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HOUSE BILL NO. 2320

Offered January 22, 2015

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Title 23 a chapter numbered 15.1, consisting of a section numbered 23-191.1, relating to a cooperative degree program; establishment of Western Governors University-Virginia.*

Patrons—Cline, Campbell and Garrett

Referred to Committee on Education**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Title 23 a chapter numbered 15.1, consisting of a section numbered 23-191.1, as follows:

CHAPTER 15.1.**COOPERATIVE DEGREE PROGRAM; WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY-VIRGINIA.****§ 23-191.1. Cooperative degree program; establishment of Western Governors University-Virginia.**

A. The Secretary of Education, in consultation with each two-year and four-year public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth and the Virginia Community College System, shall make reasonable efforts to establish and advertise a cooperative degree program whereby any undergraduate student enrolled at any such public institution of higher education may complete, through the use of online, community college, or public college or university courses, the course credit requirements to receive a degree at a tuition cost not to exceed \$16,000 per academic year.

B. In the event that the Secretary of Education and the public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth are unable, after one year, to establish a cooperative degree program pursuant to subsection A, the Secretary, in consultation with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (Council), the Chairman of the House Committee on Education, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health, the Chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance, shall establish Western Governors University-Virginia (the University) as the state affiliate of Western Governors University in the Commonwealth for the purpose of increasing the capacity for students in the Commonwealth to earn degrees from an online institution of higher education. The University shall be a private, nonprofit, online institution of higher education and shall not receive state funds except that students enrolled in the University shall be eligible to receive any state scholarship, grant, or loan established by law. The University shall be governed by the board of trustees of Western Governors University. In establishing the University, the Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Council and such chairmen, shall appoint members to a board to act in an advisory capacity to the board of trustees and make recommendations to the board of trustees for (i) the appointment of a president of the University and (ii) the adoption of articulation agreements between the University and each public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth. The University and each public institution of higher education in Virginia shall make good faith efforts to adopt such articulation agreements and ensure that credits transfer between the University and the institution to the extent feasible.