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HOUSE BILL NO. 556

Offered January 13, 2016

Prefiled January 11, 2016

A BILL to amend and reenact § 18.2-371.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to abuse and neglect of children; fetuses.

Patrons—LaRock and Freitas

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:****1. That § 18.2-371.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 18.2-371.1. Abuse and neglect of children; penalty; abandoned infant.**

A. Any parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the care of a child under the age of 18 who by willful act or omission or refusal to provide any necessary care for the child's health causes or permits serious injury to the life or health of such child is guilty of a Class 4 felony. For purposes of this subsection, "serious injury" includes but is not limited to (i) disfigurement, (ii) a fracture, (iii) a severe burn or laceration, (iv) mutilation, (v) maiming, (vi) forced ingestion of dangerous substances, and (vii) life-threatening internal injuries.

B. 1. Any parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the care of a child under the age of 18 whose willful act or omission in the care of such child was so gross, wanton, and culpable as to show a reckless disregard for human life is guilty of a Class 6 felony.

2. If a prosecution under this subsection is based solely on the accused parent having left the child at a hospital or emergency medical services agency, it shall be an affirmative defense to prosecution of a parent under this subsection that such parent safely delivered the child to a hospital that provides 24-hour emergency services or to an attended emergency medical services agency that employs emergency medical services personnel, within the first 14 days of the child's life. In order for the affirmative defense to apply, the child shall be delivered in a manner reasonably calculated to ensure the child's safety.

C. Any parent, guardian, or other person having care, custody, or control of a minor child who in good faith is under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination shall not, for that reason alone, be considered in violation of this section.

D. For purposes of this section, "child" includes a viable fetus; however, no person shall be prosecuted under this section for any injury to a fetus resulting from the performance of a lawful abortion.

2. That the provisions of this act may result in a net increase in periods of imprisonment or commitment. Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 665 of the Acts of Assembly of 2015 requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000. Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

INTRODUCED

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