

## Senator Favola's Press Release: Governor Vetoes Probation Reform Aimed at Reducing Recidivism

(March 22, 2024)

**Richmond, VA** — On Wednesday, March 20, 2024, Governor Youngkin vetoed Senate Bill 80 and House Bill 457, legislation carried by Senator Barbara Favola (D-Arlington) and Delegate Katrina Callsen (D-Albemarle), that would have incentivized those on probation to seek out jobs, education, treatment and other qualifying activities in order to earn reductions in their probationary period. For example, one qualifying activity would have been verified employment of at least thirty hours a week for 6 months to earn a 30 day reduction of probation. Similar legislation in other states has enjoyed bipartisan support and has been linked to reduced recidivism, decreased costs, and improved public safety. The bill, as amended, directed the Department of Corrections and relevant stakeholders to review current practices and implementation of the program before a required reenactment in the 2025 Session. The Governor's veto halted the study of probation and thwarted any attempts that could be made to explore the benefits of the program.

### **Responding to the veto, Senator Favola had the following remarks:**

"On the 2nd anniversary of Governor Youngkin's ['Second Chance Month'](#) proclamation, I am disappointed that the Governor vetoed a bill that embodies a pathway forward for those who have paid their debt to society. SB 80 and HB 457 establish a framework for offenders who have earned parole to re-enter society and establish a new life. The bills identified positive steps an individual could take to start over such as earning college credits, acquiring job certifications and continuing with treatment programs. Governor Youngkin has ignored Virginia's values of compassion and second chances."

### **Delegate Callsen shared the following statement:**

"Incentivizing those on probation to seek employment, further their education, engage in peer support work, and participate in mental health and substance recovery programs is a proven tool to improve outcomes. While I am very disappointed to see the veto, I am proud of the work Senator Favola and I did to bring this important topic to the Governors' desk with bipartisan support. We worked diligently with stakeholders to craft a data-driven bill that could improve the lives of Virginians and we will continue to work to find a path forward. The vast majority of incarcerated individuals eventually re-enter society and the activities envisioned by the bill are what we want to encourage."

### **Jessica Jackson, Chief Advocacy Officer at the Jay-Z and Meek Mill-founded REFORM Alliance, provided the following comment in response to the Governor's action:**

"We are disappointed that the governor vetoed this bipartisan legislation to incentivize employment, education, and mental health and substance abuse treatment for those on probation in Virginia."

"This was a missed opportunity to implement evidence-based policies that have reduced recidivism, improved public safety, and saved taxpayer dollars in nearly 20 other states. Though Governor

Youngkin chose not to move this issue forward at this time, our diverse, bipartisan coalition remains committed to working with the Governor, General Assembly, and all stakeholders to advance policies that give those in the justice system the tools and incentives to rebuild their lives. Reforms like these would benefit individuals on probation, support law enforcement in their mission, grow our workforce, and strengthen communities across the Commonwealth. We hope to keep the dialogue open and find a path forward that garners broad, bipartisan support.”

The bills enjoyed support from a diverse array of organizations, including the Humanization Project, SAARA of Virginia, Americans for Prosperity, and other groups devoted to re-entry.

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