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SENATE BILL NO. 1426

Offered January 23, 2015

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-253.13:3 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Standards of Learning assessments; reform.*

Patron—Smith

Referred to Committee on Education and Health

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 22.1-253.13:3 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 22.1-253.13:3. Standard 3. Accreditation, other standards, assessments, and releases from state regulations.**

A. The Board of Education shall promulgate regulations establishing standards for accreditation pursuant to the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.), which shall include, but not be limited to, student outcome measures, requirements and guidelines for instructional programs and for the integration of educational technology into such instructional programs, administrative and instructional staffing levels and positions, including staff positions for supporting educational technology, student services, auxiliary education programs such as library and media services, course and credit requirements for graduation from high school, community relations, and the philosophy, goals, and objectives of public education in Virginia.

The Board of Education shall promulgate regulations establishing standards for accreditation of public virtual schools under the authority of the local school board that enroll students full time.

The Board shall review annually the accreditation status of all schools in the Commonwealth.

Each local school board shall maintain schools that are fully accredited pursuant to the standards for accreditation as prescribed by the Board of Education. Each local school board shall review the accreditation status of all schools in the local school division annually in public session. Within the time specified by the Board of Education, each school board shall submit corrective action plans for any schools within its school division that have been designated as not meeting the standards as approved by the Board.

When the Board of Education has obtained evidence through the school academic review process that the failure of schools within a division to achieve full accreditation status is related to division level failure to implement the Standards of Quality, the Board may require a division level academic review. After the conduct of such review and within the time specified by the Board of Education, each school board shall submit for approval by the Board a corrective action plan, consistent with criteria established by the Board and setting forth specific actions and a schedule designed to ensure that schools within its school division achieve full accreditation status. Such corrective action plans shall be part of the relevant school division's comprehensive plan pursuant to § 22.1-253.13:6.

With such funds as are appropriated or otherwise received for this purpose, the Board shall adopt and implement an academic review process, to be conducted by the Department of Education, to assist schools that are accredited with warning. The Department shall forward a report of each academic review to the relevant local school board, and such school board shall report the results of such academic review and the required annual progress reports in public session. The local school board shall implement any actions identified through the academic review and utilize them for improvement planning.

B. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall develop and the Board of Education shall approve criteria for determining and recognizing educational performance in the Commonwealth's public school divisions and schools. Such criteria, when approved, shall become an integral part of the accreditation process and shall include student outcome measurements. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall annually identify to the Board those school divisions and schools that exceed or do not meet the approved criteria. Such identification shall include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of public education programs in the various school divisions in Virginia and recommendations to the General Assembly for further enhancing student learning uniformly across the Commonwealth. In recognizing educational performance in the school divisions, the Board shall include consideration of special school division accomplishments, such as numbers of dual enrollments and students in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses, and participation in academic year Governor's Schools.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall assist local school boards in the implementation of action plans for increasing educational performance in those school divisions and schools that are identified as not meeting the approved criteria. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall monitor

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59 the implementation of and report to the Board of Education on the effectiveness of the corrective actions
60 taken to improve the educational performance in such school divisions and schools.

61 C. With such funds as are available for this purpose, the Board of Education shall prescribe
62 assessment methods to determine the level of achievement of the Standards of Learning objectives by all
63 students. Such assessments shall evaluate knowledge, application of knowledge, critical thinking, and
64 skills related to the Standards of Learning being assessed. The Board shall (i) in consultation with the
65 chairpersons of the eight regional superintendents' study groups, establish a timetable for administering
66 the Standards of Learning assessments to ensure genuine end-of-course and end-of-grade testing and (ii)
67 with the assistance of independent testing experts, conduct a regular analysis and validation process for
68 these assessments.

69 The Board shall also provide the option of industry certification and state licensure examinations as a
70 student-selected verified credit.

71 The Board of Education shall make publicly available such assessments in a timely manner and as
72 soon as practicable following the administration of such tests, so long as the release of such assessments
73 does not compromise test security or deplete the bank of assessment questions necessary to construct
74 subsequent tests, or limit the ability to test students on demand and provide immediate results in the
75 web-based assessment system.

76 The Board shall include in the student outcome measures that are required by the Standards for
77 Accreditation end-of-course or end-of-grade assessments for various grade levels and classes, including
78 the completion of the alternative assessments implemented by each local school board, in accordance
79 with the Standards of Learning. These assessments shall include end-of-course or end-of-grade tests for
80 English, mathematics, science, and history and social science.

81 The Standards of Learning assessments administered to students in grades three through eight all
82 grade levels shall meet but not exceed (a) reading and mathematics in grades three and four; (b) reading,
83 mathematics, and science in grade five; (c) reading and mathematics in grades six and seven; (d)
84 reading, writing, mathematics, and science in grade eight; and (e) Virginia Studies and Civics and
85 Economics once each at the grade levels deemed appropriate by each local school board the minimum
86 requirements established by the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, P.L. 89-10,
87 as amended, except that additional Standards of Learning assessments may be administered for the
88 purposes of awarding verified units of credit.

89 Each school board shall annually certify that it has provided instruction and administered an
90 alternative assessment, consistent with Board guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in
91 each Standards of Learning subject area in which a Standards of Learning assessment was not
92 administered during the school year. Such guidelines shall (1) incorporate options for age-appropriate,
93 authentic performance assessments and portfolios with rubrics and other methodologies designed to
94 ensure that students are making adequate academic progress in the subject area and that the Standards of
95 Learning content is being taught; (2) permit and encourage integrated assessments that include multiple
96 subject areas; and (3) emphasize collaboration between teachers to administer and substantiate the
97 assessments and the professional development of teachers to enable them to make the best use of
98 alternative assessments. The Board shall provide for the administration of an alternative assessment to a
99 statistically representative sample of students in each school in each Standards of Learning subject area
100 in which a Standards of Learning assessment was not administered during the school year.

101 Local school divisions shall provide targeted mathematics remediation and intervention to students in
102 grades six through eight who show computational deficiencies as demonstrated by their individual
103 performance on any diagnostic test or grade-level Standards of Learning mathematics test that measures
104 non-calculator computational skills.

105 In addition, to assess the educational progress of students, the Board of Education shall (A) (a)
106 develop appropriate assessments, which may include criterion-referenced tests and other assessment
107 instruments that may be used by classroom teachers; (B) (b) select appropriate industry certification and
108 state licensure examinations; and (C) (c) prescribe and provide measures, which may include nationally
109 normed tests to be used to identify students who score in the bottom quartile at selected grade levels.
110 An annual justification that includes evidence that the student meets the participation criteria defined by
111 the Virginia Department of Education shall be provided for each student considered for the Virginia
112 Grade Level Alternative. Each Individual Education Program team shall review such justification and
113 make the final determination as to whether or not the Virginia Grade Level Alternative is appropriate for
114 the student. The superintendent and the school board chairman shall certify to the Board of Education,
115 as a part of certifying compliance with the Standards of Quality, that there is a justification in the
116 Individual Education Program for every student who takes the Virginia Grade Level Alternative.
117 Compliance with this requirement shall be monitored as a part of the special education monitoring
118 process conducted by the Department of Education. The Board shall report to the Governor and General
119 Assembly in its annual reports pursuant to § 22.1-18 any school division that is not in compliance with
120 this requirement.

The Standards of Learning requirements, including all related assessments, shall be waived for any student awarded a scholarship under the Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Program, pursuant to § 30-231.2, who is enrolled in a preparation program for a high school equivalency examination approved by the Board of Education or in an adult basic education program or an adult secondary education program to obtain the high school diploma or a high school equivalency certificate.

The Board of Education may adopt special provisions related to the administration and use of any Standards of Learning test or tests in a content area as applied to accreditation ratings for any period during which the Standards of Learning content or assessments in that area are being revised and phased in. Prior to statewide administration of such tests, the Board of Education shall provide notice to local school boards regarding such special provisions.

D. The Board of Education may pursue all available civil remedies pursuant to § 22.1-19.1 or administrative action pursuant to § 22.1-292.1 for breaches in test security and unauthorized alteration of test materials or test results.

The Board may initiate or cause to be initiated a review or investigation of any alleged breach in security, unauthorized alteration, or improper administration of tests, including the exclusion of students from testing who are required to be assessed, by local school board employees responsible for the distribution or administration of the tests.

Records and other information furnished to or prepared by the Board during the conduct of a review or investigation may be withheld pursuant to subdivision 11 of § 2.2-3705.3. However, this section shall not prohibit the disclosure of records to (i) a local school board or division superintendent for the purpose of permitting such board or superintendent to consider or to take personnel action with regard to an employee or (ii) any requester, after the conclusion of a review or investigation, in a form that (a) does not reveal the identity of any person making a complaint or supplying information to the Board on a confidential basis and (b) does not compromise the security of any test mandated by the Board. Any local school board or division superintendent receiving such records or other information shall, upon taking personnel action against a relevant employee, place copies of such records or information relating to the specific employee in such person's personnel file.

Notwithstanding any other provision of state law, no test or examination authorized by this section, including the Standards of Learning assessments, shall be released or required to be released as minimum competency tests, if, in the judgment of the Board, such release would breach the security of such test or examination or deplete the bank of questions necessary to construct future secure tests.

E. With such funds as may be appropriated, the Board of Education may provide, through an agreement with vendors having the technical capacity and expertise to provide computerized tests and assessments, and test construction, analysis, and security, for (i) web-based computerized tests and assessments, including computer-adaptive Standards of Learning assessments, for the evaluation of student progress during and after remediation and (ii) the development of a remediation item bank directly related to the Standards of Learning.

F. To assess the educational progress of students as individuals and as groups, each local school board shall require the use of Standards of Learning assessments, alternative assessments, and other relevant data, such as industry certification and state licensure examinations, to evaluate student progress and to determine educational performance. Each local school shall require the administration of appropriate assessments to students, which may include criterion-referenced tests and teacher-made tests and shall include the Standards of Learning assessments, the local school board's alternative assessments, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress state-by-state assessment. Each school board shall analyze and report annually, in compliance with any criteria that may be established by the Board of Education, the results from the Stanford Achievement Test Series, Ninth Edition (Stanford Nine) assessment, if administered, industry certification examinations, and the Standards of Learning Assessments to the public.

The Board of Education shall not require administration of the Stanford Achievement Test Series, Ninth Edition (Stanford Nine) assessment, except as may be selected to facilitate compliance with the requirements for home instruction pursuant to § 22.1-254.1.

The Board shall include requirements for the reporting of the Standards of Learning assessment scores and averages for each year as part of the Board's requirements relating to the School Performance Report Card. Such scores shall be disaggregated for each school by student subgroups on the Virginia assessment program as appropriate and shall be reported to the public within three months of their receipt. These reports (i) shall be posted on the portion of the Department of Education's website relating to the School Performance Report Card, in a format and in a manner that allows year-to-year comparisons, and (ii) may include the National Assessment of Educational Progress state-by-state assessment.

G. Each local school division superintendent shall regularly review the division's submission of data and reports required by state and federal law and regulations to ensure that all information is accurate

182 and submitted in a timely fashion. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall provide a list of the
183 required reports and data to division superintendents annually. The status of compliance with this
184 requirement shall be included in the Board of Education's annual report to the Governor and the General
185 Assembly as required by § 22.1-18.

186 H. Any school board may request the Board of Education for release from state regulations or, on
187 behalf of one or more of its schools, for approval of an Individual School Accreditation Plan for the
188 evaluation of the performance of one or more of its schools as authorized for certain other schools by
189 the Standards of Accreditation pursuant to 8 VAC 20-131-280 C of the Virginia Administrative Code.
190 Waivers of regulatory requirements may be granted by the Board of Education based on submission of a
191 request from the division superintendent and chairman of the local school board. The Board of
192 Education may grant, for a period up to five years, a waiver of regulatory requirements that are not (i)
193 mandated by state or federal law or (ii) designed to promote health or safety. The school board shall
194 provide in its waiver request a description of how the releases from state regulations are designed to
195 increase the quality of instruction and improve the achievement of students in the affected school or
196 schools. The Department of Education shall provide (a) guidance to any local school division that
197 requests releases from state regulations and (b) information about opportunities to form partnerships with
198 other agencies or entities to any local school division in which the school or schools granted releases
199 from state regulations have demonstrated improvement in the quality of instruction and the achievement
200 of students.

201 The Board of Education may also grant local school boards waivers of specific requirements in
202 § 22.1-253.13:2, based on submission of a request from the division superintendent and chairman of the
203 local school board, permitting the local school board to assign instructional personnel to the schools with
204 the greatest needs, so long as the school division employs a sufficient number of personnel divisionwide
205 to meet the total number required by § 22.1-253.13:2 and all pupil/teacher ratios and class size
206 maximums set forth in subsection C of § 22.1-253.13:2 are met. The school board shall provide in its
207 request a description of how the waivers from specific Standards of Quality staffing standards are
208 designed to increase the quality of instruction and improve the achievement of students in the affected
209 school or schools. The waivers may be renewed in up to five-year increments, or revoked, based on
210 student achievement results in the affected school or schools.