

26105026D

1 **HOUSE BILL NO. 839**

2 Offered January 14, 2026

3 Prefiled January 13, 2026

4 *A BILL to direct the Judicial Council of Virginia to convene a work group to study the implementation of*
5 *provisions to improve procedures for and responses to victims of family abuse and their children in child*
6 *custody proceedings; report.*

7 Patron—McClure

8 Committee Referral Pending

9 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**10 **1. § 1. That the Judicial Council of Virginia shall convene a work group to study the implementation of**
11 **provisions to improve procedures for and responses to victims of family abuse and their children in child**
12 **custody proceedings.**13 *The work group shall review, analyze, and make recommendations for how the juvenile and domestic*
14 *relations district courts in the Commonwealth could improve custody proceedings when credible allegations*
15 *of family abuse are at issue.*16 *The work group shall review and consider certain information, including how (i) power dynamics in child*
17 *custody matters impact outcomes, including how frequently alleged abusers gain custody of children; (ii)*
18 *alleged abusers may use court proceedings as instruments of harassment; and (iii) perceptions of survivors of*
19 *abuse may impact outcomes.*20 *The work group shall review and consider certain actions, including (a) providing resources for*
21 *affordable legal representation for abuse survivors in custody proceedings; (b) mandating judicial education*
22 *on trauma, abuse, and power dynamics; (c) improving guardian ad litem trainings relating to power*
23 *dynamics in family abuse; (d) providing greater oversight and accountability for judges; and (e) considering*
24 *whether custody cases with credible abuse allegations should result in limited custody to the abuser.*25 *The work group shall include representation from relevant stakeholders, including the Virginia Sexual*
26 *and Domestic Violence Action Alliance, the Virginia Family Law Coalition, the Virginia Trial Lawyers*
27 *Association, the Virginia Poverty Law Center, at least two guardians ad litem, at least two juvenile and*
28 *domestic relations district court judges, and at least three survivors of family abuse.*29 *The work group shall submit a report with its findings and recommendations to the Chairs of the House*
30 *and Senate Committees for Courts of Justice by November 1, 2026.*

INTRODUCED

HB839