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HOUSE BILL NO. 2127

Offered January 11, 2017

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A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 19.2-11.01, 19.2-11.6, and 19.2-11.8 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 1.2 of Title 19.2 a section numbered 19.2-11.12, relating to rights of victims of sexual assault; physical evidence recovery kits.

Patrons—Levine and Filler-Corn; Senator: Favola

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 19.2-11.01, 19.2-11.6, and 19.2-11.8 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 1.2 of Title 19.2 a section numbered 19.2-11.12 as follows:

§ 19.2-11.01. Crime victim and witness rights.

A. In recognition of the Commonwealth's concern for the victims and witnesses of crime, it is the purpose of this chapter to ensure that the full impact of crime is brought to the attention of the courts of the Commonwealth; that crime victims and witnesses are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity; and that their privacy is protected to the extent permissible under law. It is the further purpose of this chapter to ensure that victims and witnesses are informed of the rights provided to them under the laws of the Commonwealth; that they receive authorized services as appropriate; and that they have the opportunity to be heard by law-enforcement agencies, attorneys for the Commonwealth, corrections agencies and the judiciary at all critical stages of the criminal justice process to the extent permissible under law. Unless otherwise stated and subject to the provisions of § 19.2-11.1, it shall be the responsibility of a locality's crime victim and witness assistance program to provide the information and assistance required by this chapter, including verification that the standardized form listing the specific rights afforded to crime victims has been received by the victim.

As soon as practicable after identifying a victim of a crime, the investigating law-enforcement agency shall provide the victim with a standardized form listing the specific rights afforded to crime victims. The form shall include a telephone number by which the victim can receive further information and assistance in securing the rights afforded crime victims, the name, address and telephone number of the office of the attorney for the Commonwealth, the name, address and telephone number of the investigating law-enforcement agency, and a summary of the victim's rights under § 40.1-28.7:2.

1. Victim and witness protection and law-enforcement contacts.

a. In order that victims and witnesses receive protection from harm and threats of harm arising out of their cooperation with law-enforcement, or prosecution efforts, they shall be provided with information as to the level of protection which may be available pursuant to § 52-35 or to any other federal, state or local program providing protection, and shall be assisted in obtaining this protection from the appropriate authorities.

b. Victims and witnesses shall be provided, where available, a separate waiting area during court proceedings that affords them privacy and protection from intimidation, and that does not place the victim in close proximity to the defendant or the defendant's family.

2. Financial assistance.

a. Victims shall be informed of financial assistance and social services available to them as victims of a crime, including information on their possible right to file a claim for compensation from the Crime Victims' Compensation Fund pursuant to Chapter 21.1 (§ 19.2-368.1 et seq.) of this title and on other available assistance and services.

b. Victims shall be assisted in having any property held by law-enforcement agencies for evidentiary purposes returned promptly in accordance with §§ 19.2-270.1 and 19.2-270.2.

c. Victims shall be advised that restitution is available for damages or loss resulting from an offense and shall be assisted in seeking restitution in accordance with §§ 19.2-305, 19.2-305.1, Chapter 21.1 (§ 19.2-368.1 et seq.) of this title, Article 21 (§ 58.1-520 et seq.) of Chapter 3 of Title 58.1, and other applicable laws of the Commonwealth.

3. Notices.

a. Victims and witnesses shall be (i) provided with appropriate employer intercession services to ensure that employers of victims and witnesses will cooperate with the criminal justice process in order to minimize an employee's loss of pay and other benefits resulting from court appearances and (ii) advised that pursuant to § 18.2-465.1 it is unlawful for an employer to penalize an employee for

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59 appearing in court pursuant to a summons or subpoena.

60 b. Victims shall receive advance notification when practicable from the attorney for the
61 Commonwealth of judicial proceedings relating to their case and shall be notified when practicable of
62 any change in court dates in accordance with § 19.2-265.01 if they have provided their names, current
63 addresses and telephone numbers.

64 c. Victims shall receive notification, if requested, subject to such reasonable procedures as the
65 Attorney General may require pursuant to § 2.2-511, from the Attorney General of the filing and
66 disposition of any appeal or habeas corpus proceeding involving their case.

67 d. Victims shall be notified by the Department of Corrections or a sheriff or jail superintendent (i) in
68 whose custody an escape, change of name, transfer, release or discharge of a prisoner occurs pursuant to
69 the provisions of §§ 53.1-133.02 and 53.1-160 or (ii) when an accused is released on bail, if they have
70 provided their names, current addresses and telephone numbers in writing. Such notification may be
71 provided through the Virginia Statewide VINE (Victim Information and Notification Everyday) System
72 or other similar electronic or automated system.

73 e. Victims shall be advised that, in order to protect their right to receive notices and offer input, all
74 agencies and persons having such duties must have current victim addresses and telephone numbers
75 given by the victims. Victims shall also be advised that any such information given shall be confidential
76 as provided by § 19.2-11.2.

77 f. *Victims of sexual assault, as defined in § 19.2-11.5, shall be advised of their rights regarding*
78 *physical evidence recovery kits as provided in Chapter 1.2 (§ 19.2-11.5 et seq.).*

79 4. Victim input.

80 a. Victims shall be given the opportunity, pursuant to § 19.2-299.1, to prepare a written victim
81 impact statement prior to sentencing of a defendant and may provide information to any individual or
82 agency charged with investigating the social history of a person or preparing a victim impact statement
83 under the provisions of §§ 16.1-273 and 53.1-155 or any other applicable law.

84 b. Victims shall have the right to remain in the courtroom during a criminal trial or proceeding
85 pursuant to the provisions of § 19.2-265.01.

86 c. On motion of the attorney for the Commonwealth, victims shall be given the opportunity, pursuant
87 to §§ 19.2-264.4 and 19.2-295.3, to testify prior to sentencing of a defendant regarding the impact of the
88 offense.

89 d. In a felony case, the attorney for the Commonwealth, upon the victim's written request, shall
90 consult with the victim either verbally or in writing (i) to inform the victim of the contents of a
91 proposed plea agreement and (ii) to obtain the victim's views about the disposition of the case, including
92 the victim's views concerning dismissal, pleas, plea negotiations and sentencing. However, nothing in
93 this section shall limit the ability of the attorney for the Commonwealth to exercise his discretion on
94 behalf of the citizens of the Commonwealth in the disposition of any criminal case. The court shall not
95 accept the plea agreement unless it finds that, except for good cause shown, the Commonwealth has
96 complied with clauses (i) and (ii). Good cause shown shall include, but not be limited to, the
97 unavailability of the victim due to incarceration, hospitalization, failure to appear at trial when
98 subpoenaed, or change of address without notice.

99 Upon the victim's written request, the victim shall be notified in accordance with subdivision A 3 b
100 of any proceeding in which the plea agreement will be tendered to the court.

101 The responsibility to consult with the victim under this subdivision shall not confer upon the
102 defendant any substantive or procedural rights and shall not affect the validity of any plea entered by the
103 defendant.

104 5. Courtroom assistance.

105 a. Victims and witnesses shall be informed that their addresses and telephone numbers may not be
106 disclosed, pursuant to the provisions of §§ 19.2-11.2 and 19.2-269.2, except when necessary for the
107 conduct of the criminal proceeding.

108 b. Victims and witnesses shall be advised that they have the right to the services of an interpreter in
109 accordance with §§ 19.2-164 and 19.2-164.1.

110 c. Victims and witnesses of certain sexual offenses shall be advised that there may be a closed
111 preliminary hearing in accordance with § 18.2-67.8 and, if a victim was 14 years of age or younger on
112 the date of the offense and is 16 or under at the time of the trial, or a witness to the offense is 14 years
113 of age or younger at the time of the trial, that two-way closed-circuit television may be used in the
114 taking of testimony in accordance with § 18.2-67.9.

115 6. Post trial assistance.

116 a. Within 30 days of receipt of a victim's written request after the final trial court proceeding in the
117 case, the attorney for the Commonwealth shall notify the victim in writing, of (i) the disposition of the
118 case, (ii) the crimes of which the defendant was convicted, (iii) the defendant's right to appeal, if known,
119 and (iv) the telephone number of offices to contact in the event of nonpayment of restitution by the
120 defendant.

b. If the defendant has been released on bail pending the outcome of an appeal, the agency that had custody of the defendant immediately prior to his release shall notify the victim as soon as practicable that the defendant has been released.

c. If the defendant's conviction is overturned, and the attorney for the Commonwealth decides to retry the case or the case is remanded for a new trial, the victim shall be entitled to the same rights as if the first trial did not take place.

B. For purposes of this chapter, "victim" means (i) a person who has suffered physical, psychological, or economic harm as a direct result of the commission of (a) a felony, (b) assault and battery in violation of § 18.2-57 or 18.2-57.2, stalking in violation of § 18.2-60.3, a violation of a protective order in violation of § 16.1-253.2 or 18.2-60.4, sexual battery in violation of § 18.2-67.4, attempted sexual battery in violation of § 18.2-67.5, or maiming or driving while intoxicated in violation of § 18.2-51.4 or 18.2-266, or (c) a delinquent act that would be a felony or a misdemeanor violation of any offense enumerated in clause (b) if committed by an adult; (ii) a spouse or child of such a person; (iii) a parent or legal guardian of such a person who is a minor; (iv) for the purposes of subdivision A 4 only, a current or former foster parent or other person who has or has had physical custody of such a person who is a minor, for six months or more or for the majority of the minor's life; or (v) a spouse, parent, sibling, or legal guardian of such a person who is physically or mentally incapacitated or was the victim of a homicide; however, "victim" does not mean a parent, child, spouse, sibling, or legal guardian who commits a felony or other enumerated criminal offense against a victim as defined in clause (i).

C. Officials and employees of the judiciary, including court services units, law-enforcement agencies, the Department of Corrections, attorneys for the Commonwealth and public defenders, shall be provided with copies of this chapter by the Department of Criminal Justice Services or a crime victim and witness assistance program. Each agency, officer or employee who has a responsibility or responsibilities to victims under this chapter or other applicable law shall make reasonable efforts to become informed about these responsibilities and to ensure that victims and witnesses receive such information and services to which they may be entitled under applicable law, provided that no liability or cause of action shall arise from the failure to make such efforts or from the failure of such victims or witnesses to receive any such information or services.

§ 19.2-11.6. Anonymous physical evidence recovery kits.

A. When a victim of sexual assault who undergoes a forensic medical examination elects not to report the offense to law enforcement, the health care provider shall inform the victim that the physical evidence recovery kit shall be forwarded to the Division for storage as an anonymous physical evidence recovery kit. The health care provider shall further inform the victim of the length of time the anonymous physical evidence recovery kit will be stored by the Division, *the victim's right to object to the destruction of the anonymous physical evidence recovery kit*, and how the victim can have the anonymous physical evidence recovery kit released to a law-enforcement agency at a later date. The health care provider shall forward the anonymous physical evidence recovery kit to the Division in accordance with the policies and procedures established by the Division.

B. The Division shall store any anonymous physical evidence recovery kit received for a ~~minimum~~ *period of two 50 years. The Division shall store the anonymous physical evidence recovery kit for a period of 10 years following the receipt of a written objection to the destruction of the anonymous physical evidence recovery kit from the victim. After two years either the initial 50-year storage period or the additional 10-year storage period, the Division shall make a reasonable effort to notify the victim no less than 60 days prior to the intended date of destruction of the anonymous physical evidence recovery kit. In the absence of a response from the victim, or with the consent of the victim, the Division* may destroy the anonymous physical evidence recovery kit or, in its discretion or upon request of the victim or the law-enforcement agency, may elect to retain the anonymous physical evidence recovery kit for a longer period of time. Upon notification from either the law-enforcement agency or the attorney for the Commonwealth that the victim has elected to report the offense to the law-enforcement agency, the Division shall release the anonymous physical evidence recovery kit to the law-enforcement agency.

§ 19.2-11.8. Submission of physical evidence recovery kits to the Department.

A. A law-enforcement agency that receives a physical evidence recovery kit shall submit the physical evidence recovery kit to the Department for analysis within 60 days of receipt, except under the following circumstances: (i) it is an anonymous physical evidence recovery kit that shall be forwarded to the Division for storage; (ii) the physical evidence recovery kit was collected by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner as part of a routine death investigation, and the medical examiner and the law-enforcement agency agree that analysis is not warranted; (iii) the physical evidence recovery kit is connected to an offense that occurred outside of the Commonwealth; or (iv) the physical evidence recovery kit was determined by the law-enforcement agency not to be connected to a criminal offense.

B. Upon completion of analysis, the Department shall return the physical evidence recovery kit to the submitting law-enforcement agency. Upon receipt of the physical evidence recovery kit from the

182 Department, the law-enforcement agency shall store the physical evidence recovery kit for a period of
183 40 50 years ~~or until two years after the victim reaches the age of majority if the victim was a minor at~~
184 ~~the time of collection, whichever is longer.~~ *The law-enforcement agency shall store the physical*
185 *evidence recovery kit for a period of 10 years following the receipt of a written objection to the*
186 *destruction of the kit from the victim. After the mandatory retention period has lapsed either the initial*
187 *50-year storage period or the additional 10-year storage period, the law-enforcement agency shall make*
188 *a reasonable effort to notify the victim no less than 60 days prior to the intended date of destruction of*
189 *the physical evidence recovery kit. In the absence of a response from the victim, or with the consent of*
190 *the victim, the law-enforcement agency may destroy the physical evidence recovery kit or, in its*
191 *discretion, may elect to retain the physical evidence recovery kit for a longer period of time.*

192 C. The DNA profiles developed from physical evidence recovery kits submitted to the Department
193 for analysis pursuant to this section shall be uploaded into any local, state, or national DNA data bank
194 only if eligible as determined by Department procedures and in accordance with state and federal law.

195 ***§ 19.2-11.12. Costs of physical evidence recovery kits.***

196 *In accordance with subsection F of § 19.2-368.11:1, no victim of sexual assault shall be charged for*
197 *the cost of collecting a physical evidence recovery kit or an anonymous physical evidence recovery kit.*