



VIRGINIA

**For Immediate Release**

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## **EPILEPSY FOUNDATION OF VA HOSTS PANEL ON POLICE REFORM**

Epilepsy community joins calls for respect and understanding from the justice system

CHARLOTTESVILLE - As part of its Epi Edu series, which educates people on a wide range of epilepsy topics, the Epilepsy Foundation of Virginia (EFVA) will host a panel event on January 21st at 7 p.m. about the often challenging relationship between those living with epilepsy and the law.

Lowell Evans, the foundation's regional director for Eastern Va., pulled off the road when he felt a seizure coming one night. When he regained consciousness, he found himself in the back of a police car. "There are so many types of different seizures that this officer knew nothing about, so he thought I had been drinking or was intoxicated," he said.

Mr. Evans, who is Black, often dresses in business suits in hopes that law enforcement officers will treat him more seriously. But while progress is being made on implicit racial bias, the law must do more to also acknowledge bias against those with cognitive disabilities like epilepsy. Mr. Evans believes that speaking up about his experiences will bring more awareness to the issue.

Joining Mr. Evans on the panel are Dr. Linda Bright, a human services leader in the state, and Dr. Firas Beitinjaneh, a neurologist and epileptologist who recently sat on the state's DMV Medical Advisory Board.

Dr. Bright will speak on the series of criminal justice reform bills that Gov. Ralph Northam recently signed into law and what these laws mean for the epilepsy community. "You can get a lot done when you are communicating and collaborating with other organizations who understand what the needs are of individuals," said Dr. Bright, whose work in crisis intervention reduces the role police play in responding to people with a health crisis.

People living with epilepsy can do a lot to prevent and better manage their seizures, which in turn minimizes the risk of negative interaction with police and law enforcement. Dr. Beitinjaneh will use the event to provide advice on this topic.

Attendees can access the live event and ask questions by visiting the Epilepsy Foundation of Va. Facebook page. A recording will also be available on the Epilepsy Foundation of Virginia Youtube channel the next morning.

*The Epilepsy Foundation of Virginia (EFVA) leads the fight to overcome the challenges of living with epilepsy and accelerate therapies that save lives. Established in 1978, the foundation promotes awareness and provides assistance to the 84,800 Virginians living with epilepsy. Learn more at [www.epilepsyva.com](http://www.epilepsyva.com) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).*

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