



2021-2022

# LEGISLATIVE & PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

## Funding for Domestic Violence Programs & Supportive Services

The 59 Domestic Violence programs located throughout the Commonwealth **serve nearly 90,000 domestic violence victims a year**. In one day alone, in 2019, local domestic violence programs provided 1,373 adult and child victims refuge in emergency shelters or transitional housing. Yet, nearly as many (491) had to be turned away due to a lack of resources. PCADV is committed to pursuing all avenues to maintain stable, equitable and reliable funding at the local, state and federal level. In response to COVID-19, increased flexibility in funding for is needed more than ever for domestic programs that directly support victims and survivors. The pandemic has also emphasized the need for programs success as equitable access to medical care and expanded unemployment compensation as survivors of domestic violence rely on these lifelines on their path to safety and autonomy.

## Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence Prevention

If we truly expect to eliminate domestic violence, we must begin to focus our efforts on prevention. **Nearly 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men report having experienced severe physical violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime. Nearly 1.5 million high school students in the US report physical abuse from a partner each year.** Preventing domestic violence ensures that communities and environments are equitably safe and healthy for all. PCADV believes that systemic oppressions are the root causes of unhealthy communities, and coercive power and control and violence in relationships. Examples of systemic oppression include pay inequity, the school to prison pipeline, unequal public education spending, discriminatory voting laws, lack of affordable housing, and the diminishing accessibility of health-care and economic supports (i.e., TANF, WIC, etc.) for families. PCADV will actively advocate for legislation that prioritizes eliminating these inequities as well as dedicated funding for the prevention of domestic violence.

## Access to Safe and Affordable Housing

"Why don't they just leave?" is frequently asked by those outside of the domestic violence movement. While victims face many challenges when trying to leave, access to safe and affordable housing is one of the most significant barriers—victims sometimes literally have nowhere to go. PCADV is committed to advocating for legislation that improves access to flexible funding, availability, and affordability in housing. Alternatively, PCADV will actively oppose housing legislation that discriminates against, or penalizes, victims and survivors of domestic violence.

## Ensuring Trauma-Informed Services for

### Survivors and their Children

Through our work at the state and local level, we know that education about the nuanced nature of domestic violence and intersecting issues is paramount to responding with a trauma-informed lens. PCADV seeks to advocate for domestic violence education for all levels of family and criminal courts, social service workers, law enforcement and the legislature. It is our priority to ensure judges have the necessary tools available to enforce violations of PFAs and protect the safety of victims through available legal means such as setting appropriate bail for PFA violations and considering domestic violence and other evidence-based, data-driven factors when deciding child welfare cases and other matters of family law.

## Economic Justice & Financial Self-Sufficiency

The COVID-19 pandemic has cast the need for economic justice and financial self-sufficiency in a stark light. Financial abuse is a powerful tool used by abusers to control and manipulate their victim. Cutting off access to credit and keeping a victim's name off a lease are just two tactics an abuser might use to isolate and control a victim. PCADV will work to support initiatives that advocate for raising the minimum wage and decreasing the pay gap to provide survivors of domestic violence the ability to leave an abusive situation and obtain stable and safe opportunities for financial independence.

## Enhancing Services for Victims or Survivors of Marginalized Groups

Survivors of domestic violence, in particular those from marginalized groups, face profound challenges in seeking the quality and culturally competent advocacy, services, and resources they need to be safe. Just one example of this may include situations where immigrant survivors find themselves faced with the threat of deportation should they indicate their desire to leave an abusive relationship. PCADV will increase awareness of the impacts of domestic violence on marginalized groups to ensure the appropriate services are available for all survivors of domestic violence in the Commonwealth.

## Access to an Equitable Justice System

Ensuring that survivors of domestic violence have adequate access to an equitable justice system and the proper programs and advocates in place to help them navigate it remains a top priority for PCADV. Strengthening the protections afforded to victims in the PFA Act and offering trainings to judges and others involved in the legal process, have been and will continue to be, priorities. **Our priorities for improvements in this area for the 2021/2022 Legislative Session include:** continuing to advocate for additional protections under the Protection From Abuse (PFA) Act (e.g. expanding protections to victims' pets and addressing stalking as context for a PFA), recommending increased training for judges, court personnel, law enforcement, attorneys and first responders, and addressing child custody laws in relation to domestic violence in order to prevent potentially lethal situations.

## What We Don't Support:

*PCADV does not support legislation that would further complicate the path to safety for victims of domestic violence. Examples include legislation that would restrict access to food benefits, housing and other necessary services and systems survivors of domestic violence turn to when leaving an abusive relationship. Domestic violence offender registries and legislation that seeks to create them would be opposed along with any policy that would mandate a survivor meet specific requirements to receive services. We would also oppose legislation that restricts access to sexual and reproductive health services.*