

Friends,

From the very start I promised to run on the issues and to stick to facts. I'm going to be sending you a series of emails with facts and the sources to back it up, so you can evaluate for yourself the current state of our criminal justice system and the need for reform. I hope you'll read the whole series, because **it's important that you know our campaign remains grounded in facts, not rhetoric; in truth, not dog whistles.**

1. Sexual Assaults

Since 2011, convictions for rape and sexual assault have gone down 73%.¹ At the same time, reports have gone up 63%.² It's generally good if more people are coming forward to report, but **why are there fewer convictions even as reports rise?** My opponent said this is because the reports were for old allegations, but even old allegations can be prosecuted. Several years ago, the prosecutor in Prince William took an old child sexual abuse allegation to court, but when the same alleged perpetrator had a victim in Arlington, our Commonwealth's Attorney refused to prosecute.³

In our first debate, my opponent told the story of a college student who said she was raped. **She said the case would never go to trial because the accused gave a consent defense. Instead, she put the victim and the accused in a room together to hug it out,** without a trained mediator or the difficult and intensive preparation required for restorative justice to take place.⁴

As Commonwealth's Attorney, I'll prosecute cases where there is a consent defense, I won't run away from a case because it is old or hard, and I'll work every day to keep victims from being retraumatized by the justice system. I am the survivor of sexual abuse, and I did not report it because I knew, even at a young age,

¹ Virginia Sentencing Commission Data

² Arlington Police Report Data

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<https://www.revealnews.org/article/tennessee-watson-justice-isnt-always-done-for-child-sexual-abuse-i-know-firsthand/>

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<https://bluevirginia.us/2019/04/video-packed-house-at-arlington-dems-meeting-for-commonwealths-attorney-debate>

that getting involved in the criminal justice system would not provide a satisfying outcome. I am not alone in this feeling.⁵

The protection of victims has been a key part of my work on criminal justice reform. I've pursued innocence claims with the passion that I do, not just because I don't want innocent people in jail, but also because I want to achieve real justice for victims and because I want to make sure real perpetrators are not allowed to continue victimizing others. **The reason I support restorative justice is precisely because it gives voice to what victims and survivors need.** It lets them guide their healing and their case. And **I support a fairer system and diversion because in the end, these are the things that make for a safer community** — the things that prevent more people from being victimized.

Parisa

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/23/opinion/abortion-legislation-rape.html>