

Surveys of crime victims consistently reveal two major findings:

1) most victims do not feel supported by the justice system, and **2)** a majority of survivors prefer to stop crime before it starts rather than simply incarcerating our way to public safety. That means investing in prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation instead of longer prison terms. When our criminal justice system over-invests in expensive incarceration strategies, it leaves fewer resources for prevention, rehabilitation, and services that crime victims and communities impacted by violence support.

This year's legislation

- Provides expanded protections for crime victims
- Prioritizes rehabilitation by improving Florida's probation system, and
- Supports record sealing for those arrested but not convicted of a crime so that they can get back to work.

Survivors Support Job Accommodations for Families of Homicide Victims

No one should have to choose between their job and burying a family member. Yet, fear of losing their job compels many victims of violence to return to work within a day or two of losing a loved one, compounding the trauma they have experienced, making it difficult to make burial arrangements, and making recovery much more difficult.

A [2018 survey of Florida crime victims](#) found that one in three Floridians had been a victim in the previous 10 years and the vast majority experienced symptoms of trauma. A [2016 national survey of crime victims](#) found that two out of three did not receive help after becoming a victim of a crime.

HB 0949 and SB 1306 – introduced by **Sen. Shevrin Jones (D-Miami/Dade/Broward)** and **Rep. Kevin Chambliss (D-Miami)** – would expand job accommodations for crime victims and aim to end cycles of trauma in our communities.

The bills would expand three days of unpaid leave currently limited to victims of domestic violence to also aid the families of homicide victims, allowing them time to make burial arrangements and bury their loved ones with dignity. Providing limited leave to victims will help survivors and communities heal while also preserving the economic stability that comes from having a job.

Survivors Support Sealing Records of Arrests That Don't Lead to Convictions

In 2019 the legislature passed legislation to automatically seal some records of arrests with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) that did not lead to convictions. However, these arrest records often remain unsealed at the county and local court level.

SB 1302 and **HB 1259**, sponsored by **Sen. Danny Burgess (R-Pasco/Hillsborough)** and **Rep. Spencer Roach (R-North Fort Myers)**, respectively, would amend an existing law and align state and local policy by providing a pathway to ensure that those records are sealed at the county level too. Law enforcement, however, will still be able to access those records.

Survivors know that arrest records can be an obstacle to employment and housing for those who were never convicted of a crime, undermining the stability that accompanies economic security. Record sealing would allow people to keep stable jobs, maintain economic security, and to continue contributing to the local economy. Ultimately, this bill can help make Floridians safer for everyone.

Survivors Support Improving Florida's Probation System

The Council of State Governments recently calculated that Florida spends \$330 million each year incarcerating people who have violated the conditions of their release. But many of those violations are either technical — such as missing a meeting or failing to report out-of-state travel — or extremely low-level new infractions, such as driving to work or school on a suspended license. Technical violations alone account for \$145 million of the \$330 million spent each year.

By a margin of 3 to 1, Florida crime victims prefer more spending on crime prevention and rehabilitation, rather than over-incarceration. In 2019, crime survivors overwhelmingly supported the passage of **HB 7125** – public safety reforms that enacted alternative sanctions for technical violations of probation that are more effective than incarceration for addressing low-level violations and making Florida communities safer.

HB 0611 and SB 1138 build on these probation reforms to both increase public safety and save taxpayer dollars. These commonsense bills are sponsored by Rep. Michelle Saltzman (R-Pensacola) and Sen. Bobby Powell (D-Palm Beach County) and would improve the state's probation system's treatment of low-level offenses by

- Expanding and expediting the use of the alternative sanctions program to ensure people on probation are effectively held accountable for technical violations where no one was harmed while avoiding wasteful, counterproductive prison time and unwanted disruptions to individual and family stability, including from job loss, and
- Providing judges and probation officers with additional tools to respond to certain low-level offenses where no harm has occurred, holding them accountable with alternative sanctions, instead of incarceration.



