COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Abigail D. Spanberger
Governor

October 29, 2026

Dear Presidents:

As you know, we have an obligation to protect every student who attends a Virginia college or university. The Commonwealth of Virginia expects its institutions of higher education to maintain safe, respectful, and supportive learning environments for the students from across our Commonwealth and across our country who come to your campuses to further their education. I trust that you all lead first and foremost with that goal in mind.

Recent national and local reporting has recounted the stories of women who have experienced rape, sexual violence, and sexual harassment on university campuses in Virginia and across the country. Educational leaders have a responsibility not only to respond to allegations of sexual violence correctly, quickly, and in compliance with the law, but they also must ensure systems are in place to protect students and create a campus culture that supports proactive efforts to prevent harm from ever occurring. We have an obligation to ensure that these systems are working as intended. Policies must be clearly understood — both by those administering them and by those whom these policies serve — and must be consistently implemented and enforced.

Pursuant to § 23.1-808, by October 31 of each year, each institution of higher education must certify to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) that it has reviewed its sexual violence policy and updated the policy as appropriate. As part of our ongoing partnership to protect students at Virginia's colleges and universities, I am asking each of your institutions to:

- Certify to SCHEV that you have reviewed your sexual violence policy and updated it as appropriate by October 31;
- Provide the Office of the Secretary of Education with a copy of applicable policies and procedures, including those covered under § 23.1-808 as well as other relevant policies regarding Title IX and disciplinary processes;
- Ensure that personnel have reviewed and understand the policies and procedures applicable to their respective roles;
- Assess the adequacy of existing training and education for students, faculty, and staff related to bystander intervention and preventing sexual violence or misconduct; and
- Reinforce expectations for accountability as well as timely reporting and follow up in accordance with institutional policies and applicable law.

I have directed my Secretary of Education, Secretary Smith, to work with SCHEV, the Department of Criminal Justice Services, and other experts to review existing policies and work with each of your institutions as you implement any identified improvements.

Our collective responsibility to Virginia's students requires us to do all that we can to keep them safe — and that means seriously evaluating the support we are offering and improving that support whenever possible.

As we continue to work together to provide students with a world-class Virginia education, I am grateful for your continued commitment to providing learning environments where every student is respected, protected, and set up to succeed.

Sincerely,



Abigail D. Spanberger