

VIRGINIA MAKES IT LEGAL FOR CHILDREN TO PLAY OUTSIDE

New Virginia law assures parents: "Neglect" is only when you put your kids in serious danger--not anytime you let them walk or play outside.

RICHMOND, VA, UNITED STATES, March 30, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Children in Virginia can now play outside without their parents getting investigated for neglect.

On Sunday, [Gov. Glenn Youngkin signed](#) what is colloquially called the "[Reasonable Childhood Independence](#)"

bill, after it passed both houses unanimously. It narrows the state's neglect laws, which had been so vague and broad that parents were getting investigated simply for letting their kids walk or play outside.

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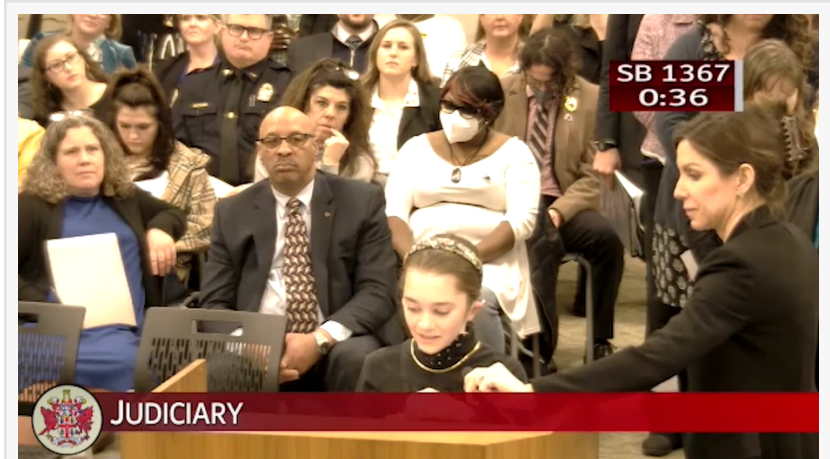
We were accused of neglect for letting the children play in the front yard.”

Emily Fields, Virginia Mom of 3

home from the bus stop in Falls Church, VA., at age 9 and four police officers showed up at her door “before I could get my coat off. They said they got a call about a kid alone in the cold seen going into this house.”

Elsa was terrified her parents would be taken away. “Since then,” she said, “I haven’t wanted to go outside very often.”

Her mother, naval architect Evelyn Hackel, testified, “I never imagined there would be more police involved for that than for when my neighbor was assaulted by a fugitive.”



Elsa Hackel, 12, testifies in favor of Virginia's "Reasonable Childhood Independence" bill.

Anna Fields from rural Pearisburg, VA., testified, too. She's 9. About a year ago, she said, "My brother, sister, and I were all playing outside and a neighbor said we weren't safe because we didn't have any grown-ups around."

The siblings were playing next door to their own home, Anna's mom, Emily Fields, testified. But thanks to that neighbor's call, "Child Protective Services showed up at our door. We were accused of neglect for letting the children play in the front yard."

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Jill Vogel (R., District 27, Warrenton), with chief co-patron Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D., District 33, Herndon), and co-sponsor Jennifer McLellan (D. 9., Richmond), changes that. It was supported by experts across the political spectrum, from parents' rights and conservative women's groups, to anti-poverty and racial justice advocates.

These included Will Estrada, President of the Parental Rights Foundation, and Valerie L'Herrou from the Virginia Poverty Law Center, with leadership by Debra Rodman, a former Democratic

member of the Virginia House of delegates. Other supporters included Families Forward, ALEC Action, the Independent Women's Forum, and the Legal Aid Justice Center. [Let Grow](#), the nonprofit promoting childhood independence, helped coordinate these efforts.

The sponsors testified that the bill will let Virginia parents breathe easier, especially families in minority communities, who have a higher rate of Child Protective Services investigations.

Sen. Vogel told her fellow legislators that this law saves precious resources by allowing Child Protective Services to focus on children in true danger, and it also saves families from "investigations that are unnecessarily traumatic or disruptive."



Emily Fields was visited by Child Protective Services for letting her kids play in the front yard.



Let Grow is the national nonprofit promoting childhood independence.

Virginia becomes the fifth state to pass such a law, following Utah, Oklahoma, Texas and Colorado.

“We need to stop believing that whenever parents allow their children out of their sight, they are endangering them. This is a family rights and human rights issue whose time has come,” said Diane Redleaf, a long time child and family advocate and Let Grow’s legal consultant.

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Lenore Skenazy

Let Grow Inc

+1 646-734-8426

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