



Press Release

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The Fairfax County Commonwealth Attorney and OAR Commit to Reduce Racial Disparities in Fairfax by 20 Percent in Partnership with Vera Institute

OAR and the Commonwealth Attorney will join the Vera Institute of Justice's Motion for Justice program in an effort to center racial equity in policies and practices and address the historical and ever-present devastating impacts of the criminal legal system on Black people.

Fairfax, VA— Today, the office of the Fairfax County Commonwealth Attorney and OAR announced a new partnership with the [Vera Institute of Justice](#), pledging to reduce racial disparities in the Fairfax County criminal legal system by at least 20 percent over the next year. As part of their [Reshaping Prosecution Program's Motion for Justice](#) program, Vera will provide OAR with financial support to expand its outreach and provide the prosecutor's office with data analysis, staff training, community engagement support, and policy expertise to expand its understanding of the criminal legal system's history of racial injustice and guide them toward a more equitable future.

"This partnership will provide opportunities for members of our community who become involved with the criminal justice system to avoid the traditional criminal justice sanctions of conviction or incarceration. The partnership will also allow OAR to provide the services necessary for community members to be successful after justice-system involvement. This is an exciting opportunity, and we are pleased to partner with Vera and the Commonwealth Attorney on this project," said Derwin Overton, OAR's Executive Director.

The [Motion for Justice](#) program creates pathways for prosecutors to bridge the gap between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve to create lasting policies and practices that tackle the racial injustices deeply rooted in the criminal legal system. As part of this program, prosecutors have an opportunity to partner with a community-based organization to disrupt and rectify the decisions and policies that have historically targeted and harmed marginalized communities and inspire others across the country to adopt similar measures to address the racial inequities in the criminal legal system.

"As a former prosecutor, I know the unique and immense power that prosecutors wield. They can either perpetuate the injustices of the criminal legal system or work to rectify them," said [Jami Hodge](#), **director of the Reshaping Prosecution initiative at the Vera Institute of Justice**. "Local prosecutors are on the frontlines of justice and thus have the responsibility and discretion to address the racial inequities inherent in the criminal legal system. We are far past time for prosecutors to operate through a racial equity lens and in partnership with the community, so I am thrilled to partner with both OAR and the Commonwealth Attorney in Fairfax to tackle the deep-rooted injustices that continue to plague our communities."

Vera will provide the following support to prosecutors' offices and community-based partners:

1. policy and strategy recommendations;
2. data on the disparate impact of prosecution practices on Black people and other marginalized communities;
3. educational materials and programming designed and delivered in partnership with people from communities most impacted by the criminal legal system; and
4. Financial support to a community-based organization that partners with prosecutors to implement racially equitable policies and practices.

Current partners include Suffolk County District Attorney Rachael Rollins in Massachusetts, Ingham County Prosecuting Attorney Carol Siemon in Michigan, Ramsey County Attorney John Choi in Minnesota, City of St. Louis Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner, and Commonwealth's Attorney for Arlington County and the City of Falls Church Parisa Dehghani-Tafti. New partners include Westchester County District Attorney Miriam Rocah and the Youth Shelter Program of Westchester in New York; Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney Stephen Descano and OAR in Virginia; Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit and Washtenaw County My Brothers Keeper in Michigan; Athens-Clarke County District Attorney Deborah Gonzalez and People Living in Recovery in Georgia; Chatham County (Savannah) District Attorney Shalena Cook Jones and Savannah Feed the Hungry in Georgia; Kauai Prosecuting Attorney Justin Kollar and Hale Opio Kaua'i in Hawaii; City of St. Louis Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner and Freedom Community Center in Missouri; Marion County Prosecutor Ryan Mears and Horizon House in Indiana; and Franklin County District Attorney Matt Fogel in Pennsylvania.

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The Vera Institute of Justice is powered by hundreds of advocates, researchers, and community organizers working to transform the criminal legal and immigration systems until they're fair for all. Founded in 1961 to advocate for alternatives to money bail in New York City, Vera is now a national organization that partners with impacted communities and government leaders for change. We develop just, antiracist solutions so that money doesn't determine freedom; fewer people are in jails, prisons, and immigration detention; and everyone is treated with dignity. Vera's headquarters is in Brooklyn, New York, with offices in Washington, DC, New Orleans, and Los Angeles. For more information, visit vera.org.

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OAR is a local non-profit restorative justice organization providing human services since 1971. Our mission is to rebuild lives and create a safer community with opportunities, alternatives, and resources for justice-involved individuals and families. OAR provides diversion programs, jail-based reentry services, and community-based services to individuals and families involved in the justice system. More information about OAR can be found at oarnova.org or by calling (703) 246-3033.