



November 23, 2019

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
c/o Matt Mansell, Policy Director
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Northam,

Poisoning is the leading cause of injury related deaths in Virginia. In 1994 the Virginia PTA passed a resolution supporting funding for the three Poison Centers serving the Commonwealth; the National Capital Poison Center, Virginia Poison Center (VCU), and Blue Ridge Poison Center (UVA).

Virginia PTA recognizes that poison control centers and their educational outreach have been preventing unnecessary emergency department visits, reducing health care expenses, and improving outcomes for more than thirty years, all at no cost to its users. We ask that the Commonwealth increase the Poison Control Center appropriation so that they can continue to provide life-saving services for families and children across the Commonwealth.

Poison Centers lead the effort to prevent and minimize injury from poisoning by providing free triage and treatment guidance by phone and online, 24 hours a day. Their services save millions of dollars by avoiding unnecessary health care costs. They also save lives by providing expert guidance for more than 68,500 consults, annually, to the public and healthcare professionals.

In addition to helping and protecting poisoned patients, the three Centers:

- Perform continuous real-time analysis of poison center data to detect product hazards and chemical/bioterrorism incidents;
- Partner with the epidemiology office within the Virginia Department of Health to track, report, and discuss outbreaks of toxicological significance such as designer drugs and e-cigarette and vaping associated lung injury;
- Train EMS staff throughout Virginia; and
- Educate the public and increase awareness about poison prevention.

Similar to national trends, the severity of Virginia's poison exposure reports has increased dramatically in the past 2 decades.

From 1998 to 2018, both the percent and absolute number of serious outcomes from poisonings has nearly tripled and there has been a 54% increase in the percent of cases

managed in health care facilities. Serious cases require greater staff time and expertise for information gathering, clinical decision-making, and consultations with toxicology experts. The Centers have been meeting the growing needs by subsidizing the state's share through foundation grants and donations for years.

Please ensure adequate and consistent financial support is appropriated to meet the growing needs of the three Poison Centers so they can continue their invaluable work promoting poison control and poisoning prevention.

Sincerely,

Jenna Alexander

Jenna Alexander
Vice President of Advocacy
Virginia PTA

Donna Colombo

Donna Colombo
President
Virginia PTA

ABOUT VIRGINIA PTA

The Virginia PTA's twenty-one districts support 240,000 members at local PTAs in 1,025 schools across the Commonwealth. Hands-on, local support for PTAs in schools across the Commonwealth combined with robust training resources and a national advocacy platform, sets the PTA apart as the leader in supporting local school parent groups. Local PTAs play a crucial role in building strong partnerships between parents and administrators and creating a vibrant community of engaged parents which contributes to the educational success, health, and well-being of our children and communities. We speak with one voice for every child - not only in our local schools, but also in State Legislatures, the US Congress and in our State and National Departments of Education.