



For Virginia's
Children

Independent

Nonprofit

Nonpartisan

2021 General Assembly Results
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Policy and Programs Director



What Was Important During the 2021 GA Session?

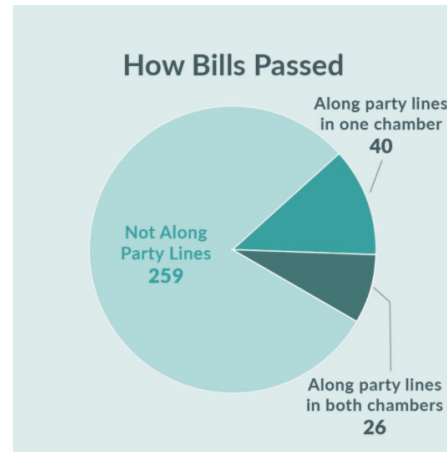


Revenue & Spending Themes

- **“Found” more revenue with improved revenue outlook**
- **Restored many pre-pandemic unallotted priorities**
- **Attempts to maximize federal funding**
 - TANF, Child Care, Housing, Medicaid

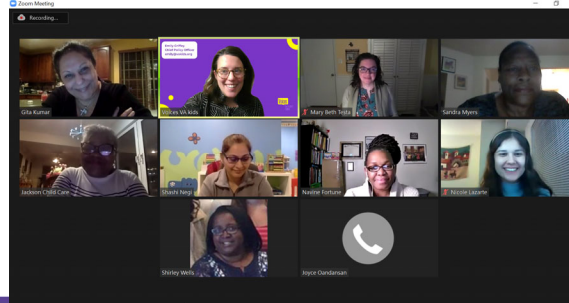
Legislation Themes

- **Most bills passed with bipartisan support**
 - exceptions: racism as a public health crisis, & paid sick days for essential workers
- **Issues that did not advance:**
 - paid family leave, reducing SOLs, eliminating mandatory minimums



Advocacy Themes

- **Evened the playing field to have everyone using Zoom & allowed front line workers more opportunities to weigh in**
 - Example: advocacy cohorts with impacted communities



Biggest Budget Wins

- **More than \$257 million in state and federal funds for new initiatives for kids & families!**
 - Transforming the approach to foster care
 - Enhancing VA Preschool Initiatives
 - Equitable education for disadvantaged school districts
 - Support to address financial hardship for families



Biggest Legislative Wins

- **First state in the South to declare racism a public health crisis**
- **Establishing new methods to stabilize child care and make it affordable**
- **Dismantle systems of oppression**
 - Ex: access to health insurance, barriers to receive public assistance benefits



How Policies Addressed Pain Points of Dual Pandemic

HJR537
Racism as a Public Health Crisis
 Delegate Lashrecse Aird

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- Expands VDH's Office of Health Equity to be the primary watchdog for ensuring policies addressing racism are implemented.
- Makes the Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in Virginia Law permanent.
- Establishes training for all state elected officials, their staff members and state employees on recognizing racism.
- Creates a list of definitions and terms on racism and health equity.
- Promotes community engagement across the state on recognizing racism.

Headed to Governor's desk to sign.



Improving Health Insurance Access

- **Starting Summer 2021: Prenatal health care coverage for economically disadvantaged mothers who are undocumented immigrants.**
- **Starting Summer 2021: A Medicaid-funded doula benefit for eligible moms to obtain doula care during pregnancy, delivery and post-partum follow-up.**
- **TBD/Fall 2021: 12 months of postpartum health coverage for economically disadvantaged mothers enrolled in Medicaid/FAMIS.**
- Directed the state Medicaid agency to continue planning for a **Medicaid-funded home visiting benefit.**



Improve Food Access

- **Increase Food Investment Fund to \$3.1 million to improve access in food deserts**
- **Study to establish ProduceRx Program**

HB1820 "Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility" for Public Benefits



Delegate Dan Helmer

- Casts a wider net for families to obtain public benefits for nutrition and cash assistance by increasing gross income limits.
- Eliminates "asset test" barrier.
- Approximately 25,000 households could newly be eligible for food and cash assistance.

Headed to Governor's desk to implement July 1, 2021.



Trauma Responsive Mental Health System

- **Funding to implement MARCUS Alert Crisis Response**
- **New unified call-in number and system to respond to mental health crisis**
- **Funding to sustain VA HEALS statewide trauma-informed referral and response**
- **Increase access to ACE Interface training for direct service professionals**



Responding to Student Mental Health Needs

SB1307 Medicaid “Free Care” for School-Based Health Services



Senator Siobhan Dunnivant

- Requires the state Medicaid agency (DMAS) to create a process for school divisions to bill Medicaid for health & mental health services.
- Enables matching federal funds (currently, slightly more than a \$1 to \$1 match) to enhance and expand services.
- Eliminates barriers to students receiving health and mental health services by bringing services to students in school settings.

Headed to the Governor's desk to sign, can be implemented when guidance is available to local school divisions.

Increased school-based support positions

- School counselors funded 1:325 students
- Specialized support staff funded 3:1,000 students
 - 44 divisions must hire additional staff to meet needs



Increase Cash Assistance for Families

- In July 2020 TANF cash assistance increased 15%
- In July 2021 will increase additional 10%
 - Avg payment per household would become \$397/mo



Policies to keep families strong and avoid foster care

- **Funding to Implement Families First July 2021**
 - Hire 143 local prevention services positions
 - Establish center for evidence-based practice

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Improve Support for Kinship Caregivers

HB1962 "KinFirst"

Delegate Wendy Gooditis

- Establishes a policy for involving a child's relatives or close friends, "fictive kin", in the development of the child's foster care plan.
- Allows younger children, now age 12, to help establish plans.
- Allows fictive kin to be eligible for financial assistance.

Headed to Governor's desk to implement July 1, 2021.

SB1328 State Funded Kinship Guardianship Program

Senator Monty Mason

- Expands eligibility for kinship guardians to receive financial assistance & support as an approved foster home.
- Approximately 90 children and youth that would have had to enter the foster care system will be eligible for assistance with a state-funded kinship placement next year.

Headed to Governor's desk to implement July 1, 2021.

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Foster Care

2021 GENERAL ASSEMBLY NOW IN SESSION
#VOICES4KIDS

HB1866
allows Court Appointed
Special Advocates (CASAs)
additional opportunities to
weigh in during children's
case planning
**passed the
House!**

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NOW IN SESSION
**2021 VA
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**
Follow and engage with @vakiids for updates
#voices4kids

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Improve Access to Affordable Child Care

HB2206
**Child Care Assistance
Expansion**

Speaker of the House Eileen Filler-Corn

- Establishes higher income eligibility limits when a family has at least one child under age 5, not yet in kindergarten.
- Parents are eligible while looking for a job.
- Eliminates child support enforcement requirement.
- Providers must be approved subsidy vendors and will be paid at current rates.

Headed to Governor's desk to implement ASAP!!

- Uses \$60 mil in federal
- Waitlists have declined
- Reimbursement covers most costs
 - Ex: \$1,000 per month for infant care in Henrico

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Improved Child Care Eligibility- Spread the Word!



NEW Child Care Assistance Eligibility

New Eligibility Criteria

On April 1, new eligibility criteria for child care assistance in Virginia went into effect. Thanks to HB2206, more families will be able to access child care.

- Families can receive financial assistance while looking for work
- There is NO requirement to participate in child support enforcement
- For a short period of time, there are higher income limits for families with kids 5 & under through July 31, 2021!

How Does it Work

Applications can take up to 30 days to process. Families must have a provider selected when applying.

After approved, families receive a swipe card to pay the child care program monthly. The provider will be paid the reimbursement rate determined for the locality and age of child.

For example, a family with an infant in Henrico would be able to pay a child care center about \$1,000 per month with this assistance.

New income eligibility levels for families with kids 5 & under

Family Size	Monthly Income	Annual Income
2	\$5,040	\$60,480
3	\$6,226	\$74,712
4	\$7,412	\$88,944

How to Apply

Online through CommonHelp or In-Person at your local Department of Social Services or visit: <https://commonhelp.virginia.gov>



Are there long waiting lists for acceptance?

NO! Not right now because participation is down.

Find a Child Care Program


Find a child care program by searching online at dss.virginia.gov/facility/search/cc2.cgi OR calling ChildCareAware VA at 1-866-KIDS-TLC

Visit dss.virginia.gov for more information.



Improve Compensation for Early Childhood Educators


- **Additional \$5 million to increase access to \$1,500 Educator Incentive Awards**
- **Establish pilot project to pay for care based on enrollment and “true costs” such as higher pay**




Supporting Virginia's Early Educators during COVID & Beyond

Daphna Bassok
Associate Professor
Education & Public Policy
University of Virginia

Joint Subcommittee on Early Childhood Care and Education
Dec 2020





More Work To Do

- **Providing Paid Family & Medical Leave**
- **Establishing permanent staff and permanent Children's Cabinet**
- **Providing general funds to support community-based trauma networks (TICNs)**



Participate in the Feedback Loop

- 1. Join in network and coalition meetings**
 - allison@vakids.org to connect on child welfare initiatives
 - emily@vakids.org to connect on early care and education.
 - chloe@vakids.org to connect on family economic security and policies impacted by racial, cultural and historical trauma.
- 2. Share this information with youth, families & frontline staff and seek their feedback**
- 3. Sign up for Voices' mailing lists**

