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**HOUSE BILL NO. 21**

Offered January 11, 2006

Prefiled December 5, 2005

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 19.2-11.01 of the Code of Virginia, relating to crime victims' rights to notice of court proceedings.*

Patrons—Fralin and McQuigg

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, including verification that the standardized form listing the specific rights afforded to crime victims has been received by the victim.

As soon as practicable after identifying a victim of a crime, the investigating law-enforcement agency 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, the name, address and telephone number of the office of the attorney for the Commonwealth, and the name, address and telephone number of the investigating law-enforcement agency.

1. Victim and witness protection and law-enforcement contacts.

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, and that does not place the victim in close proximity to the defendant or the defendant's family.

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.) of 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, *including bail hearings*, and shall be

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HB21

59 notified when practicable of any change in court dates in accordance with § 19.2-265.01 if they have  
60 provided their names, current addresses and telephone numbers.

61 c. Victims shall receive notification, if requested, subject to such reasonable procedures as the  
62 Attorney General may require pursuant to § 2.2-511, from the Attorney General of the filing and  
63 disposition of any appeal or habeas corpus proceeding involving their case.

64 d. Victims shall be notified by the Department of Corrections or a sheriff or jail superintendent (i) in  
65 whose custody an escape, change of name, transfer, release or discharge of a prisoner occurs pursuant to  
66 the provisions of §§ 53.1-133.02 and 53.1-160 or (ii) *when an accused is released on bail*, if they have  
67 provided their names, current addresses and telephone numbers in writing.

68 e. Victims shall be advised that, in order to protect their right to receive notices and offer input, all  
69 agencies and persons having such duties must have current victim addresses and telephone numbers  
70 given by the victims. Victims shall also be advised that any such information given shall be confidential  
71 as provided by § 19.2-11.2.

72 4. Victim input.

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

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

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

82 d. In a felony case, the attorney for the Commonwealth, upon the victim's written request, shall  
83 consult with the victim either verbally or in writing (i) to inform the victim of the contents of a  
84 proposed plea agreement and (ii) to obtain the victim's views about the disposition of the case, including  
85 the victim's views concerning dismissal, pleas, plea negotiations and sentencing. However, nothing in  
86 this section shall limit the ability of the attorney for the Commonwealth to exercise his discretion on  
87 behalf of the citizens of the Commonwealth in the disposition of any criminal case. The court shall not  
88 accept the plea agreement unless it finds that, except for good cause shown, the Commonwealth has  
89 complied with clauses (i) and (ii). Good cause shown shall include, but not be limited to, the  
90 unavailability of the victim due to incarceration, hospitalization, failure to appear at trial when  
91 subpoenaed, or change of address without notice.

92 Upon the victim's written request, the victim shall be notified in accordance with subdivision A 3 b  
93 of any proceeding in which the plea agreement will be tendered to the court.

94 The responsibility to consult with the victim under this subdivision shall not confer upon the  
95 defendant any substantive or procedural rights and shall not affect the validity of any plea entered by the  
96 defendant.

97 5. Courtroom assistance.

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

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

103 c. Victims and witnesses of certain sexual offenses shall be advised that there may be a closed  
104 preliminary hearing in accordance with § 18.2-67.8 and, if a victim was 14 years of age or younger on  
105 the date of the offense and is 16 or under at the time of the trial, or a witness to the offense is 14 years  
106 of age or younger at the time of the trial, that two-way closed-circuit television may be used in the  
107 taking of testimony in accordance with § 18.2-67.9.

108 6. Post trial assistance.

109 a. Within 30 days of receipt of a victim's written request after the final trial court proceeding in the  
110 case, the attorney for the Commonwealth shall notify the victim in writing, of (i) the disposition of the  
111 case, (ii) the crimes of which the defendant was convicted, (iii) the defendant's right to appeal, if known,  
112 and (iv) the telephone number of offices to contact in the event of nonpayment of restitution by the  
113 defendant.

114 b. If the defendant has been released on bail pending the outcome of an appeal, the agency that had  
115 custody of the defendant immediately prior to his release shall notify the victim as soon as practicable  
116 that the defendant has been released.

117 c. If the defendant's conviction is overturned, and the attorney for the Commonwealth decides to  
118 retry the case or the case is remanded for a new trial, the victim shall be entitled to the same rights as if  
119 the first trial did not take place.

120 B. For purposes of this chapter, "victim" means (i) a person who has suffered physical, psychological

121 or economic harm as a direct result of the commission of a felony or of assault and battery in violation  
122 of § 18.2-57 or § 18.2-57.2, stalking in violation of § 18.2-60.3, sexual battery in violation of  
123 § 18.2-67.4, attempted sexual battery in violation of § 18.2-67.5, maiming or driving while intoxicated in  
124 violation of § 18.2-51.4 or § 18.2-266, (ii) a spouse or child of such a person, (iii) a parent or legal  
125 guardian of such a person who is a minor, (iv) for the purposes of subdivision A 4 of this section only,  
126 a current or former foster parent or other person who has or has had physical custody of such a person  
127 who is a minor, for six months or more or for the majority of the minor's life, or (v) a spouse, parent,  
128 sibling or legal guardian of such a person who is physically or mentally incapacitated or was the victim  
129 of a homicide; however, "victim" does not mean a parent, child, spouse, sibling or legal guardian who  
130 commits a felony or other enumerated criminal offense against a victim as defined in clause (i).

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