

VOTE FOR REFORM ON **JUNE 11!**



Last week, an Arlington parent of two young children shared a disturbing story about his family's experience of being pressed into a criminal plea after a classmate sent his young son intimate pictures. He shared his story first in a [Letter to the Editor](#) to one of our local papers, and then subsequently in a longer [post on social media](#). I am linking to them here because I want to be sure to let his words speak for themselves.

This week, [The Appeal published a story](#) highlighting a number of stories about a pattern of harsh treatment of children by the incumbent's office.

A number of voters have shared similar stories with me in person, and the issue of how our criminal justice system treats kids has kept me motivated throughout this campaign. Our Commonwealth's Attorney's office should reflect our community's values. We should be treating kids like kids, [as scientific evidence](#) tells us that their brains are still developing and they are biologically prone to use bad judgement sometimes.

What these stories illustrate is why it is so vital that Arlington catch up with our neighbors and with best practices in establishing a formal and robust restorative justice program. These programs are absolutely essential for young children and for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Especially when it comes to kids, our justice system shouldn't just focus on punishment, but on also on helping the victim heal while helping the rule-breaker turn themselves into the sort of person who will not harm again. As parents, no matter how hard we work on instilling the best values in our kids, it is almost certain that many of them will (sometimes inadvertently) engage in acts that implicate the criminal code. Imagine if it was your kid who was involved in a "sexting" incident, *whether as the victim or as the accused*, would you want the old, punitive way of prosecutorial thinking to prevail, or one that took into account brain science and age, and focused on making things right and learning to do better?

-Parisa

PS - You can read earlier posts in our facts series [here](#).