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HOUSE BILL NO. 2352

Offered January 10, 2001

Prefiled January 10, 2001

A BILL to amend and reenact § 19.2-11.01 of the Code of Virginia, relating to crime victim's right to participate in plea agreement.

Patron—McEachin

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 19.2-11.01 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 19.2-11.01. Crime victim and witness rights.

A. In recognition of the Commonwealth's concern for the victims and witnesses of crime, it is the purpose of this chapter to ensure that the full impact of crime is brought to the attention of the courts of the Commonwealth; that crime victims and witnesses are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity; and that their privacy is protected to the extent permissible under law. It is the further purpose of this chapter to ensure that victims and witnesses are informed of the rights provided to them under the laws of the Commonwealth; that they receive authorized services as appropriate; and that they have the opportunity to be heard by law-enforcement agencies, attorneys for the Commonwealth, corrections agencies and the judiciary at all critical stages of the criminal justice process to the extent permissible under law. Unless otherwise stated and subject to the provisions of § 19.2-11.1, it shall be the responsibility of a locality's crime victim and witness assistance program to provide the information and assistance required by this chapter.

Following a crime, law-enforcement personnel shall provide the victim with a standardized form listing the specific rights afforded to crime victims. The form shall include a telephone number by which the victim can receive further information and assistance in securing the rights afforded crime victims.

1. Victim and witness protection.

a. In order that victims and witnesses receive protection from harm and threats of harm arising out of their cooperation with law-enforcement, or prosecution efforts, they shall be provided with information as to the level of protection which may be available pursuant to § 52-35 or to any other federal, state or local program providing protection, and shall be assisted in obtaining this protection from the appropriate authorities.

b. Victims and witnesses shall be provided, where available, a separate waiting area during court proceedings that affords them privacy and protection from intimidation.

2. Financial assistance.

a. Victims shall be informed of financial assistance and social services available to them as victims of a crime, including information on their possible right to file a claim for compensation from the Crime Victims' Compensation Fund pursuant to Chapter 21.1 (§ 19.2-368.1 et seq.) this title and on other available assistance and services.

b. Victims shall be assisted in having any property held by law-enforcement agencies for evidentiary purposes returned promptly in accordance with §§ 19.2-270.1 and 19.2-270.2.

c. Victims shall be advised that restitution is available for damages or loss resulting from an offense and shall be assisted in seeking restitution in accordance with §§ 19.2-305, 19.2-305.1, Chapter 21.1 (§ 19.2-368.1 et seq.) of this title, Article 21 (§ 58.1-520 et seq.) of Chapter 3 of Title 58.1, and other applicable laws of the Commonwealth.

3. Notices.

a. Victims and witnesses shall be (i) provided with appropriate employer intercession services to ensure that employers of victims and witnesses will cooperate with the criminal justice process in order to minimize an employee's loss of pay and other benefits resulting from court appearances and (ii) advised that pursuant to § 18.2-465.1 it is unlawful for an employer to penalize an employee for appearing in court pursuant to a summons or subpoena.

b. Victims shall receive advance notification when practicable from the attorney for the Commonwealth of judicial proceedings relating to their case and shall be notified when practicable of any change in court dates in accordance with § 19.2-265.01 if they have provided their names, current addresses and telephone numbers.

c. Victims shall be notified by the Department of Corrections or a sheriff or jail superintendent in whose custody an escape, change of name, transfer, release or discharge of a prisoner occurs pursuant to

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59 the provisions of §§ 53.1-133.02 and 53.1-160 if they have provided their names, current addresses and
60 telephone numbers in writing.

61 d. Victims shall be advised that, in order to protect their right to receive notices and offer input, all
62 agencies and persons having such duties must have current victim addresses and telephone numbers
63 given by the victims.

64 4. Victim input.

65 a. Victims shall be given the opportunity, pursuant to § 19.2-299.1, to prepare a written victim
66 impact statement prior to sentencing of a defendant and may provide information to any individual or
67 agency charged with investigating the social history of a person or preparing a victim impact statement
68 under the provisions of §§ 16.1-273 and 53.1-155 or any other applicable law.

69 b. Victims shall have the right to remain in the courtroom during a criminal trial or proceeding
70 pursuant to the provisions of § 19.2-265.01.

71 c. On motion of the attorney for the Commonwealth, victims shall be given the opportunity, pursuant
72 to §§ 19.2-264.4 and 19.2-295.3, to testify prior to sentencing of a defendant regarding the impact of the
73 offense.

74 d. *Upon the request of the victim, the attorney for the Commonwealth shall keep the victim informed*
75 *and confer with the victim throughout the plea negotiation process and obtain the victim's views. If a*
76 *victim impact statement has been submitted by the victim, it shall be presented to the court along with*
77 *the proposed plea agreement. Prior to offering or entering into a plea agreement involving a criminal*
78 *offense wherein the defendant was originally charged with a violent felony offense as described set forth*
79 *in § 17.1-805, the attorney for the Commonwealth shall: (i) inform the victim of the contents of the*
80 *proposed plea agreement before it is agreed upon; (ii) discuss the case with the victim and obtain the*
81 *victim's views regarding the proposed plea agreement; and (iii) notify the victim that the victim is*
82 *entitled to be present and may submit a written statement regarding the impact that the defendant's*
83 *criminal conduct has had upon the victim and any objections to the plea agreement when such plea*
84 *agreement is considered by the court. The victim shall have the right to be present and present a written*
85 *impact statement at any proceeding in which a negotiated plea agreement for the person accused of*
86 *committing the criminal offense against the victim will be presented to the court. The court shall not*
87 *accept a plea agreement unless (a) it finds that the Commonwealth has, except for good cause shown,*
88 *complied with the provisions of this subdivision; and (b) the attorney for the Commonwealth represents*
89 *to the court that the requirements of this chapter have been complied with and advises the court*
90 *whether the victim has any objections to the agreement.*

91 *The duty to confer under this subdivision shall not limit the ability of the attorney for the*
92 *Commonwealth to exercise his discretion concerning the handling of any criminal charge against the*
93 *defendant.*

94 5. Courtroom assistance.

95 a. Victims and witnesses shall be informed that their addresses and telephone numbers may not be
96 disclosed, pursuant to the provisions of §§ 19.2-11.2 and 19.2-269.2, except when necessary for the
97 conduct of the criminal proceeding.

98 b. Victims and witnesses shall be advised that they have the right to the services of an interpreter in
99 accordance with §§ 19.2-164 and 19.2-164.1.

100 c. Victims of certain sexual offenses shall be advised that there may be a closed preliminary hearing
101 in accordance with § 18.2-67.8 and, if a victim was fourteen years of age or younger on the date of the
102 offense and is sixteen or under at the time of the trial, two-way closed-circuit television may be used in
103 the taking of testimony in accordance with § 18.2-67.9.

104 B. For purposes of this chapter, "victim" means (i) a person who has suffered physical, psychological
105 or economic harm as a direct result of the commission of a felony or of assault and battery in violation
106 of §§ 18.2-57, 18.2-57.1 or § 18.2-57.2, stalking in violation of § 18.2-60.3, sexual battery in violation
107 of § 18.2-67.4, attempted sexual battery in violation of § 18.2-67.5, maiming or driving while intoxicated
108 in violation of § 18.2-51.4 or § 18.2-266, (ii) a spouse or child of such a person, (iii) a parent or legal
109 guardian of such a person who is a minor, or (iv) a spouse, parent, sibling or legal guardian of such a
110 person who is physically or mentally incapacitated or was the victim of a homicide; however, "victim"
111 does not mean a parent, child, spouse, sibling or legal guardian who commits a felony or other
112 enumerated criminal offense against a victim as defined in clause (i) of this subsection.

113 C. Officials and employees of the judiciary, including court services units, law-enforcement agencies,
114 the Department of Corrections, attorneys for the Commonwealth and public defenders, shall be provided
115 with copies of this chapter by the Department of Criminal Justice Services or a crime victim and witness
116 assistance program. Each agency, officer or employee who has a responsibility or responsibilities to
117 victims under this chapter or other applicable law shall make reasonable efforts to become informed
118 about these responsibilities and to ensure that victims and witnesses receive such information and
119 services to which they may be entitled under applicable law, provided that no liability or cause of action
120 shall arise from the failure to make such efforts or from the failure of such victims or witnesses to

121 receive any such information or services.