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**SENATE BILL NO. 425**

Offered January 14, 2004

Prefiled January 14, 2004

*A BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-253.13:4 of the Code of Virginia, relating to high school diplomas.*

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Patron—Wagner

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Referred to Committee on Education and Health

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**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:****1. That § 22.1-253.13:4 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 22.1-253.13:4. Standard 4. Diplomas and certificates; class rankings.

A. Each local school board shall award diplomas to all secondary school students, including students who transfer from nonpublic schools or from home instruction, who earn the units of credit prescribed by the Board of Education, pass the prescribed tests, and meet such other requirements as may be prescribed by the local school board and approved by the Board of Education.

*In addition, the Board of Education shall establish guidelines for local school boards to award diplomas for which 22 credits and satisfactory completion of coursework are required, but for which (i) any verified units of credit may be selected and earned by the student and (ii) certain industry certifications may be substituted for Standards of Learning assessments to earn verified units of credit. Such diploma requirements shall be designed to ensure that students have acquired the knowledge and skills required to enter a vocation or skilled trade upon graduation. School boards shall report annually to the Board of Education the number of such diplomas awarded. In no event shall the issuance of such diplomas be considered in determinations of school accreditation.*

Provisions shall be made for students who transfer between secondary schools and from nonpublic schools or from home instruction as outlined in the standards for accreditation. Further, reasonable accommodation to meet the requirements for diplomas shall be provided for otherwise qualified students with disabilities as needed.

In addition, each local school board may devise, vis-a-vis the award of diplomas to secondary school students, a mechanism for calculating class rankings that takes into consideration whether the student has taken a required class more than one time and has had any prior earned grade for such required class expunged.

B. Students identified as disabled who complete the requirements of their individualized education programs shall be awarded special diplomas by local school boards.

C. Students who have completed a prescribed course of study as defined by the local school board shall be awarded certificates by local school boards if they do not qualify for diplomas.

D. The Board of Education shall develop criteria for recognizing exemplary performance in career and technical education programs by students who have completed the requirements for a standard or advanced studies diploma and shall award seals on the diplomas of students meeting such criteria.

E. By September 1, 2003, the Board shall establish, by regulation, requirements for the award of a general achievement diploma for those persons who have (i) achieved a passing score on the GED examination; (ii) successfully completed an education and training program designated by the Board of Education; and (iii) satisfied other requirements as may be established by the Board for the award of such diploma.

INTRODUCED

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