prison sentences an opportunity to get a second look at their sentence if they've served at least ten years and been active in education and reform opportunities. The ACLU led the work. Patrons: Senator Deeds (D) and Delegate Cousins (D). ***The Senator bill was continued to 2025. The House bill was killed.***

**Limiting solitary confinement (SB 719, HB 1244).** This bill limits solitary or isolated confinement to less than 15 days. VICPP supported the work of the ACLU on this initiative. Patrons: Senator Bagby (D) and Delegate Cole (D). ***The bills passed on party-line vote, and were vetoed by the Governor.***

**Automatic restoration of voting rights (SJ 2, HJ 2).** VICPP supported bills to automatically restore voting rights. Patrons: Senator Locke (D) and Delegate Bennett-Parker (D). ***Bills were held over till 2025.***

## Affordable Housing

### VICPP Leading

**Housing and Faith in the Commonwealth (SB 233, HB 1124).** VICPP led an effort to get Virginia to allow congregations to build affordable housing without special zoning changes. VICPP's bill was modeled after one that recently passed in California called "Yes, in God's Backyard." Patrons: Senator Hashmi (D) and Delegate Carr (D). ***The bill was assigned to the Virginia Housing Commission for work.***

### VICPP Supporting

**Money.** VICPP supports more money for building affordable housing, rental assistance, and eviction prevention. This work is led by the Virginia Housing Alliance and the Virginia Poverty Law Center. ***The compromise budget includes extra money for the VA Housing Trust Fund, manufactured home parks, down-payment assistance, and the eviction reduction program. The Governor's budget only adds money to the VA Housing Trust Fund.***

**Tenant protections.** VICPP supports the Virginia Poverty Law Center's and Housing Opportunity Made Equal's proposals for protecting tenants against evictions. ***There were many bills that passed and sent to the Governor. He signed a few, amended a few, and vetoed a few.***

## Working Family Support

### VICPP Leading

**Paid Sick Days (SB 507, HB 348).** VICPP has led a coalition effort to create a Paid Sick Day standard for all workers. Patrons: Senator Surovell (D) and Delegate Ward (D). ***The bills were carried over to 2025.***

**Child Labor Protections (HB 100).** VICPP sought to increase the penalties for child labor violations. The penalties had not been updated in 30 years. Patron: Delegate Siebold (D). ***The bill passed with strong bi-partisan support and was signed into law by the Governor.***

### VICPP Supporting

**Minimum wage (SB 1, HB 1).** The minimum wage bill that passed in 2020 must be reenacted before July 2024 for the next two increases can go into effect and raise the minimum wage up to \$15 per hour Patrons: Senator Lucas (D) and Delegate Ward (D). ***The bills passed both chambers on party-line votes. The Governor vetoed the bills.***

**Childcare subsidies.** VICPP is part of a childcare coalition (Virginia Promise Partnership) advocating more subsidies for childcare. Much more is needed for working families. The Governor proposed money in his budget. The Partnership advocated more in the budget. ***The conference budget consolidated childcare and early education funding and allocated almost \$70 million in additional dollars. The Governor reduced***

***that amount somewhat in his budget, but still includes extra money.***

***Wage Theft (HB 325).*** VICPP is part of a group of labor attorneys, labor groups and worker advocates that want to strengthen remedies on minimum wage and overtime laws to make the remedies the same as the wage payment law. Patron: Delegate Thomas (D). ***The bill was continued till 2025.***

***Remove farmworker exemption (HB 157).*** Currently farmworkers are exempted from the state minimum wage, a clear legacy from slavery. The Legal Aid Justice Center is the lead on this work. Patron: Delegate McClure (D). ***The bill passed both chambers. The Governor vetoed the bill.***

***Labor Trafficking (HB 633).*** Virginia's trafficking code covers sex trafficking. This bill adds labor trafficking to the code to better protect workers. Patron: Delegate Cherry (R) and Chief Co-Patron: Delegate Delaney (D). ***The bill passed with strong bi-partisan support and was signed into law by the Governor.***

## **Other**

***Assault weapon ban (SB 2, HB 2).*** VICPP supports commonsense gun reform, including a ban on assault weapons. Patrons: Senator Deeds (D) and Delegate Helmer (D). ***Passed on party-line votes. Vetoed by the Governor.***

***Tax reform.*** VICPP has been a part of tax coalition led by The Commonwealth Institute. The coalition supports making Virginia's taxes more progressive. VICPP supported efforts to decrease taxes for low-income families and increase taxes on those most able to pay. ***The conference budget removes the most regressive components of the Governor's proposed tax changes but does not make the budget more progressive.***