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SENATE BILL NO. 1495

Offered January 9, 2019

Prefiled January 8, 2019

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 7 of Chapter 31 of Title 23.1 a section numbered 23.1-3129.1, relating to the establishment of the Virginia Rural Information Technology Apprenticeship Grant Fund and Program.*

Patrons—Chafin and Chase

Referred to Committee on Education and Health

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 7 of Chapter 31 of Title 23.1 a section numbered 23.1-3129.1 as follows:

§ 23.1-3129.1. Virginia Rural Information Technology Apprenticeship Grant Fund and Program.

A. As used in this section:

"Apprenticeship program" means an 18-month apprenticeship program for information technology workers hosted by a small, rural information technology business that combines mentorship and on-the-job training and that is established for the purpose of enhancing the experience and skills of such information technology workers.

"Information technology" means communications, telecommunications, automated data processing, applications, databases, data networks, the Internet, management information systems, and related information, equipment, goods, and services.

"Information technology worker" means any employee of a small, rural information technology business who is employed full-time on a salaried or wage basis and whose position is neither temporary nor provisional in nature.

"Qualified locality" means the Counties of Alleghany, Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Craig, Dickenson, Giles, Grayson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe and the Cities of Bristol, Danville, Galax, Martinsville, and Norton.

"Small, rural information technology business" means any corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship, firm, or enterprise that (i) provides information technology services to its clients, (ii) is headquartered and operated in a qualified locality, and (iii) employs fewer than 100 employees.

B. There is hereby created in the state treasury a special nonreverting fund to be known as the Virginia Rural Information Technology Apprenticeship Grant Fund, referred to in this section as "the Fund." The Fund shall be established on the books of the Comptroller. All funds appropriated for such purpose and any gifts, donations, grants, bequests, and other funds received on its behalf shall be paid into the state treasury and credited to the Fund. Interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it. Any moneys remaining in the Fund, including interest thereon, at the end of each fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely for the purposes of (i) awarding grants on a competitive basis through the Virginia Rural Information Technology Apprenticeship Grant Program established pursuant to subsection C or (ii) implementing and administering the Virginia Rural Information Technology Apprenticeship Grant Program. Expenditures and disbursements from the Fund shall be made by the State Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written request signed by the executive director of the Center.

C. The Virginia Rural Information Technology Apprenticeship Grant Program (the Program) is hereby established for the purpose of awarding grants on a competitive basis from the Fund to small, rural information technology businesses to establish apprenticeship programs. The Program shall be administered by the Center. In administering the Program, the Center shall establish and publish guidelines and criteria for grant awards, including guidelines and criteria governing agreements between the Center and grant recipients relating to the employment of information technology workers who participate in apprenticeship programs. Such guidelines and criteria are subject to the approval of Chief Workforce Development Officer. The Center, in collaboration with the Chief Workforce Development Officer, shall oversee each grant awarded through the Program and ensure thorough annual reporting on each such grant.

D. Each small, rural information technology business that receives a grant pursuant to the Program is eligible to receive grant funding for no more than five years or until the business employs 100 individuals, whichever occurs first. The amount of each grant shall not exceed the entry-level salary to employ information technology workers pursuant to the apprenticeship program established by the

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59 *business for a period of 18 months, in accordance with salary guidelines established and annually*
60 *adjusted, as necessary, by the Center.*