

February 27, 2018

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Northam:

The Family and Children's Trust Fund (FACT) was established to provide resources to communities to treat and prevent family violence across the lifespan. As a public-private partnership with administrative support provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services and funding oversight from a gubernatorial appointed board, FACT receives income through dedicated license plates, a state-income tax check-off program and other private donations.

In 2012, Virginia's Governor's Advisory Council on Child Abuse and Prevention merged with FACT. The FACT Child Abuse and Neglect Advisory Committee now serves as one of the state's citizens' advisory boards required for federal funding focused on child abuse prevention. Included in the duties of that committee is to advise the Governor and the Department of Social Services on issues related to child abuse and neglect and family violence.

With this charge in mind, we are writing to endorse the following proposed legislation critical to effective prevention and intervention of child abuse:

State level trauma-informed approaches

We know from the study on Adverse Childhood Effects (ACEs) that exposure to trauma often leads to lifelong health issues if interventions are not made. Last fall, the Commission on Youth made recommendations to implement state level efforts focused on preventing and mitigating the effects of trauma on children. Legislation has been put forth to support several of those. They include:

- Funding for formation of a state level workgroup to develop a framework to implement evidence-based trauma-informed policy and practice and use it to help identify innovations, interventions, and resources to support resilient children and communities. (Items 281#1h & 281#s1s)

Our Mission:

To provide for the support and development of services for the prevention and treatment of family violence in Virginia

- Funding to support additional grants through FACT to support innovative practices to prevent childhood trauma at the local level. (Items 334#2h & 334#2s)
- Increased funding for positive behavior interventions and supports for alternatives to suspension and expulsion in early grades. (Items 129#4h, 129#1s, 135#16h & 135#6s)

Increasing permanency for Virginia's children in kinship care

Children in foster care who are living with relatives may languish in care for many years. Virginia has 1,708 children in foster care that are waiting to be adopted, half of which have been waiting for over 2 years. The kinship guardianship assistance program creates a new permanency pathway for children to exit foster care and to live permanently with relatives while continuing to receive financial assistance. The guardianship assistance program will encourage Virginia to place more children with relatives so that they can live permanently with relatives as legal guardians.

(HB 106, SB 44, SB 636)

Medicaid Expansion

The expansion of Medicaid will provide a vital support for thousands of families in Virginia and serve to protect children. Parental access to healthcare is fundamental to buffering stress associated with physical and mental wellbeing. The CDC recognizes parental access to healthcare as a protective factor for child abuse and neglect. Without it, a family's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day challenges of raising children is critically compromised.

Your administration has already made a clear and ongoing commitment to the health and safety of Virginia's children and families. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance to you in those efforts.

Sincerely,



Betty Wade Coyle
Chair, FACT Child Abuse and Neglect Advisory Committee
FACT Board Member

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