

VIRGINIA PROGRESSIVE PROSECUTORS FOR JUSTICE



COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEYS

HON. AMY ASHWORTH
PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY AND CITY OF MANASSAS

HON. ANTON BELL
CITY OF HAMPTON

HON. BUTA BIBERAJ
LOUDOUN COUNTY

HON. PARISA DEHGHANI-TAFTI
ARLINGTON COUNTY AND CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

HON. STEVE DESCANO
FAIRFAX COUNTY AND CITY OF FAIRFAX

HON. JAMES M. HINGELEY
ALBEMARLE COUNTY

HON. STEPHANIE N. MORALES
CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

HON. JOSEPH D. PLATANIA
CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

HON. BRYAN PORTER
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

HON. SHANNON L. TAYLOR
HENRICO COUNTY

HON. GREGORY D. UNDERWOOD
CITY OF NORFOLK

July 13, 2020

Dear Senator Surovell, Leader Herring, and Chair Bagby:

We are a group of Commonwealth's Attorneys who represent and are responsible for the safety of over 40% of the population of the Commonwealth of Virginia. As the national dialogue and push for meaningful systemic change within criminal justice and policing continues, we submit this letter to you as a statement of our commitment to these changes and meaningful reforms and of our willingness to be partners by offering our assistance to you and to your colleagues as you propose and implement these critically needed reforms.

We have seen the Senate Democratic Caucus' and the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus' list of priorities for the upcoming Special Session, and beyond, and truly appreciate the agenda's commitment to meaningful measures.

We would like to offer our support and advocate our strong commitment to the advancement of these proposals, including, but certainly not limited to:

- All measures related to police officer accountability for use of force misconduct and other behavior-related complaints, to include the requirement to allow prosecutors unrestricted access to all police reports, information, and disciplinary records of officers involved in a matter before the court;
- A requirement that all warrants be served during the daytime and include a knock-and-announce provision with additional showing to a judge, not a magistrate, for (i) nighttime service and (ii) no-knock service;



- The elimination of the mandatory six-month operator’s license suspension on all drug convictions because the suspension serves no public safety interest and is an inappropriate punishment unrelated to the criminal behavior;
- The ability to expunge convictions from one’s record to enable one to have a meaningful “second chance”;
- The removal of mandatory minimum sentences from the law, allowing judges to take into account the needs and facts of each person’s case before their court;
- The expansion of deferred disposition in all cases where the attorney for the accused and Commonwealth agree; and
- The clarification of the discretionary powers of the prosecutor.

We stand ready to be of assistance to you and the members of the General Assembly in the lead-up to and during the Special Session. We applaud your willingness to make these most needed changes that will directly and positively impact the communities in which we are honored and privileged to serve each and every day.

We look forward to the outcome of the Special Session with great anticipation that the results will serve the citizens of Virginia in a fairer, more equitable, and less discriminatory way. In any way that we can assist to accomplish those goals, we stand ready and pledge to do so.

Sincerely,

Hon. Amy Ashworth
Prince William County and City of
Manassas

Hon. Anton Bell
City of Hampton

Hon. Buta Biberaj
Loudoun County

Hon. Parisa Dehghani-Tafti
Arlington County and City of Falls
Church

Hon. Steve Descano
Fairfax County and City of Fairfax

Hon. James M. Hingeley
Albemarle County

Hon. Stephanie N. Morales
City of Portsmouth

Hon. Joseph D. Platania
City of Charlottesville

Hon. Bryan Porter
City of Alexandria

Hon. Shannon L. Taylor
Henrico County

Hon. Gregory D. Underwood
City of Norfolk