



**In-Session Newsletter**  
**Crossover Edition**  
March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023

With only 2 weeks left in the 2023 Legislative Session, it is important to contextualize GCADV's position on non-carceral solutions to address domestic violence.

Every year well-intentioned lawmakers introduce dozens of bills that seek to address domestic violence. Early anti-violence organizers worked towards policy reform to hold abusers accountable because wanted DV to be taken seriously. They wanted legal consequences that law enforcement would be required to enforce -something more than telling the person who caused harm to take a walk around the block to cool off. However, we have discovered in the last 30-40years that incarcerating those who perpetrate domestic violence has not been a crime deterrent nor has it significantly reduced incidences of domestic violence. Moreover, as researcher and lawyer, Leigh Goodmark states in her book *Imperfect Victims*, "criminalization was intended to benefit victims of gender-based violence, to keep them safe and ensure that those who harmed them were held accountable. Instead, the criminal legal system has done immeasurable damage to those it was meant to protect". - Leigh Goodmark, *Imperfect Victims* (2023)

Though Georgia has implemented mandatory sentencing for some acts of family violence and passed legislation in an effort to reduce dual arrests and the overall number of incidences of domestic violence has not been significantly reduced. In the past 10 years, known domestic violence related fatalities have increased at a rate of 57%. Domestic violence agencies served 2000 more victims last year than in the year before COVID. And we know that most people who experience domestic violence do not engage the criminal legal system. For people who are experiencing intimate partner violence but don't want to call law enforcement or go into shelter, they still have every right to live free from fear. We know that the biggest driver of domestic violence is actually related to economic and social stressors. And the number one reason survivors return to abusive situations is related to economic precarity. GCADV supports bills that address economic security, remove firearms from those who have committed acts of domestic and dating violence; we support survivors' physical safety, bodily autonomy, and options for survivors to seek justice and redress harm through civil proceedings.

This year, Legislators have introduced risk protection bills and red flag ([HB553](#)) and ([HB584](#)), bills to protect undocumented survivors who have experienced family violence from deportation ([HB194](#)), bills that support reproductive freedom ([SB15](#)) ([HB75](#)), bills to increase the state minimum wage to \$15/hr ([SB25](#)), bills to prohibit persons convicted of misdemeanor acts of family violence from possessing a firearm ([SB119](#)), a bill that creates a civil action for stalking that involves doxing ([SB182](#)), bills to remove the sales tax from menstrual products ([HB123](#) and [SB51](#)), a bill that would expand TANF benefits to people who are pregnant and remove the family cap for people who want to have more children ([HB129](#)), and a bill that would



privilege information shared during restorative justice circles ([HB382](#)). These are policy reforms that have been shown to keep communities safe.

Last Monday was Crossover Day- the day that bills must pass one chamber in order to cross over to the other. Bills that did not cross over this year are essentially “dead” for the rest of the Session (with a few exceptions) but can be picked up again next Session without having to start all over again. This year, we have prioritized Address Confidentiality, Safe Time and increases in shelter funding this year for certified domestic violence shelters.

### **Address Confidentiality**

We have been hearing from advocates that when they talk to their legislators about address confidentiality, they think we already have it in GA. What we have is a VoteSafe program which keeps the addresses of victims of domestic violence hidden from voter rolls. Because the VoteSafe law has not been updated to include other types of victimizations or other criteria for eligibility, we have decided to shift our strategy to include a more comprehensive address confidentiality bill that would amend VoteSafe to keep survivors’ addresses hidden from all public records and provide a mail forwarding service. Sen. Kim Jackson has given us the greenlight to work with legislative counsel to work on this amendment with the intention to have a bill introduced before the end of Session.

### **Funding for DV Shelters**

The good news is that for the one- time supplemental budget for 2023 which Governor Kemp signed into law yesterday, certified DV shelters have been appropriated a little over \$4M (\$4,080,000) to off-set cuts in federal funding which amounts to about \$60,000 per site for certified DV shelters and Sexual Assault Centers. And \$2.4M to upgrade security at DV shelters. The FY24 budget is still being negotiated. The House published their recommendations last week which did not include an increase in the base appropriation for DV shelters. The Senate has yet to publish their budget recommendations.

### **CALL TO ACTION**

Please contact Chairman Albers Chair of Public Safety Committee at (404) 463-8055 [john.albers@senate.ga.gov](mailto:john.albers@senate.ga.gov) and Chairman Tillery, Chair of Senate Appropriations Committee at (404) 656-5038 [blake.tillery@senate.ga.gov](mailto:blake.tillery@senate.ga.gov) When you reach out to the legislators, **please thank them for the one-time appropriation first and then share with them why we need more. Talk about your specific shelter’s funding breakdown, gaps in services, how many people you have had to turn away, how many positions you have had to cut.** Be specific. We are currently at about a \$14M appropriation and are asking for at least \$7M more.



### OTHER BILLS WE ARE WATCHING

[SB83](#) would revise the definition of stalking to include stalking that occurs in the home. This bill passed the Senate prior to Crossover Day and has been assigned to House Judiciary Non-Civil.

[SB61](#) - removes the sunset provision on the Family Care Act which allows employees who already have sick time to use that time to care for a sick family member. This bill passed the Senate before Crossover Day and has been assigned to House Industry and Labor Committee.

[SB12](#) is one of those bills that is well intentioned but seems to miss the mark when it comes to viable solutions. On the one hand, it recognizes the connection between gangs, an act of family violence and firearms and on the other hand, it would require mandatory minimum sentencing for persons convicted of a second felony or act of family violence who were also found in possession of a firearm. This bill passed the senate before crossover day with a substitute amendment before and has been assigned to house Judiciary non-civil. Similarly, Hb509 is a bill that adds the intent to commit an act of family or dating violence to the definition of burglary thereby making the violation a felony. This bill passed the House and has been assigned to the Juvenile Justice Committee.

[SB132](#) is a discriminatory piece of legislation that would target immigrant and refugee communities by prohibiting property ownership for individuals from certain countries thereby impacting the ability of potential homebuyers (which could very well include survivors) to thrive economically. This bill passed the Senate before Crossover Day and has been assigned to the House Committee on Agriculture and Consumer Affairs.

[SB140](#) is one of several bills that were introduced this Session that rejects bodily autonomy. SB 140 prevents transgender youth from receiving gender affirming surgery or hormone therapy. Sen. Sally Harrell (District 40) spoke against this bill by sharing a story about her transgender son, in remarks, Sen. Harrell shared that the problem she has with this bill is that it” ...only addresses what we won’t do for our children... [not what ] we will do”. This bill passed the Senate before Crossover Day and was assigned to the House Public Health committee. Another anti-LGBTQ bill was introduced this year that would bar educators from engaging in discussions about sexuality or gender identity with children 16 and under.

**This bill did not pass out of committee.**

[HB404](#) requires landlords to make repairs on real property; any written contract or lease for use of real property as a dwelling place must include a provision that states that the property is habitable. No landlord can charge more than 2 month’s rent for a deposit. However, if a tenant fails to pay rent, utilities, or other charges due the landlord at the time that the payment becomes due, the tenant has 3 business days from date of notification of past due items to remit payment or the landlord can start eviction proceedings.