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HOUSE BILL NO. 1263

Offered January 9, 2008
Prefiled January 9, 2008

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-278.4, 16.1-278.5, 22.1-209.1:1, 22.1-258, 22.1-260, 22.1-261, 22.1-262, 22.1-265, 22.1-267, 22.1-279.3, and 22.1-279.6 of the Code of Virginia, relating to truancy and school dropout prevention.

Patron—Hall

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 16.1-278.4, 16.1-278.5, 22.1-209.1:1, 22.1-258, 22.1-260, 22.1-261, 22.1-262, 22.1-265, 22.1-267, 22.1-279.3, and 22.1-279.6 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 16.1-278.4. Children in need of services.

A. If a child is found to be in need of services or a status offender, the juvenile court or the circuit court may make any of the following orders of disposition for the supervision, care and rehabilitation of the child:

1. Enter an order pursuant to the provisions of § 16.1-278.

2. Permit the child to remain with his parent subject to such conditions and limitations as the court may order with respect to such child and his parent.

3. Order the parent with whom the child is living to participate in such programs, cooperate in such treatment or be subject to such conditions and limitations as the court may order and as are designed for the rehabilitation of the child and his parent.

4. Beginning July 1, 1992, in the case of any child fourteen years of age or older, where the court finds that the child is not able to benefit appreciably from further schooling, the court may excuse the child from further compliance with any legal requirement of compulsory school attendance as provided under § 22.1-254 or authorize the child, notwithstanding the provisions of any other law, to be employed in any occupation which is not legally declared hazardous for children under the age of eighteen.

5. Permit the local board of social services or a public agency designated by the community policy and management team to place the child, subject to the provisions of § 16.1-281, in suitable family homes, child caring-institutions, residential facilities, or independent living arrangements with legal custody remaining with the parents or guardians. The local board or public agency and the parents or guardians shall enter into an agreement which shall specify the responsibilities of each for the care and control of the child. The board or public agency that places the child shall have the final authority to determine the appropriate placement for the child.

Any order allowing a local board or public agency to place a child where legal custody remains with the parents or guardians as provided in this section shall be entered only upon a finding by the court that reasonable efforts have been made to prevent placement out of the home and that continued placement in the home would be contrary to the welfare of the child, and the order shall so state.

6. Transfer legal custody to any of the following:

a. A relative or other individual who, after study, is found by the court to be qualified to receive and care for the child;

b. A child welfare agency, private organization or facility that is licensed or otherwise authorized by law to receive and provide care for such child. The court shall not transfer legal custody of a child in need of services to an agency, organization or facility out of the Commonwealth without the approval of the Commissioner of Social Services; or

c. The local board of social services of the county or city in which the court has jurisdiction or, at the discretion of the court, to the local board of the county or city in which the child has residence if other than the county or city in which the court has jurisdiction. The local board shall accept the child for care and custody, provided that it has been given reasonable notice of the pendency of the case and an opportunity to be heard. However, in an emergency in the county or city in which the court has jurisdiction, the local board may be required to accept a child for a period not to exceed fourteen days without prior notice or an opportunity to be heard if the judge entering the placement order describes the emergency and the need for such temporary placement in the order. Nothing in this subdivision shall prohibit the commitment of a child to any local board of social services in the Commonwealth when the local board consents to the commitment. The board to which the child is committed shall have the final authority to determine the appropriate placement for the child.

Any order authorizing removal from the home and transferring legal custody of a child to a local

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board of social services as provided in this subdivision shall be entered only upon a finding by the court that reasonable efforts have been made to prevent removal and that continued placement in the home would be contrary to the welfare of the child, and the order shall so state.

7. Require the child to participate in a public service project under such conditions as the court prescribes.

B. In the case of any child subject to compulsory school attendance as provided in § 22.1-254, where the court finds that the child's parent is in violation of § 22.1-254, 22.1-255, 22.1-265, or 22.1-267, in addition to any penalties provided in § 22.1-263 or 22.1-265, the court shall order the parent with whom the child is living to participate in such programs, cooperate in such treatment, or be subject to such conditions and limitations as the court shall order and as are designed for the rehabilitation of the child or the parent, or both. Upon the failure of the parent to so participate or cooperate, or to comply with the conditions and limitations that the court orders, the court shall impose a fine of not more than $100 for each day in which the person fails to comply with the court order.

If the court finds that the parent has willfully disobeyed a lawful process, judgment, decree, or court order requiring such person to comply with the compulsory school attendance law, in addition to any conditions or limitations that the court has ordered or any penalties provided by §§ 16.1-278.2 through 16.1-278.19, § 22.1-263 or 22.1-265, the court shall impose the penalty authorized by § 18.2-371.

C. Any order entered pursuant to this section shall be provided in writing to the child, his parent or legal custodian, and to the child's attorney and shall contain adequate notice of the provisions of § 16.1-292 regarding willful violation of such order.

§ 16.1-278.5. Children in need of supervision.

A. If a child is found to be in need of supervision, the court shall, before final disposition of the case, direct the appropriate public agency to evaluate the child's service needs using an interdisciplinary team approach. The team shall consist of qualified personnel who are reasonably available from the appropriate department of social services, community services board, local school division, court service unit and other appropriate and available public and private agencies and may be the family assessment and planning team established pursuant to § 2.2-5207. A report of the evaluation shall be filed as provided in § 16.1-274 A. In lieu of directing an evaluation be made, the court may consider the report concerning the child of an interdisciplinary team which met not more than ninety days prior to the court's making a finding that the child is in need of supervision.

B. The court may make any of the following orders of disposition for the supervision, care and rehabilitation of the child:

1. Enter any order of disposition authorized by § 16.1-278.4 for a child found to be in need of services;

2. Place the child on probation under such conditions and limitations as the court may prescribe including suspension of the child's driver's license upon terms and conditions which may include the issuance of a restricted license for those purposes set forth in subsection E of § 18.2-271.1;

3. Order the child and/or his parent to participate in such programs, cooperate in such treatment or be subject to such conditions and limitations as the court may order and as are designed for the rehabilitation of the child;

4. Require the child to participate in a public service project under such conditions as the court may prescribe; or

5. ~~a.~~ ~~Beginning July 1, 1992, in~~ *In* the case of any child subject to compulsory school attendance as provided in § 22.1-254, where the court finds that the child's parent is in violation of §§ 22.1-254, 22.1-255, 22.1-265, or § 22.1-267, in addition to any penalties provided in § 22.1-263 or § 22.1-265, the court ~~may~~ *shall* order the parent with whom the child is living to participate in such programs, cooperate in such treatment, or be subject to such conditions and limitations as the court ~~may~~ *shall* order and as are designed for the rehabilitation of the child and/or the parent. Upon the failure of the parent to so participate or cooperate, or to comply with the conditions and limitations that the court orders, the court ~~may~~ *shall* impose a fine of not more than $100 for each day in which the person fails to comply with the court order.

~~b.~~ If the court finds that the parent has willfully disobeyed a lawful process, judgment, decree, or court order requiring such person to comply with the compulsory school attendance law, in addition to any conditions or limitations that the court ~~may~~ ~~order~~ *has ordered* or any penalties provided by §§ 16.1-278.2 through 16.1-278.19, 22.1-263 or § 22.1-265, the court ~~may~~ *shall* impose the penalty authorized by § 18.2-371.

C. Any order entered pursuant to this section shall be provided in writing to the child, his parent or legal custodian, and to the child's attorney and shall contain adequate notice of the provisions of § 16.1-292 regarding willful violation of such order.

§ 22.1-209.1:1. School dropout prevention programs.

With such funds as are appropriated for this purpose, the Board of Education shall establish a program for the prevention of school dropout. All school divisions shall be eligible to receive such

noncompetitive grants ~~under the following conditions~~. *Effective July 1, 2010, local school boards shall implement school dropout prevention programs that include the following components*:

1. ~~The local school dropout prevention program includes components which emphasize~~ *An emphasis on* prevention, intervention, retrieval, and parental and community involvement;

2. ~~The program includes a component specifically~~ *Instructional programs and services* designed to eliminate the poor academic achievement among disadvantaged students in the school divisions; ~~and~~

3. Truancy prevention services that are supported through the collaboration, cooperation, and communication of a consortia of representatives of the school division, local law enforcement, business and industry, parents and the community, the faith community, and juvenile and domestic relations judges and court services personnel.

~~3.~~*4*. ~~The program includes a component for oversight~~ *Oversight* and evaluation of program effectiveness.

The Board of Education shall establish a full-time dropout prevention unit and shall employ such professional and support staff as may be necessary to ~~implement the grants programa~~*assist school divisions in truancy and dropout prevention efforts*, provide coordination for the statewide dropout prevention program ~~and~~, *provide* technical assistance to school divisions, and ~~to~~ monitor ~~such~~ local dropout prevention programs to ensure compliance and uniformity in the interpretation and application of such rules and regulations as may be adopted by the Board.

§ 22.1-258. Appointment of attendance officers; notification when pupil fails to report to school.

Every school board shall have power to appoint one or more attendance officers, who shall be charged with the enforcement of the provisions of this article. Where no attendance officer is appointed by the school board, the division superintendent shall act as attendance officer.

Whenever any pupil fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no indication has been received by school personnel that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the pupil's absence, a reasonable effort to notify by telephone the parent to obtain an explanation for the pupil's absence shall be made by the attendance officer, other school personnel, or volunteers organized by the school administration for this purpose. Any such volunteers shall not be liable for any civil damages for any acts or omissions resulting from making such reasonable efforts to notify parents and obtain such explanation when such acts or omissions are taken in good faith, unless such acts or omissions were the result of gross negligence or willful misconduct. This subsection shall not be construed to limit, withdraw, or overturn any defense or immunity already existing in statutory or common law or to affect any claim occurring prior to the effective date of this law. School divisions are encouraged to use noninstructional personnel for this notice.

Whenever any pupil fails to report to school for a total of ~~five scheduled~~ *three consecutive* school days ~~for~~ *during any part of* the school year and no indication has been received by school personnel that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the pupil's absence, and a reasonable effort to notify the parent has failed, the school principal or his designee shall make ~~a reasonable effort to ensure that~~ direct contact ~~is made~~, *to the extent possible,* with the parent, either in person or through telephone conversation, by the attendance officer to obtain an explanation for the pupil's absence and to explain to the parent the consequences of continued nonattendance. The attendance officer, the pupil, and the pupil's parent shall jointly develop a plan to resolve the pupil's nonattendance. Such plan shall include documentation of the reasons for the pupil's nonattendance.

If the pupil is absent an additional day after direct contact with the pupil's parent and the attendance officer has received no indication that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the pupil's absence, the attendance officer shall schedule a conference within ~~ten~~ *five* school days with the pupil, his parent, and school personnel, which conference may include other community service providers, to resolve issues related to the pupil's nonattendance. The conference shall be held no later than ~~fifteen~~ *10* school days after the ~~sixth~~ *fourth* absence. Upon the next absence by such pupil without indication to the attendance officer *or other school personnel* that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the pupil's absence, the school principal or his designee shall notify ~~the attendance officer or~~ the division superintendent~~, as the case may be,~~ who shall enforce the provisions of this article by either or both of the following: (i) filing a complaint with the juvenile and domestic relations court alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision *or a child in need of services, or both,* as defined in § 16.1-228 or (ii) instituting proceedings against the parent pursuant to § 18.2-371 or § 22.1-262. In filing a complaint against the student, the attendance officer shall provide *the division superintendent* written documentation of the efforts to comply with the provisions of this section. In the event that both parents have been awarded joint physical custody pursuant to § 20-124.2 and the school has received notice of such order, both parents shall be notified at the last known addresses of the parents.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit in any way the authority of any attendance officer or division superintendent to seek immediate compliance with the compulsory school attendance law as set forth in this article.

Attendance officers, other school personnel or volunteers organized by the school administration for this purpose shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability in connection with the notice to parents of a pupil's absence or failure to give such notice as required by this section.

§ 22.1-260. Reports of children enrolled and not enrolled; nonattendance; social security numbers required.

A. Within 10 days after the opening of the school, each public school principal shall report to the division superintendent:

1. The name, age and grade of each student enrolled in the school, and the name and address of the student's parent or guardian; and

2. To the best of the principal's information, the name of each child subject to the provisions of this article who is not enrolled in school, with the name and address of the child's parent or guardian. *Upon receiving the list from the principal containing the names of students who are subject to the provisions of this article and who are not enrolled in school, the division superintendent shall commence proceedings in accordance with the provisions of § 22.1-258 to enforce compliance with the compulsory school attendance law.*

B. At the end of each school year, each public school principal shall report to the division superintendent the number of students by grade level for whom a conference was scheduled as required by § 22.1-258. The division superintendent shall compile such grade level information for the division, *including information pertaining to proceedings instituted to enforce compliance with the compulsory school attendance law,* and provide such information to the Superintendent of Public Instruction annually.

C. For the purposes of this section, each student shall present a federal social security number within 90 days of his enrollment. The Board of Education shall, after consulting with the Social Security Administration, promulgate guidelines for determining which students are eligible to obtain social security numbers. In any case in which a student is ineligible, pursuant to these guidelines, to obtain a social security number or the parent is unwilling to present such number, the superintendent or his designee may assign another identifying number to the student or waive this requirement.

§ 22.1-261. Attendance officer to make list of children not enrolled; duties of attendance officer.

The attendance officer or the division superintendent shall check the reports submitted pursuant to subsection A of § 22.1-260 with the last school census and with reports from the State Registrar of Vital Records and Health Statistics. From these reports and from any other reliable source the attendance officer or the division superintendent shall, within five days after receiving all reports submitted pursuant to subsection A of § 22.1-260, make a list of the names of children who are not enrolled in any school and who are not exempt from school attendance. It shall be the duty of the ~~attendance officer, on behalf of the local school board,~~ *division superintendent or his designee* to investigate all cases of nonenrollment and, when no valid reason is found therefor, to notify the parent, guardian or other person having control of the child to require the attendance of such child at the school within three days from the date of such notice.

§ 22.1-262. Complaint to court when parent fails to comply with law.

A list of persons notified pursuant to § 22.1-261 shall be sent by the attendance officer *or division superintendent* to the appropriate school principal. If the parent (i) fails to comply with the provisions of § 22.1-261 within the time specified in the notice; or (ii) fails to comply with the provisions of § 22.1-254; or (iii) refuses to participate in the development of the plan to resolve the student's nonattendance or in the conference provided for in § 22.1-258, it shall be the duty of the ~~attendance officer, with the knowledge and approval of the~~ division superintendent, to make complaint against the pupil's parent in the name of the Commonwealth before the juvenile and domestic relations district court. If proceedings are instituted against the parent for failure to comply with the provisions of § 22.1-258, the ~~attendance officer is to~~ *division superintendent shall* provide documentation to the court regarding the school division's compliance with § 22.1-258. In addition thereto, such child may be proceeded against as a child in need of services or a child in need of supervision as provided in Chapter 11 (§ 16.1-226 et seq.) of Title 16.1.

§ 22.1-265. Inducing children to absent themselves.

Any person who induces or attempts to induce any child to be absent unlawfully from school or who knowingly employs or harbors, while school is in session, any child absent unlawfully shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor and may be subject to the penalties provided by subdivision 5 ~~a~~ of subsection B of § 16.1-278.5 or § 18.2-371. Upon a finding that a person knowingly and willfully violated the provisions of this section and that such person has been convicted previously of a violation of this section, such person shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

§ 22.1-267. Proceedings against habitually absent child.

Any child permitted by any parent, guardian, or other person having control thereof to be habitually absent from school contrary to the provisions of this article may be proceeded against as a child in need of supervision *or a child in need of services, or both,* as provided in Chapter 11 (§ 16.1-226 et seq.) of

Title 16.1.

§ 22.1-279.3. Parental responsibility and involvement requirements.

A. Each parent of a student enrolled in a public school has a duty to assist the school in enforcing the standards of student conduct and compulsory school attendance in order that education may be conducted in an atmosphere free of disruption and threat to persons or property, and supportive of individual rights.

B. A school board shall provide opportunities for parental and community involvement in every school in the school division.

C. Within one calendar month of the opening of school, each school board shall, simultaneously with any other materials customarily distributed at that time, send to the parents of each enrolled student (i) a notice of the requirements of this section; (ii) a copy of the school board's standards of student conduct; and (iii) a copy of the compulsory school attendance law. These materials shall include a notice to the parents that by signing the statement of receipt, parents shall not be deemed to waive, but to expressly reserve, their rights protected by the constitutions or laws of the United States or the Commonwealth and that a parent shall have the right to express disagreement with a school's or school division's policies or decisions.

Each parent of a student shall sign and return to the school in which the student is enrolled a statement acknowledging the receipt of the school board's standards of student conduct, the notice of the requirements of this section, and the compulsory school attendance law. Each school shall maintain records of such signed statements.

D. The school principal may request the student's parent or parents, if both parents have legal and physical custody of such student, to meet with the principal or his designee to review the school board's standards of student conduct and the parent's or parents' responsibility to participate with the school in disciplining the student and maintaining order, to ensure the student's compliance with compulsory school attendance law, and to discuss improvement of the child's behavior, school attendance, and educational progress.

E. In accordance with the due process procedures set forth in this article and the guidelines required by § 22.1-279.6, the school principal ~~may~~ *shall* notify the parents of any student who violates a school board policy or the compulsory school attendance requirements when such violation could result in the student's suspension or the filing of a court petition, whether or not the school administration has imposed such disciplinary action or filed a petition. The notice shall state (i) the date and particulars of the violation; (ii) the obligation of the parent to take actions to assist the school in improving the student's behavior and ensuring compulsory school attendance compliance; (iii) that, if the student is suspended, the parent may be required to accompany the student to meet with school officials; and (iv) that a petition with the juvenile and domestic relations court may be filed under certain circumstances to declare the student a child in need of supervision *or a child in need of services*.

F. No suspended student shall be admitted to the regular school program until such student and his parent have met with school officials to discuss improvement of the student's behavior, unless the school principal or his designee determines that readmission, without parent conference, is appropriate for the student.

G. Upon the failure of a parent to comply with the provisions of this section, the school board may, by petition to the juvenile and domestic relations court, proceed against such parent for willful and unreasonable refusal to participate in efforts to improve the student's behavior or school attendance, as follows:

1. If the court finds that the parent has willfully and unreasonably failed to meet, pursuant to a request of the principal as set forth in subsection D of this section, to review the school board's standards of student conduct and the parent's responsibility to assist the school in disciplining the student and maintaining order, and to discuss improvement of the child's behavior and educational progress, it may order the parent to so meet; or

2. If the court finds that a parent has willfully and unreasonably failed to accompany a suspended student to meet with school officials pursuant to subsection F, or upon the student's receiving a second suspension or being expelled, it ~~may~~ *shall* order the student or his parent, or both, to participate in such programs or such treatment, including, but not limited to, extended day programs, summer school, other educational programs and counseling, as the court deems appropriate to improve the student's behavior or school attendance. The order may also require participation in a parenting, counseling or a mentoring program, as appropriate or that the student or his parent, or both, shall be subject to such conditions and limitations as the court deems appropriate for the supervision, care, and rehabilitation of the student or his parent. In addition, the court may order the parent to pay a civil penalty not to exceed $500.

H. The civil penalties established pursuant to this section shall be enforceable in the juvenile and domestic relations court in which the student's school is located and shall be paid into a fund maintained by the appropriate local governing body to support programs or treatments designed to improve the

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behavior of students as described in subdivision G 2. Upon the failure to pay the civil penalties imposed by this section, the attorney for the appropriate county, city, or town shall enforce the collection of such civil penalties.

I. All references in this section to the juvenile and domestic relations court shall be also deemed to mean any successor in interest of such court.

§ 22.1-279.6. Board of Education guidelines and model policies for codes of student conduct; school board regulations.

A. The Board of Education shall establish guidelines and develop model policies for codes of student conduct to aid local school boards in the implementation of such policies. The guidelines and model policies shall include, but not be limited to, (i) criteria for the removal of a student from a class, the use of suspension, expulsion, and exclusion as disciplinary measures, the grounds for suspension and expulsion and exclusion, and the procedures to be followed in such cases, including *(i)* proceedings for such suspension, expulsion, and exclusion decisions and all applicable appeals processes; (ii) *proceedings for enforcing compliance with the compulsory school attendance law; (iii)* standards, consistent with state, federal and case laws, for school board policies on alcohol and drugs, gang-related activity, hazing, vandalism, trespassing, threats, search and seizure, disciplining of students with disabilities, intentional injury of others, self-defense, bullying, and dissemination of such policies to students, their parents, and school personnel; and ~~(iii)~~ *(iv)* standards for in-service training of school personnel in and examples of the appropriate management of student conduct and student offenses in violation of school board policies.

In accordance with the most recent enunciation of constitutional principles by the Supreme Court of the United States of America, the Board's standards for school board policies on alcohol and drugs and search and seizure shall include guidance for procedures relating to voluntary and mandatory drug testing in schools, including, but not limited to, which groups may be tested, use of test results, confidentiality of test information, privacy considerations, consent to the testing, need to know, and release of the test results to the appropriate school authority.

In the case of suspension and expulsion, the procedures set forth in this article shall be the minimum procedures that the school board may prescribe.

B. School boards shall adopt and revise, as required by § 22.1-253.13:7 and in accordance with the requirements of this section, regulations on codes of student conduct that are consistent with, but may be more stringent than, the guidelines of the Board. School boards shall include, in the regulations on codes of student conduct, procedures for suspension, expulsion, and exclusion decisions and shall biennially review the model student conduct code to incorporate discipline options and alternatives to preserve a safe, nondisruptive environment for effective teaching and learning.

Each school board shall include, in its code of student conduct, prohibitions against bullying, hazing, and profane or obscene language or conduct. School boards shall also cite, in their codes of student conduct, the provisions of § 18.2-56, which defines and prohibits hazing and imposes a Class 1 misdemeanor penalty for violations, i.e., confinement in jail for not more than 12 months and a fine of not more than $2,500, either or both.

A school board may regulate the use or possession of beepers or other portable communications devices and laser pointers by students on school property or attending school functions or activities and establish disciplinary procedures pursuant to this article to which students violating such regulations will be subject.

Nothing herein shall be construed to require any school board to adopt policies requiring or encouraging any drug testing in schools. However, a school board may, in its discretion, require or encourage drug testing in accordance with the Board of Education's guidelines and model student conduct policies required by subsection A and the Board's guidelines for student searches required by § 22.1-279.7.

C. The Board of Education shall establish standards to ensure compliance with the federal Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Part F-Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994), as amended, in accordance with § 22.1-277.07.

This subsection shall not be construed to diminish the authority of the Board of Education or to diminish the Governor's authority to coordinate and provide policy direction on official communications between the Commonwealth and the United States government.