

Plan a January 21, 2023 Prayer Vigil on Affordable Housing

Background: Virginia has an affordable housing crisis. Very low-income families spend more than half their incomes on housing. Approximately 29 percent of families spend more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing. Rents have increased dramatically, and home prices have skyrocketed, making the American dream of home ownership out of reach for many families. Thousands of families are on waitlists for public housing programs and evictions are rapidly increasing the numbers of people who are homeless.

The Governor has said he is concerned about housing affordability, but despite huge budget surpluses his proposed budget amendments offer little new money to build more affordable housing, provide rental assistance or stop evictions. Instead, Governor Youngkin proposes \$1 billion in tax cuts that will mostly benefit affluent Virginians and corporations.

Budget Goals: VICPP believes Virginia's budget should include the following for affordable housing:

- \$75 million to the Virginia Housing Trust Fund to build more affordable housing and help prevent homelessness.
- \$738 million to the Housing Stability Fund to fund a rental voucher program to assist families with low incomes.
- \$12.5 million to the Virginia Eviction Reduction Program (VERP) to reduce evictions with short-term financial assistance to at-risk renters or homeowners.

Organize the Vigil: Organizing the vigil is easy and because the action is part of a broader set of actions around the commonwealth, your vigil can help ensure more money for affordable housing. Here are the simple steps for organizing the vigil:

- 1) **Choose a location.** You can hold the vigil in your congregation's parking lot, near a homeless shelter, outside a nonprofit affordable housing building, or at the site of a current affordable housing struggle, such as at a building where lots of people are getting evicted. A site that symbolizes the need for affordable housing is good for photos, but your congregation's parking lot is fine too.
- 2) **Choose a date and time.** We are suggesting 10 a.m. on Saturday morning, January 21, but feel free to adjust the time and even move it to Sunday, January 22, if that works better for your group.
- 3) **Recruit a few leaders.** You will need people to:
 - Lead an opening prayer and closing prayer
 - Lead the litany – serving as the MC for the vigil
 - Share a story or two
 - Take pictures
- 4) **Print copies of the litany.**
- 5) **Practice getting to petition.** The litany includes a QR code so people can sign a petition on affordable housing by using their phone. If you are not used to using QR codes (e.g. menus), please try it ahead of time.
- 6) **Inform VICPP of your event.** Please let Sheila@virginiainterfaithcenter.org know of your event's date and time, so we can promote it. Please confirm by January 10 or January 17 so we can promote in the weekly roundup (on January 11 and January 18).

7) Recruit people to participate. Invite your friends, family, and congregants to participate. You can also invite your legislators who will likely be in the district over the weekend.

After the Event: Immediately after the event, please:

- Post photos on social media. Include the following link to the petition:
<https://virginiainterfaithcenter.ourpowerbase.net/civCRM/petition/sign?sid=247>
- Send your photos to Ayesha@virginiainterfaithcenter.org who will be using the photos for press coverage.