

# BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

*The Quarterly Newsletter of the  
Family Violence Law Center's Policy Department*



Image captured by Debate Ideas

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“I am a woman and a warrior. If you think I can't be both, you've been lied to.”

- Jennifer Zeynab  
Joukhadar

# Welcome Message

In honor of International Women's Day and Women's History month, and amidst unstable times, it is more important than ever to celebrate community and the bravery of those who came before us and who surround us today. At Family Violence Law Center (FVLC), we have the pleasure of working alongside Alameda County community members, and without fail, I am consistently impressed and in awe of the women who call our crisis line, show up at court to fight for a restraining order, attend youth groups at their high schools, and advocate for themselves and their families at protests and through policy reform.

At Family Violence Law Center, women are at the center of our work. Gender-based violence knows no bounds; it can impact any age group, anywhere in the world, and is in all parts of society no matter your race, ethnicity, or religion. However, when it comes to those who experience it the most, women and gender minorities continue to be the most impacted. As a Crisis Intervention Specialist, I have firsthand experience and it is impossible to ignore the dangers and injustices that our clients, including trans women, face on a daily basis in a society plagued with inequality.

Despite the structural and systemic barriers in place, women continue to rise above and persevere in a world that has continuously tried to make us feel less than. More than ever, I am thankful for the women in my life, including the clients I work with every day, for putting one step in front of the other.

Sofia Heffernan  
PCrisis Intervention Specialist  
Family Violence Law Center

# FVLC Policy Work and Campaigns

**Policy Work:** Over the last several months, the policy team has been working tirelessly to help introduce AB1134 (Bains), a bill that will amend California Penal code 265 to ensure all individuals are protected against forced marriage regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. This bill will further amend Family Code 2211 to lift the statute of limitations for annulment of forced marriage, which previously held a 4 year statute of limitations. Additionally, as part of the Solis Policy Institute, our staff has been able to help draft and introduce AB 878 (Kalra), a bill that will create housing protections for victims of violence, allowing them to install cameras, move units or parking spaces, or rescind 14-day lease terminations if concerns of violence no longer exist.

## **Policy Campaigns:**

**Freedom to Choose:** Last year, FVLC worked with coalition partners to research and collect data on forced marriage in California, and to educate lawmakers about the health, financial and safety issues arising from forced and child marriage. Over the course of this campaign to date, FVLC has surveyed and spoken with over 150 survivors in



Pictured above is the Sheltering Survivors team of the Solis Policy Institute (Women's Foundation)

California and educated 118 of California's 120 lawmakers. In February, FVLC worked with Assemblymember Jasmeet Bains to introduce AB 1134, which includes 2 of our 3 bill proposals. We will continue to work with Asm. Bains introduced the adoption of a new form of restraining order, the Forced Marriage Protection Order, which is aimed at protecting against forced marriage and creating an escape for those already forced into a marriage.

**Right to Exit:** FVLC's campaign to ensure survivors are guaranteed access to safe housing and services continues its advocacy efforts at national, state and local levels. Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding continues to be central to the campaign and FVLC will again join the Partnership to raise awareness about the need for a guaranteed funding source for California's victims of gender-based violence, especially when it comes to housing. FVLC also continues to work in coalition with other GBV providers on local efforts to expand affordable housing and address homelessness.

# Legislative Advocacy



## **Bills We are Following :**

### **AB 878 (Kalra) Victims of abuse or violence: reasonable accommodations:**

This bill would require a landlord to provide reasonable accommodations, as defined, at the request of a tenant who is a victim or whose family member is a victim of abuse or violence. The bill would require a landlord, upon receiving a request for a reasonable accommodation, to engage in a timely, good faith, and interactive process with the tenant to determine an effective accommodation, taking into account any exigent circumstances or danger facing the tenant or their family member.

**AB 1134 (Bains) Coerced marriage:** This bill would make that crime applicable when the victim is any person, without regard to

gender or age. The bill would expand the crime to apply to a perpetrator who makes any attempts to force the victim to marry them, irrespective of gender, marry another person, or to be defiled. Additionally, this bill would delete the time limits described above and instead authorize a proceeding to obtain a judgment of nullity of marriage at anytime

**AB 969 (Rodriguez) CalWORKs: family violence option and gender-based violence information.** This bill would require a county to waive a program requirement for a recipient who has been identified as a past or present victim of domestic abuse unless the county has evidence that the requirement would not make it more difficult for the recipient or their children to escape abuse, or that it would not be detrimental or unfairly penalize them.

**SB 498 (Becker) County detention: commissary.** This bill would require that indigent incarcerated persons and indigent wards or detainees be provided basic hygiene products free of charge and require that those individuals have guaranteed access to hygiene products upon request. The bill would prohibit an indigent incarcerated person or an indigent ward or detainee from being denied access to hygiene products as a disciplinary measure.

# Advocacy Efforts & Home Cohort

## **AB 779 (Lackey) Child welfare services:**

The bill would require a domestic violence consultant under the program to assist county social workers by providing education on domestic violence-related dynamics and services and discussing complicating factors and protective measures.

**Advocacy Efforts:** Measure NN, an Oakland nine-year special tax, passed. FVLC continues to work toward effective implementation. In 2020, Alameda County voters approved Measure W, a ten-year one-half percent general transaction and use tax. Measure W is estimated to generate approximately \$150 million in revenue, based on the last five years of transaction and use tax estimates. Alameda County Housing and Homeless Services Agency has recommended that those funds should be used to address the housing and homelessness challenges in the county. FVLC supports the funds being used for housing, homelessness prevention, and services, and our Policy Department is working with gender-based violence

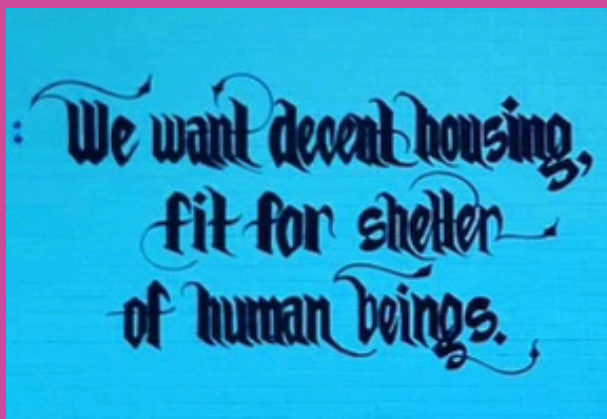
provider coalition members to advocate for those potential resources to include survivors and survivor-serving agencies. Measure W is currently the subject of litigation, and any collected funds are being held in escrow until the conclusion of the litigation.

**HOME Cohort:** Over the last several months, the advocacy committee has been hard at work researching permanent supportive housing. In our research we found the following data:

In 2024, more than 187,000 people in California were counted as experiencing homelessness on a given night—an increase of more than 5,500 from 2023. Of the unhoused population in California, 68% of individuals experiencing homelessness are unsheltered.

Between 2018 -2023, the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in CA grew by 107% (71,150 individuals).

Research has consistently shown that permanent supportive housing is highly effective at addressing chronic homelessness. Permanent supportive housing has been found to increase long-term housing stability and reduce returns to homelessness, including for people with significant barriers to housing. In some studies, more than 75 percent of residents remained housed after two years.



# Upcoming Events

Keep an eye out:

- Violence Prevention Coalition(Gender-Based Violence Subcommittee) Meeting, March 13th
- VPC Event: Healthcare and Hot Chocolate on March 22nd from 12-4pm on
  - 7th and international
  - 17th and international
  - 22th and international
- HOME Cohort in person meeting, April 15th
- CAPVD Lobby Day, May 20th

## Follow us on Social Media!

**Facebook:** Family Violence Law Center

**Instagram:** @Bebravespeakup

**Twitter/ X:** @FamilyVLC

**Linkedin:** Family Violence Law Center



THIRSRAIL- Artist Didicok, Location: unknown

**Want to help us continue making an impact for survivors in Alameda County?**

*Please consider donating to  
Family Violence Law Center!*

**To donate, click HERE**



Founded in 1978, Family Violence Law Center (FVLC) helps diverse communities in Alameda County heal from domestic violence and sexual assault, advocating for justice and healthy relationships. We provide survivor-centered legal and crisis intervention services, offer prevention education for youth and other community members, and engage in policy work to create systemic change.

*In court and in our community, every day.*

**<http://fvlc.org/> \* [info@fvlc.org](mailto:info@fvlc.org) \* 1.800.947.8301 (24 hrs./day)**