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HOUSE BILL NO. 1229

Offered January 24, 2000

A BILL to amend and reenact § 18.2-57 of the Code of Virginia, relating to assault and battery and certain actions by school personnel.

Patrons—McEachin, Abbitt, Baskerville, Blevins, Christian, Crittenden, Darner, Day, DeBoer, Deeds, Diamonstein, Dillard, Hamilton, Hargrove, Ingram, Jackson, Johnson, Keister, Kilgore, McDonnell, Nixon, Phillips, Pollard, Shuler, Spruill, Tata, Wagner, Williams and Woodrum; Senators: Barry, Byrne, Colgan, Edwards, Hanger, Puller and Reynolds

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 18.2-57 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 18.2-57. Assault and battery.

A. Any person who commits a simple assault or assault and battery shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor, and if the person intentionally selects the person against whom a simple assault is committed because of his race, religious conviction, color or national origin, the penalty upon conviction shall include a mandatory, minimum term of confinement of at least six months, thirty days of which shall not be suspended, in whole or in part.

B. However, if a person intentionally selects the person against whom an assault and battery resulting in bodily injury is committed because of his race, religious conviction, color or national origin, the person shall be guilty of a Class 6 felony, and the penalty upon conviction shall include a mandatory, minimum term of confinement of at least six months, thirty days of which shall not be suspended, in whole or in part.

C. In addition, if any person commits an assault or an assault and battery against another knowing or having reason to know that such other person is a law-enforcement officer as defined hereinafter, a correctional officer as defined in § 53.1-1, a person employed by the Department of Corrections directly involved in the care, treatment or supervision of inmates in the custody of the Department or a firefighter as defined in § 65.2-102, engaged in the performance of his public duties as such, such person shall be guilty of a Class 6 felony, and, upon conviction, the sentence of such person shall include a mandatory, minimum term of confinement for six months which mandatory, minimum term shall not be suspended, in whole or in part.

Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to affect the right of any person charged with a violation of this section from asserting and presenting evidence in support of any defenses to the charge that may be available under common law.

D. In addition, if any person commits a battery against another knowing or having reason to know that such other person is a full-time or part-time teacher, principal, assistant principal, or guidance counselor of any public or private elementary or secondary school and is engaged in the performance of his duties as such, he shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor and the sentence of such person upon conviction shall include a mandatory, minimum sentence of fifteen days in jail, two days of which shall not be suspended in whole or in part. However, if the offense is committed by use of a firearm or other weapon prohibited on school property pursuant to § 18.2-308.1, the person shall serve a mandatory, minimum sentence of confinement of six months which shall not be suspended in whole or in part.

E. As used in this section, a "law-enforcement officer" means any full-time or part-time employee of a police department or sheriff's office which is part of or administered by the Commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof, who is responsible for the prevention or detection of crime and the enforcement of the penal, traffic or highway laws of this Commonwealth, and any conservation officer of the Department of Conservation and Recreation commissioned pursuant to § 10.1-115, and such officer also includes auxiliary police officers appointed or provided for pursuant to §§ 15.2-1731 and 15.2-1733 and auxiliary deputy sheriffs appointed pursuant to § 15.2-1603.

F. "Simple assault" or "assault and battery" shall not be construed to include the use of, by any teacher, principal or other person employed by a school board or employed in a school operated by the Commonwealth, any of the following: (i) incidental, minor or reasonable physical contact or other actions designed to maintain order and control; (ii) reasonable and necessary force to quell a disturbance or remove a student from the scene of a disturbance that threatens physical injury to persons or damage to property; (iii) reasonable and necessary force to prevent a student from inflicting physical harm on himself; (iv) reasonable and necessary force for self-defense or the defense of others; or (v) reasonable and necessary force to obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects or

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60 *controlled substances or associated paraphernalia that are upon the person of the student or within his*
61 *control.*

62 *In determining whether a person was acting within the exceptions provided in this subsection, due*
63 *deference shall be given to reasonable judgments at the time of the event that were made by a teacher,*
64 *principal or other person employed by a school board or employed in a school operated by the*
65 *Commonwealth.*