

VOTE FOR REFORM ON **JUNE 11!**



My last two emails on the facts in this race focused on [voting rights](#) and [sexual assault](#). Today's is on Diversion Programs.

3. Diversion Programs

Drug Court - As of May 2019, **our drug court serves only 9 people**. Washington County, Virginia, which has roughly one fifth of our population, has a drug court that [serves 37](#), and is expanding to serve 50. There are willing partners who want to use full the drug court capacity we have, and even expand drug court, but the CA's office determines the criteria for who is eligible and exercises veto power on applicants. And in 2011, when my opponent first ran, she was opposed to drug court. Don't take my word for it – take my opponent's [own words](#): *"There was real resistance—I was among the people who was a doubter."*

Second Chance - My opponent touts her involvement in the Second Chance program. [Second Chance](#) is a 3-day early intervention educational program for kids caught using alcohol, marijuana, and certain other substances. **It does not provide treatment for addiction and substance abuse. It is [not a program of the Commonwealth's Attorney's office](#)** - parents, schools, and police can refer students as well as courts. As a [local education law expert explained](#): "The program is available to avoid out-of-school suspension or criminal charges for minor infractions, such as vaping and alcohol consumption and first-offense marijuana possession. **It is a one-time chance that cannot be repeated, even if the infraction was not a crime or was never referred to police for prosecution.**" In other words, **if a child has used the program once in a non-criminal context, the child cannot go through it again as a diversion from criminal prosecution.** I commend the partners in this program who are working to keep our kids safe and healthy, but we need a true criminal justice diversion program for our children.

Operation Safe Station – This program was announced in the middle of the campaign and is too restrictive to be effective. [It requires a person to go with their drugs into the Magistrate's office and admit to a crime \(possession of drugs\)](#). The Magistrate's office where they go to surrender the drugs is located next to central booking. In order to get a treatment program, people have to let themselves be searched by police officers who are present (and can ask questions). **If a person is not considered suitable for the benefit of treatment, they can be arrested. If they enter treatment and [relapse, as is common](#), they can be arrested** (remember, when they came in, they admitted to possessing drugs). So, it's not really a safe way to dispose of drugs, since you are exposing yourself to prosecution. [Best practices](#) would suggest a promise not to prosecute if you are not eligible for treatment or relapse, and not require you to submit to a search or interrogation as a condition for treatment. **Why would someone seeking help submit themselves to potential prosecution when they can directly seek help through the [County's Department of Human Services](#)?**

Mental Health Court - We do not have a mental health court, despite 15 years' worth of efforts by members of our community to get one. [Prince William and other jurisdictions have one. Why don't we?](#)

As your Commonwealth's Attorney, I'll support the creation of diversion programs to get people treatment and rehabilitation instead of incarceration, [which is in and of itself criminogenic](#). Diversion ultimately keeps us safer because people get help that lowers the chances that they'll be involved in the criminal justice system in the future.

-- Parisa