

Criminal Legal System Reform

- **Expungement** – Virginia’s criminal records expungement law is in urgent need of change. We must create an automatic expungement system that is as equitable, far-reaching, automatic, and free.
- **Court Fines and Fees** – Monies owed by those with criminal legal system involvement is a serious barrier to their ability to move beyond their worst day. Virginia must publish demographic data, showing how court fines and fees are imposed against different groups of Virginians across the state. As we look to reform the court fines and fees system more broadly, there are a couple of easy changes we can make now that will improve people’s lives, such as automatically eliminating accrual of interest during incarceration and eliminating down payments to access payment plans.
- **Pretrial System** – Virginia’s pretrial system incarcerates far too many individuals—particularly Black and Brown residents—before they’ve even had the facts of their case considered. But the data of how this system works and who it impacts is inaccessible, making any meaningful reform challenging. Comprehensive open data must be made available. We must also end the presumptions against pretrial release that give judicial officers no choice but incarceration simply because a person is accused of a certain crime, regardless of the situation, or based on immigration status. And we must ensure a person’s first appearance in our courts is meaningful by guaranteeing access to counsel and the information necessary to advocate for pretrial release.
- **Habitual Offender Legacy Repeal** - This bill will complete the repeal of the habitual offender designation that created excessively harsh punishments, including mandatory prison time, for drivers who still receive enhanced charges and consequences for behavior as minimal as driving on a suspended license. While the GA acted in 1999 to repeal the habitual offender statute, it did not apply retroactively. This bill will remove the label for the approximately 32,000 people who have been enduring its effects for decades and will direct their driver’s licenses to be reinstated if they are otherwise eligible.

Immigrants’ Rights

- **De-ICE State Mental Health Facilities** – This bill would repeal the Virginia law that requires state mental health facilities to screen their patients’ immigration status and report immigrants (documented and undocumented) to ICE. The statute serves no purpose except to isolate and segregate treatment of immigrants seeking critical care. It discourages them from accessing mental health services out of fear that it might result in their being turned over for deportation or denied a green card.
- **Driver’s Privilege Card Privacy** – Virginia’s newly enacted Driver’s Privilege Card law does not adequately prevent ICE from using DMV data to make civil immigration arrests. Virginia must prevent this data from being used by ICE to make bulk data requests or to use individual address information for civil immigration enforcement purposes.

- **Financial Aid for DREAMers** – In 2020, the General Assembly expanded in-state tuition benefits to all college students who grew up and graduated high school in Virginia, regardless of their immigration status. This bill would make those in-state immigrant students eligible for certain forms of state-funded financial aid for college.
- **Special Immigrant Juvenile Status** – Although federal law allows immigrant youth under the age of 21 fleeing abuse, abandonment or neglect to apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, Virginia state law erects barriers that make it impossible for young adults 18 years or older to complete some of the steps necessary to apply. This bill would eliminate those unnecessary barriers, enabling more young immigrants in Virginia to seek permanent protection in the United States.

Health Care Reform

- **Statute of Limitations on Medical Debt Collection** – State hospitals should not be exempt from the statute of limitations for the collection of debts. All medical debt, including debt owed to hospitals that are agencies of the Commonwealth, should have a three-year statute of limitations, in line with the existing statutory limitations on other types of unwritten contracts in Virginia.

Housing Reform

- LAJC is advocating for the housing related bills being led by the Virginia Poverty Law Center increasing tenant protections and addressing the ongoing eviction crisis in our state. You can read more here.

Youth Justice and Education Reform

- **Equitable Public Education** – Virginia has under-resourced its PK-12 education system for decades, creating vast gaps in access to opportunity for our children. The School Equity and Staffing Act would create a more equitable school funding structure, directing more state dollars to under-resourced school divisions. The Act would also provide more student support staffing and additional mentorship and supports for teachers.
- **“Pay to Stay” in Youth Prison** – Our juvenile justice system should support the welfare and stability of all youth and families, but current Virginia law requires collection of payments from the families of youth who are committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice. The system is counter-productive, extractive, and exacerbates existing racial and ethnic gaps. Virginia must end this pernicious practice.
- **Youth Decarceration** – A hallmark of our juvenile justice system is the power of courts to assess each youth’s progress and amend sentences as appropriate. In cases around the state, prosecutors have pursued plea agreements that seek to waive a youth’s opportunity to these important “release and review” due process hearings. Virginia must protect the rights of youth to these hearings and clarify that they are not waivable or subject to restriction through plea agreements.
- **Budget Amendment: Divest SRO Grant Fund, Invest in Resource Equity** – Virginia incentivizes school policing in local school divisions with state funding for grants to hire School Resource and School Security Officers. Given the loss of instruction and support for students during our unprecedented public education crisis, we must instead direct this state funding to the At-Risk Add-On program to further support all local school divisions’ ability to more directly and flexibly tailor staffing and support needs for economically disadvantaged students.

Worker Protection Reform

- **Farmworker and Guestworker Minimum Wage Exemptions** – Virginia continues to exempt farmworkers and migrant workers on H-2 visas from the protections of the Virginia Minimum Wage Act. It is long past time we repeal these exemptions, ones rooted in racism, and ensure these essential workers benefit from this basic worker protection.
- **Unemployment Insurance** – The unemployment system needs to work for those who find themselves without work to sustain their families. Changes must be made in multiple areas, from overpayment collection to timely employer participation.
- **Worker Heat Stress** – Virginia's workers have no enforceable protections against heat illness. We must adopt comprehensive heat stress regulations with a private right of action to protect Virginian workers from heat illness that every year causes serious workplace illness, injuries, and fatalities.