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March 6, 2025

Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Sent via email and U.S. mail

Dear Governor Youngkin,

The Tahirih Justice Center is a national, nonprofit organization that serves people who have survived violence like domestic abuse, sexual assault, forced marriage, and human trafficking. Founded in 1997 and based in Falls Church, our team has decades of expertise in understanding how abusive people weaponize the fear of deportation to keep their victims from getting safe. **We urge you to rescind Executive Order 47 in order to truly protect victims of crime.**

State and local police already have the authority to arrest people who commit crimes, including people born in other countries. Virginia police and corrections officers also assist Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by transferring custody of people who commit crimes and may be deportable. While it is true that people born in other countries are far less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans, Virginia police already coordinate with ICE on criminal matters. **If arresting people who pose a danger to our communities is the priority, there is no need for this Executive Order.**

What will change under this Executive Order? **State police will have new authority to arrest and detain people who have not been charged with crimes.** That is the authority they do not have today, and that is the authority inherent in federal “287(g) agreements.”

The rhetoric that surrounds this Executive Order does not match

the reality. But, the message to immigrants is clear — any contact with state police could become an immigration matter. It could lead to their arrest, incarceration, separation from their jobs and children, and even lifetime banishment from the people they love. We know that this Executive Order will make it less likely for people who are victims of crime and were born in other countries to come forward and report their abusers. It raises the stakes for them if they do, and in doing so, lets abusers off the hook. Additionally, it will make it less likely for witnesses to crimes to come forward out of fear for their own safety and well-being. This makes everyone in Virginia less safe.

Between 2017 and 2021, during a similar climate, Tahirih documented a marked increase in survivors' mistrust of law enforcement. Three out of four legal advocates reported that their clients — immigrant survivors of gender-based and other forms of violence — were afraid to seek protection from courts or police out of fear that any contact with authorities could lead to their own deportation. Forty-three percent saw one or more clients drop their pursuit of legal cases, like protection orders, for this reason.

We want all people who are victims of or witnesses to violence to come forward and seek safety. With Executive Order 47, however, we know many survivors will be deterred.

You have the opportunity to show leadership at a time of deep division in this country. Whether we were born in the United States or born abroad, Virginia is now home. Our fates and our futures are commingled.

Please rescind Executive Order 47.

Respectfully,

Alex Goyette
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