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## HOUSE BILL NO. 2086

Offered January 11, 2017

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A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 19.2-327.10, 19.2-327.11, and 19.2-327.13 of the Code of Virginia, relating to writ of actual innocence based on nonbiological evidence; untested evidence.

Patron—Herring

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That §§ 19.2-327.10, 19.2-327.11, and 19.2-327.13 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**

**§ 19.2-327.10. Issuance of writ of actual innocence based on nonbiological evidence.**

Notwithstanding any other provision of law or rule of court, upon a petition of a person who was convicted of a felony upon a plea of not guilty, or the petition of a person who was adjudicated delinquent, upon a plea of not guilty, by a circuit court of an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult, the Court of Appeals shall have the authority to issue writs of actual innocence under this chapter. ~~Only one such writ based upon such conviction or adjudication of delinquency may be filed by a petitioner.~~ The writ shall lie to the circuit court that entered the conviction or the adjudication of delinquency and that court shall have the authority to conduct hearings, as provided for in this chapter, on such a petition as directed by order from the Court of Appeals. In accordance with §§ 17.1-411 and 19.2-317, either party may appeal a final decision of the Court of Appeals to the Supreme Court of Virginia. Upon an appeal from the Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court of Virginia shall have the authority to issue writs in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

**§ 19.2-327.11. Contents and form of the petition based on previously unknown, unavailable, or untested evidence of actual innocence.**

A. The petitioner shall allege categorically and with specificity, under oath, all of the following: (i) the crime for which the petitioner was convicted or the offense for which the petitioner was adjudicated delinquent, and that such conviction or adjudication of delinquency was upon a plea of not guilty; (ii) that the petitioner is actually innocent of the crime for which he was convicted or the offense for which he was adjudicated delinquent; (iii) an exact description of (a) the previously unknown or unavailable evidence supporting the allegation of innocence or (b) *the previously untested evidence and the scientific testing supporting the allegation of innocence*; (iv) (a) that such evidence was previously unknown or unavailable to the petitioner or his trial attorney of record at the time the conviction or adjudication of delinquency became final in the circuit court or (b) *if known, the reason that the evidence was not subject to the scientific testing set forth in the petition*; (v) the date (a) the previously unknown or unavailable evidence became known or available to the petitioner, and the circumstances under which it was discovered or (b) *the results of the scientific testing of previously untested evidence became known to the petitioner or any attorney of record*; (vi) (a) that the previously unknown or unavailable evidence is such as could not, by the exercise of diligence, have been discovered or obtained before the expiration of 21 days following entry of the final order of conviction or adjudication of delinquency by the circuit court or (b) *that the testing procedure was not available at the time the conviction or adjudication of delinquency became final in the circuit court*; (vii) *that the previously unknown or unavailable, or untested evidence is material and, when considered with all of the other evidence in the current record, will prove that no rational trier of fact would have found proof of guilt or delinquency beyond a reasonable doubt; and (viii) that the previously unknown or unavailable, or untested evidence is not merely cumulative, corroborative, or collateral. Nothing in this chapter shall constitute grounds to delay setting an execution date pursuant to § 53.1-232.1 or to grant a stay of execution that has been set pursuant to clause (iii) or (iv) of § 53.1-232.1 or to delay or stay any other appeals following conviction or adjudication of delinquency, or petitions to any court. Human biological evidence may not be used as the sole basis for seeking relief under this writ but may be used in conjunction with other evidence.*

B. Such petition shall contain all relevant allegations of facts that are known to the petitioner at the time of filing, shall be accompanied by all relevant documents, affidavits, and test results, and shall enumerate and include all relevant previous records, applications, petitions, and appeals and their dispositions. The petition shall be filed on a form provided by the Supreme Court. If the petitioner fails to submit a completed form, the Court of Appeals may dismiss the petition or return the petition to the petitioner pending the completion of such form. Any false statement in the petition, if such statement is knowingly or willfully made, shall be a ground for prosecution of perjury as provided for in § 18.2-434.

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59 C. In cases brought by counsel for the petitioner, the Court of Appeals shall not accept the petition  
60 unless it is accompanied by a duly executed return of service in the form of a verification that a copy of  
61 the petition and all attachments have been served on the attorney for the Commonwealth of the  
62 jurisdiction where the conviction or adjudication of delinquency occurred and the Attorney General, or  
63 an acceptance of service signed by these officials, or any combination thereof. In cases brought by  
64 petitioners pro se, the Court of Appeals shall not accept the petition unless it is accompanied by a  
65 certificate that a copy of the petition and all attachments have been sent, by certified mail, to the  
66 attorney for the Commonwealth of the jurisdiction where the conviction or adjudication of delinquency  
67 occurred and the Attorney General. If the Court of Appeals does not summarily dismiss the petition, it  
68 shall so notify in writing the Attorney General, the attorney for the Commonwealth, and the petitioner.  
69 The Attorney General shall have 60 days after receipt of such notice in which to file a response to the  
70 petition that may be extended for good cause shown; however, nothing shall prevent the Attorney  
71 General from filing an earlier response. The response may contain a proffer of any evidence pertaining  
72 to the guilt or delinquency or innocence of the petitioner that is not included in the record of the case,  
73 including evidence that was suppressed at trial.

74 D. The Court of Appeals may inspect the record of any trial or appellate court action, and the Court  
75 may, in any case, award a writ of certiorari to the clerk of the respective court below, and have brought  
76 before the Court the whole record or any part of any record. If, in the judgment of the Court, the  
77 petition fails to state a claim, or if the assertions of previously unknown ~~or~~, unavailable, *or untested*  
78 evidence, even if true, would fail to qualify for the granting of relief under this chapter, the Court may  
79 dismiss the petition summarily, without any hearing or a response from the Attorney General.

80 E. In any petition filed pursuant to this chapter that is not summarily dismissed, the petitioner is  
81 entitled to representation by counsel subject to the provisions of Article 3 (§ 19.2-157 et seq.) and  
82 Article 4 (§ 19.2-163.3 et seq.) of Chapter 10. The Court of Appeals may, in its discretion, appoint  
83 counsel prior to deciding whether a petition should be summarily dismissed.

84 **§ 19.2-327.13. Relief under writ.**

85 Upon consideration of the petition, the response by the Commonwealth, previous records of the case,  
86 the record of any hearing held under this chapter and, if applicable, any findings certified from the  
87 circuit court pursuant to an order issued under this chapter, the Court of Appeals, if it has not already  
88 summarily dismissed the petition, shall either dismiss the petition for failure to state a claim or assert  
89 grounds upon which relief shall be granted; or the Court shall (i) dismiss the petition for failure to  
90 establish previously unknown ~~or~~, unavailable, *or untested* evidence sufficient to justify the issuance of  
91 the writ; or (ii) only upon a finding that the petitioner has proven by clear and convincing evidence all  
92 of the allegations contained in clauses (iv) through (viii) of subsection A of § 19.2-327.11, and upon a  
93 finding that no rational trier of fact would have found proof of guilt or delinquency beyond a reasonable  
94 doubt, grant the writ, and vacate the conviction or finding of delinquency, or in the event that the Court  
95 finds that no rational trier of fact would have found sufficient evidence beyond a reasonable doubt as to  
96 one or more elements of the offense for which the petitioner was convicted or adjudicated delinquent,  
97 but the Court finds that there remains in the original trial record evidence sufficient to find the petitioner  
98 guilty or delinquent beyond a reasonable doubt of a lesser included offense, the Court shall modify the  
99 order of conviction or delinquency accordingly and remand the case to the circuit court that entered the  
100 conviction or adjudication of delinquency for resentencing. The burden of proof in a proceeding brought  
101 pursuant to this chapter shall be upon the convicted or delinquent person seeking relief. If a writ  
102 vacating a conviction or adjudication of delinquency is granted, and no appeal is made to the Supreme  
103 Court, or the Supreme Court denies the Commonwealth's petition for appeal or upholds the decision of  
104 the Court of Appeals to grant the writ, the Court of Appeals shall forward a copy of the writ to the  
105 circuit court, where an order of expungement shall be immediately granted.