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HOUSE BILL NO. 1183

Offered January 9, 2008

Prefiled January 9, 2008

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-254.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to requirements for home instruction of children.*

Patrons—Lingamfelter, Athey, Cole and Ware, R.L.

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 22.1-254.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 22.1-254.1. Declaration of policy; requirements for home instruction of children.

A. When the requirements of this section have been satisfied, instruction of children by their parents is an acceptable alternative form of education under the policy of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Any parent of any child who will have reached the fifth birthday on or before September 30 of any school year and who has not passed the eighteenth birthday may elect to provide home instruction in lieu of school attendance if he (i) holds a high school diploma; or (ii) is a teacher of qualifications prescribed by the Board of Education; or (iii) has enrolled the child or children in a correspondence course approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction; or (iv) provides a program of study or curriculum which, in the judgment of the division superintendent, includes the standards of learning objectives adopted by the Board of Education for language arts and mathematics or provides evidence that the parent is able to provide an adequate education for the child.

B. Any parent who elects to provide home instruction in lieu of school attendance shall annually notify the division superintendent in August of his intention to so instruct the child and provide a description of the curriculum to be followed for the coming year and evidence of having met one of the criteria for providing home instruction as required by subsection A. Effective July 1, 2000, parents electing to provide home instruction shall provide such annual notice no later than August 15. Any parent who moves into a school division or begins home instruction after the school year has begun shall notify the division superintendent of his intention to provide home instruction as soon as practicable and shall thereafter comply with the requirements of this section within 30 days of such notice. The division superintendent shall notify the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the number of students in the school division receiving home instruction.

C. The parent who elects to provide home instruction shall provide the division superintendent by August 1 following the school year in which the child has received home instruction with either (i) evidence that the child has attained a composite score in or above the fourth stanine on any nationally normed standardized achievement test; ~~or~~ (ii) an evaluation or assessment which the division superintendent determines to indicate that the child is achieving an adequate level of educational growth and progress; (iii) a letter from a person licensed to teach in any state, or a person employed as a teacher in a private school in Virginia, or a person with a master's degree or higher in the field of education, stating that the child is achieving an adequate level of educational growth and progress; (iv) a portfolio containing a sample of the child's work each quarter in math and language arts that demonstrates the child is achieving an adequate level of annual educational growth and progress; or (v) a report card from a private school in Virginia, college distance learning program, or home education correspondence school.

In the event that evidence of progress as required in this subsection is not provided by the parent, the home instruction program for that child may be placed on probation for one year. Parents shall file with the division superintendent evidence of their ability to provide an adequate education for their child in compliance with subsection A and a remediation plan for the probationary year which indicates their program is designed to address any educational deficiency. Upon acceptance of such evidence and plan by the division superintendent, the home instruction may continue for one probationary year. If the remediation plan and evidence are not accepted or the required evidence of progress is not provided by August 1 following the probationary year, home instruction shall cease and the parent shall make other arrangements for the education of the child which comply with § 22.1-254. The requirements of subsection C shall not apply to children who are under the age of six as of September 30 of the school year.

D. Nothing in this section shall prohibit a pupil and his parents from obtaining an excuse from school attendance by reason of bona fide religious training or belief pursuant to subdivision B 1 of § 22.1-254.

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HB1183

59 E. Any party aggrieved by a decision of the division superintendent may appeal his decision within
60 30 days to an independent hearing officer. The independent hearing officer shall be chosen from the list
61 maintained by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court for hearing appeals of the placements of
62 children with disabilities. The costs of the hearing shall be apportioned among the parties by the hearing
63 officer in a manner consistent with his findings.

64 F. School boards shall implement a plan to notify students receiving home instruction pursuant to
65 this section and their parents of the availability of Advanced Placement (AP) and Preliminary Scholastic
66 Aptitude Test (PSAT) examinations and the availability of financial assistance to low-income and needy
67 students to take these examinations. School boards shall implement a plan to make these examinations
68 available to students receiving home instruction.