

# LEGISLATIVE AND PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

2023-2024 Session



The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV) is a statewide collaborative membership organization whose 59 local domestic violence programs provide free and confidential services to nearly 90,000 victims, survivors, and their children each year. We envision a Commonwealth where all Pennsylvanians are supported in the human right to live healthy, stable, and rewarding lives free from intimate partner violence and all forms of violence and oppression. This vision is the compass for our work and pervades our priorities: prevention, intervention, and change. We also recognize that the systems victims and survivors need to navigate in their path to safety are inherently challenging and disproportionately stacked against people of color. We strive to make these systems more equitable for all, especially the most marginalized.

Powerful policy change is fulfilled only when followed by effective implementation. Given the unique role the judiciary plays in implementing policies intended to protect domestic violence victims and their children, we continue to prioritize [the need for trauma-informed judicial training and education](#).

## Access to Safe, Stable, and Affordable Housing

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and their children in the Commonwealth. While victims face many challenges when trying to leave an abusive relationship, access to safe and affordable housing is one of the most significant barriers victims encounter.

### WE SUPPORT

- Access to flexible funding
- Availability and affordability in housing options
- Protection of victims' current housing should they wish to remain in their home

### WE OPPOSE

- Legislation that discriminates against or penalizes victims of domestic violence

## Economic Justice and Self-Sufficiency

Economic abuse occurs in 99% of domestic violence situations and can include cutting off access to credit, keeping a victim's name off a lease, and interfering with their ability to work. Studies indicate that one of the best predictors of whether a victim will be able to stay away from their abuser is the degree of their economic independence.

### WE SUPPORT

- Financial empowerment and equal pay initiatives
- Workplace supports and education and training opportunities
- Affordable childcare
- Access to public benefits and affordable quality healthcare

### WE OPPOSE

- Policies that complicate the processes, procedures, or qualifications necessary to obtain financial and social supports

## Funding for Domestic Violence Programs and Supportive Services

We are committed to pursuing all avenues to increase stable, equitable and reliable funding at the local, state, and federal level to ensure programs can deliver a continuum of services to help victims and their children find safety in their communities and build lives free of violence.



## Supporting Protective Parents and Their Children

One of our top priorities is to support protective parents and their children to ensure the child welfare, family, and criminal legal systems have the requisite training and education to understand the complex dynamics of domestic violence and the nexus to child safety. This is crucial to avoid ongoing system-based harm to victims and their children—especially those who are the most marginalized and already experience the most barriers to obtaining safety: protective mothers who are Black, indigenous and people of color and live below the poverty line. Adverse Childhood Experiences (such as the loss of a caring parent) are correlated with negative mental health, medical, social, and economic outcomes through adulthood.

### WE SUPPORT

- ✓ Access to, and funding for, supervised child visitation centers and intervention programs for those who cause harm to their intimate partners
- ✓ Access to low-cost or free legal services and representation
- ✓ Enhanced family court infrastructure including case management services and electronic filing

## Striving for an Equitable Criminal Legal System

We strive for a survivor-centered criminal legal system that deters abusive behavior by providing victim-defined support and holding those who cause harm accountable. Far too often, the criminal legal system seeks deterrence through punitive measures that lack a victim-centered lens and reinforce systemic oppressions that re-harm victims. These failures have led to Pennsylvania's criminal legal system tragically mischaracterizing victims of domestic violence as abusers and perpetuating the harm caused by racial bias.

### WE SUPPORT

- ✓ Policies that address racial bias through training law enforcement and other system actors
- ✓ Increased access to emotional, physical, and financial support as alternatives to law enforcement in domestic violence crises

### WE OPPOSE

- ✗ Policies that compromise victim confidentiality or limit victim or community choice and empowerment
- ✗ Measures seeking to expand the crimes code in instances where existing statute sufficiently criminalizes the act

## Prevention and Confronting Systemic Oppression

Prevention is a process of cultivating environments that are healthy and equitable for all people by addressing the risk and protective factors associated with domestic violence. Many risk factors for domestic violence stem from systemic oppression that lead to survivors' inequitable access to the systems and resources they need for safety and economic self-sufficiency, allowing domestic violence to flourish.

### WE SUPPORT

- ✓ Policies that expand the accessibility of comprehensive mental, physical, and reproductive healthcare
- ✓ Legislation that provides the economic supports families and communities need to thrive

### WE OPPOSE

- ✗ Legislation that over-criminalizes and/or leads to mass incarceration or fuels the school-to-prison pipeline
- ✗ Discriminatory voting laws
- ✗ Inequitable public education spending
- ✗ Barriers to pathways to citizenship
- ✗ Trans-exclusionary policies

## Access to Reproductive Healthcare

Coercive control and reproductive coercion are tactics used regularly in domestic violence situations, including contraceptive sabotage, knowingly exposing the victim to an STI, forcing sexual contact, inflicting harm with the intent of causing miscarriage, and forcing a pregnant person to abort a pregnancy or carry it to term. The consequences of coercive control on reproductive and sexual health can be prevented if people are empowered to make decisions about emergency contraception and pregnancy termination- a decision that is often a critical component of finding safety and healing for victims.

### WE SUPPORT

- ✓ Policies that ensure access to reproductive health care services for residents both in and outside of the Commonwealth, and protection of health care providers

### WE OPPOSE

- ✗ Policies that limit a person's right to access sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including safe abortion care