

20105202D

HOUSE BILL NO. 1532

Offered January 10, 2020

A BILL to amend and reenact § 53.1-202.3 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Department of Corrections; earned sentence credits.

Patrons—Scott, Bagby, Bourne, Campbell, J.L., Guy, Jones, Krizek and Lopez

Referred to Committee on Public Safety

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 53.1-202.3 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 53.1-202.3. Rate at which sentence credits may be earned; prerequisites.

A maximum of four and one-half sentence credits may be earned for each 30 days served. The earning of sentence credits shall be conditioned, in part, upon full participation in and cooperation with programs to which a person is assigned pursuant to § 53.1-32.1. A. Earned sentence credits shall be awarded and calculated using the following four-level classification system:

1. Level I. For inmates receiving Level I sentence credits, 13 days shall be deducted from the inmate's sentence for every 30 days served. If the inmate maintains a Level I classification beyond one year consecutively, sentence credits shall be awarded as follows: (i) during the second year, 16 days shall be deducted for every 30 days served; (ii) during the third year, 20 days shall be deducted for every 30 days served; (iii) during the fourth year, 25 days shall be deducted for every 30 days served; and (iv) during the fifth year and any consecutive year thereafter, 30 days shall be deducted for every 30 days served. Level I sentence credits shall be awarded to inmates who participate in and cooperate with all programs to which the inmate is assigned pursuant to § 53.1-32.1 and who have no more than one minor correctional infraction and no serious correctional infractions.

2. Level II. For inmates receiving Level II sentence credits, 7.5 days shall be deducted from the inmate's sentence for every 30 days served. Level II sentence credits shall be awarded to inmates who participate in and cooperate with all programs to which the inmate is assigned pursuant to § 53.1-32.1 but who require improvement in not more than one area.

3. Level III. For inmates receiving Level III sentence credits, 3.5 days shall be deducted from the inmate's sentence for every 30 days served. Level III sentence credits shall be awarded to inmates who participate in and cooperate with all programs to which the inmate is assigned pursuant to § 53.1-32.1 but who require significant improvement in two or more areas.

4. Level IV. No earned sentence credits shall be awarded to any inmate who fails to participate in and cooperate with all programs to which the inmate is assigned pursuant to § 53.1-32.1 or who causes substantial security or operational problems at the correctional facility.

B. An inmate shall be reevaluated and classified pursuant to subsection A each year, or sooner if required by Board regulation, and documentation of such classification, along with a calculation of the inmate's earned sentence credits, shall be included in the inmate's correctional file. An inmate's classification and calculation of earned sentence credits shall not be lowered or withheld due to a lack of programming, educational, or employment opportunities at the correctional facility at which the inmate is confined. If an inmate is downgraded to a classification by which the inmate receives a lower amount of earned sentence credits than the inmate received during the previous year or classification period, a clear explanation of the reasons for such reclassification shall be included in the inmate's correctional file. An inmate may appeal such reclassification determinations, which shall be filed and conducted in accordance with Board regulations. Such regulations shall include a requirement that such appeals be heard before a neutral and independent arbiter.

C. Any inmate who was confined in a local or regional jail prior to conviction or sentencing shall be credited for such time served. During such confinement in a local or regional jail, the inmate shall receive Level I sentence credits unless the inmate was classified at a different level at the time he was released from his most recent period of confinement, in which case the inmate shall receive sentence credits in accordance with such prior classification.

D. For a juvenile sentenced to serve a portion of his sentence as a serious juvenile offender under § 16.1-285.1, consideration for earning sentence credits shall be conditioned, in part, upon full participation in and cooperation with programs afforded to the juvenile during that portion of the sentence. The Department of Juvenile Justice shall provide a report that describes the juvenile's adherence to the facility's rules and the juvenile's progress toward treatment goals and objectives while sentenced as a serious juvenile offender under § 16.1-285.1.

E. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no portion of any sentence credits earned shall be

INTRODUCED

HB1532

59 applied to reduce the period of time a person must serve before becoming eligible for parole upon any
60 sentence.

61 **2. That the provisions of § 53.1-202.3 of the Code of Virginia, as amended by this act, shall apply**
62 **retroactively to the entire sentence of any inmate who is confined in a state correctional facility**
63 **and participating in the earned sentence credit system on July 1, 2020. If it is determined that,**
64 **upon retroactive application of the provisions of § 53.1-202.3 of the Code of Virginia, as amended**
65 **by this act, the release date of any such inmate passed prior to the effective date of this act, the**
66 **inmate shall be released upon approval of an appropriate release plan and within 60 days of such**
67 **determination; however, no inmate shall have a claim for wrongful incarceration pursuant to §**
68 **8.01-195.11 of the Code of Virginia on the basis of such retroactive application. If an inmate is**
69 **released prior to completion of any reentry programs deemed necessary by the Department of**
70 **Corrections on the inmate's most recent annual review or prior to completion of any programs**
71 **mandated by court order, the inmate shall be required to complete such programs under**
72 **post-release community supervision, provided that release prior to completion of any programs**
73 **required by the court is not strictly prohibited by the terms of the court order.**