VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2016 SESSION

CHAPTER 652

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 2.2-208.1, relating to the establishment of the School Readiness Committee.

[H 46]

Approved April 1, 2016

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 2.2-208.1 as follows:

§ 2.2-208.1. School Readiness Committee; Secretary to establish.

A. In recognition of the fact that early care and education of young children is linked to academic success and workforce readiness, the Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, and upon receiving recommendations for appointments from the Virginia Education Association, the Virginia School Boards Association, the Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals, the Virginia Council for Private Education, the Virginia Child Care Association, the Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education, and the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, shall establish and appoint members to the School Readiness Committee (the Committee).

B. The Committee shall have a total membership of no fewer than 27 members that shall consist of seven legislative members, no fewer than 16 nonlegislative citizen members, and four ex officio members. Members shall be appointed as follows: four members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; three members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules on the recommendation of the Chair of the Senate Committee on Education and Health; and no fewer than 16 nonlegislative citizen members to be appointed by the Secretary of Education. Nonlegislative citizen members shall include at least three representatives of the office of the Secretary of Education, one representative of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, one representative of a four-year public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth with a teacher education program, one representative of a two-year public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth with a teacher education program, one representative of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, one representative of the Virginia Association of School Superintendents, four representatives of the private business sector, one early childhood education teacher from a public early childhood education program, one early childhood education teacher from a private early childhood education program, one administrator from a public early childhood education program, and one administrator from a private early childhood education program. The Commissioner of Social Services or his designee, the Secretary of Education or his designee, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources or his designee, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction or his designee shall serve ex officio with voting privileges.

C. In recognition of the fact that one of the most important factors in learning outcomes for young children is the capabilities of the adults who support their growth and learning, the first goal of the Committee is to address the development and alignment of an effective professional development and credentialing system for the early childhood education workforce in the Commonwealth, including the (i) development of a competency-based professional development pathway for practitioners who teach children from birth to age five in both public and private early childhood education programs; (ii) consideration of articulation agreements between associate and baccalaureate degree programs; (iii) review of teacher licensure and education programs, including programs offered at comprehensive community colleges in the Commonwealth, to address competencies specific to early childhood development; (iv) alignment of existing professional development funding streams; and (v) development of innovative approaches to increasing accessibility, availability, affordability, and accountability of the Commonwealth's workforce development system for early childhood education teachers and providers. The Committee shall periodically review the goals set forth in this subsection and other priorities within the early childhood care and education systems and make recommendations to the Board of Education, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, the Department of Social Services, and the Chairmen of the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on Education and Health, the House Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions, and the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services. An affirmative vote by a majority of the legislative members in attendance and a majority of nonlegislative members in attendance shall be required for the Committee to adopt any recommendations. The Board of Education shall review the recommendations of the Committee and submit to the Chairmen of the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health, in advance of the next regular session of the General Assembly, any comments on such recommendations that the Board of Education deems appropriate.

D. Appointments to fill vacancies, other than by expiration of a term, shall be for the unexpired terms. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments. All legislative members and nonlegislative citizen members may be reappointed.

E. After the initial staggering of terms, legislative members and nonlegislative citizen members shall be appointed for terms of three years.

F. No legislative member or nonlegislative citizen member shall serve more than two consecutive three-year terms. The remainder of any term to which a member is appointed to fill a vacancy shall not constitute a term in determining the member's eligibility for reappointment.

G. The Committee shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its membership. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum. The meetings of the Committee shall be held at the call of the chairman or whenever the majority of the members so request.

H. The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation shall provide for the facilitation of the work of the Committee under the direction of the Secretary of Education or his designee and with the guidance of a steering subcommittee that includes the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, one legislative member, one representative of the private business sector, one representative of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, and one early childhood education teacher or administrator from a private early childhood education program.

I. The chairman may request and access the expertise of additional representatives and organizations relating to the Committee's goals and priorities. In order to meet the federally mandated requirements for early childhood advisory councils, the chairman may establish and appoint additional members to advisory subcommittees to address areas of special concern and priority.

J. The Department of Education and the Department of Social Services shall provide staff support to the Committee. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Committee, upon request.

2. That the initial appointments of nonlegislative citizen members of the School Readiness Committee shall be staggered as follows: at least six members for a term of four years, at least five members for a term of three years, and at least five members for a term of two years.