



Statement of Solidarity

Advocates Strengthened in Resolve to Prevent Violence and to Support All Survivors

November 22nd -We have no words, none, that can meaningfully express our anger and deep sorrow as we mourn two young children -Giana and Aminah. These children's lives ended violently after they were kidnapped by their father, Robert Vicoso, and his accomplice.

We underscore that Giana and Aminah, like too many children in Pennsylvania and across the United States, remain unshielded from domestic and sexual violence. Such violence is omnipresent and still too normalized in our families, schools, workplaces, houses of worship and society overall.

We vow the loss of Giana and Aminah will not result in momentary mourning, but rather will renew and strengthen our resolve to protect children and prevent violence in homes and communities.

We are horrified, in our understanding, that Giana and Aminah's mother was physically and sexually terrorized before the children were kidnapped and later killed. We want to assure this mother, like so many other mothers who experience violence, that you are not alone. All across the Commonwealth, victim advocates and survivors of domestic and sexual violence, are ready and well-prepared to stand with and support you on your unique journey of healing.

We strongly believe our society deserves, actually requires, an independent prevention-focused examination of institutions and systems toward identifying any red flags that preceded the recent terrorizing and lethal acts. The goal must be to learn from and work to prevent such violence in the future. For example, it has been reported in the media, that the children's father previously faced discipline in his professional work (as a police officer) for sexually inappropriate interactions with women, including his subordinates.

We firmly believe that preventing violence is possible when we confront the underlying root causes, including understanding the degree to which violent acts are committed by a person with their own history of trauma. Breaking cycles of violence begins, in part, with how we care for and protect our children. Preventing violence will also require courageous public policy choices, including balancing a person's access to lethal weapons following threats or acts of abuse by that same person.

We reaffirm our commitment that every survivor deserves access to trauma-informed and victim-centered services regardless their gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation or socio-economic status. Strong examples of trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches include forensic services at a children's advocacy center, safety planning with victims who engage the justice system for Protection from Abuse (PFA's) and Sexual Violence Protection Orders (SVPOs) and assistance, lethality assessments when appropriate, and trauma recovery centers in our communities that provide a multi-faceted approach to care.

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We urge any person being threatened with abuse or violence or having directly experienced violence to seek out help, as you are able and ready. Confidential, free help is available, and healing is possible.

Resources for Help and Healing:

- If you are in immediate danger, call 911.
- If you are a child experiencing abuse or you are a person that suspects a child is being abused, call Pennsylvania's child abuse reporting hotline (ChildLine) at 1-800-932-0313.
- Find services and supports for child victims at a local children's advocacy center <https://penncac.org/find-a-center/>.
- Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or text START to 88788. Find a local domestic violence program in Pennsylvania at <https://www.pcadv.org/find-help/find-your-local-domestic-violence-program/>
- Locate a Pennsylvania rape crisis center providing confidential services and support to victims of sexual assault, <https://pcar.org/help-pa/locations>.
- Learn more about the services available to and rights afforded victims of crime through the Pennsylvania Office of Victim Advocate at 1-800-563-6399 or www.ova.pa.gov.

For more information contact:

- **Cathleen Palm, Center for Children's Justice** (717-215-1440 or CPalm@C4CJ.org)
- **Chris Kirchner, Children's Advocacy Centers of PA** (814-969-6993)
- **Julie Bancroft, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence** (jbancroft@pcadv.org, 717.545.6400 x 120)
- **Jim Willshier, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape**, (717-712-8815 or jwillshier@pcar.org)
- **Ashley Walkowiak, PA Office of Victim Advocate** (717-773-2399 or anwalkowiak@pa.gov)
- **Deb Harrison, York County Children's Advocacy Center** (717-718-4253 X 106)

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