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HOUSE BILL NO. 1491

Offered January 14, 2015

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A BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-253.13:4 of the Code of Virginia, relating to graduation; verified units of credit; locally developed alternative assessments.

Patron—Habeeb

Referred to Committee on Education

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. Student achievement and graduation requirements.**

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. Provisions shall be made to facilitate the transfer and appropriate grade placement of students from other public secondary schools, from nonpublic schools, or from home instruction as outlined in the standards for accreditation. Course credits earned for online courses taken in the Department of Education's Virtual Virginia program shall transfer to Virginia public schools in accordance with provisions of 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.

Each local school board shall notify the parents of rising eleventh and twelfth grade students of (i) the number and subject area requirements of standard and verified units of credit required for graduation pursuant to the standards for accreditation and (ii) the remaining number and subject area requirements of such units of credit the individual student requires for graduation.

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

Each local school board shall notify the parent of such students with disabilities who have an individualized education program and who fail to meet the requirements for a standard or advanced studies diploma of the student's right to a free and appropriate education to age 21, inclusive, pursuant to Article 2 (§ 22.1-213 et seq.) of Chapter 13.

C. Students who have completed a prescribed course of study as defined by the local school board shall be awarded certificates of program completion by local school boards if they are not eligible to receive a Board of Education-approved diploma.

Each local school board shall provide notification of the right to a free public education for students who have not reached 20 years of age on or before August 1 of the school year, pursuant to Chapter 1 (§ 22.1-1 et seq.), to the parent of students who fail to graduate or who have failed to achieve the number of verified units of credit required for graduation as provided in the standards for accreditation. If such student who does not graduate or achieve such verified units of credit is a student for whom English is a second language, the local school board shall notify the parent of the student's opportunity for a free public education in accordance with § 22.1-5.

D. In establishing course and credit requirements for a high school diploma, the Board shall:

1. Provide for the selection of integrated learning courses meeting the Standards of Learning and approved by the Board to satisfy graduation credit requirements, which shall include Standards of Learning testing, as necessary.

2. Establish the requirements for a standard and an advanced studies high school diploma, which shall each include at least one credit in fine or performing arts or career and technical education and one credit in United States and Virginia history. The requirements for a standard high school diploma shall, however, include at least two sequential electives chosen from a concentration of courses selected from a variety of options that may be planned to ensure the completion of a focused sequence of elective courses. Such focused sequence of elective courses shall provide a foundation for further education or training or preparation for employment. The advanced studies diploma shall be the recommended diploma for students pursuing baccalaureate study. Both the standard and the advanced studies diploma

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59 shall prepare students for post-secondary education and the career readiness required by the
60 Commonwealth's economy.

61 Beginning with first-time ninth grade students in the 2013-2014 school year, requirements for the
62 standard diploma shall include a requirement to earn a career and technical education credential that has
63 been approved by the Board, that could include, but not be limited to, the successful completion of an
64 industry certification, a state licensure examination, a national occupational competency assessment, or
65 the Virginia workplace readiness skills assessment.

66 Beginning with first-time ninth grade students in the 2016-2017 school year, requirements for the
67 standard and advanced diplomas shall include a requirement to be trained in emergency first aid,
68 cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and the use of automated external defibrillators, including hands-on
69 practice of the skills necessary to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

70 The Board shall make provision in its regulations for students with disabilities to earn a standard
71 diploma.

72 3. Provide, in the requirements to earn a standard or advanced studies diploma, the successful
73 completion of one virtual course. The virtual course may be a noncredit-bearing course.

74 4. Provide, in the requirements for the verified units of credit stipulated for obtaining the standard or
75 advanced studies diploma, that students completing elective classes into which the Standards of Learning
76 for any required course have been integrated may take the relevant Standards of Learning test for the
77 relevant required course and receive, upon achieving a satisfactory score on the specific Standards of
78 Learning assessment, a verified unit of credit for such elective class that shall be deemed to satisfy the
79 Board's requirement for verified credit for the required course.

80 5. Establish a procedure to facilitate the acceleration of students that allows qualified students, with
81 the recommendation of the division superintendent, without completing the 140-hour class, to obtain
82 credit for such class upon demonstration of mastery of the course content and objectives. Having
83 received credit for the course, the student shall be permitted to sit for the relevant Standards of Learning
84 assessment and, upon receiving a passing score, shall earn a verified credit. Nothing in this section shall
85 preclude relevant school division personnel from enforcing compulsory attendance in public schools.

86 6. Provide for the award of verified units of credit for passing scores on industry certifications, state
87 licensure examinations, and national occupational competency assessments approved by the Board of
88 Education.

89 School boards shall report annually to the Board of Education the number of Board-approved
90 industry certifications obtained, state licensure examinations passed, national occupational competency
91 assessments passed, Virginia workplace readiness skills assessments passed, and the number of career
92 and technical education completers who graduated. These numbers shall be reported as separate
93 categories on the School Performance Report Card.

94 For the purposes of this subdivision, "career and technical education completer" means a student who
95 has met the requirements for a career and technical concentration or specialization and all requirements
96 for high school graduation or an approved alternative education program.

97 In addition, the Board may:

98 a. For the purpose of awarding verified units of credit, approve the use of additional or substitute
99 tests for the correlated Standards of Learning assessment, such as academic achievement tests, industry
100 certifications or state licensure examinations; and

101 b. Permit students completing career and technical education programs designed to enable such
102 students to pass such industry certification examinations or state licensure examinations to be awarded,
103 upon obtaining satisfactory scores on such industry certification or licensure examinations, the
104 appropriate verified units of credit for one or more career and technical education classes into which
105 relevant Standards of Learning for various classes taught at the same level have been integrated. Such
106 industry certification and state licensure examinations may cover relevant Standards of Learning for
107 various required classes and may, at the discretion of the Board, address some Standards of Learning for
108 several required classes.

109 7. Provide for the waiver of certain graduation requirements (i) upon the Board's initiative or (ii) at
110 the request of a local school board. Such waivers shall be granted only for good cause and shall be
111 considered on a case-by-case basis.

112 8. Consider all computer science course credits earned by students to be science course credits,
113 mathematics course credits, or career and technical education credits. The Board of Education shall
114 develop guidelines addressing how computer science courses can satisfy graduation requirements.

115 9. *Provide for the award of verified units of credit to students who have demonstrated proficiency in*
116 *a Standards of Learning content area by achieving a satisfactory score on a locally developed*
117 *alternative assessment in lieu of the Standards of Learning assessment. This subdivision shall not apply*
118 *in cases in which the Standards of Learning assessment is required for accountability purposes pursuant*
119 *to federal law.*

120 E. In the exercise of its authority to recognize exemplary academic performance by providing for

121 diploma seals, the Board of Education shall develop criteria for recognizing exemplary performance in
122 career and technical education programs by students who have completed the requirements for a Board
123 of Education-approved diploma and shall award seals on the diplomas of students meeting such criteria.

124 In addition, the Board shall establish criteria for awarding a diploma seal for advanced mathematics
125 and technology for the Board of Education-approved diplomas. The Board shall consider including
126 criteria for (i) technology courses; (ii) technical writing, reading, and oral communication skills; (iii)
127 technology-related training; and (iv) industry, professional, and trade association national certifications.

128 The Board shall also establish criteria for awarding a diploma seal for excellence in civics education
129 and understanding of our state and federal constitutions and the democratic model of government for the
130 Board of Education-approved diplomas. The Board shall consider including criteria for (i) successful
131 completion of history, government, and civics courses, including courses that incorporate character
132 education; (ii) voluntary participation in community service or extracurricular activities that includes the
133 types of activities that shall qualify as community service and the number of hours required; and (iii)
134 related requirements as it deems appropriate.

135 F. The Board shall establish, by regulation, requirements for the award of a general achievement
136 adult high school diploma for those persons who are not subject to the compulsory school attendance
137 requirements of § 22.1-254 and have (i) achieved a passing score on a high school equivalency
138 examination approved by the Board of Education; (ii) successfully completed an education and training
139 program designated by the Board of Education; (iii) earned a Board of Education-approved career and
140 technical education credential such as the successful completion of an industry certification, a state
141 licensure examination, a national occupational competency assessment, or the Virginia workplace
142 readiness skills assessment; and (iv) satisfied other requirements as may be established by the Board for
143 the award of such diploma.

144 G. To ensure the uniform assessment of high school graduation rates, the Board shall collect,
145 analyze, and report high school graduation and dropout data using a formula prescribed by the Board.

146 The Board may promulgate such regulations as may be necessary and appropriate for the collection,
147 analysis, and reporting of such data.