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## HOUSE BILL NO. 1820

## AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions  
on January 26, 2021)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Helmer)

A *BILL to amend and reenact §§ 63.2-608 and 63.2-801 of the Code of Virginia, relating to SNAP benefits program.*

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

**1. That §§ 63.2-608 and 63.2-801 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**

**§ 63.2-608. Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW).**

A. The Department shall establish and administer the Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW) to reduce long-term dependence on welfare, emphasize personal responsibility, and enhance opportunities for personal initiative and self-sufficiency by promoting the value of work. The Department shall endeavor to develop placements for VIEW participants that will enable participants to develop job skills that are likely to result in independent employment and that take into consideration the proficiency, experience, skills, and prior training of a participant.

VIEW shall recognize clearly defined responsibilities and obligations on the part of public assistance recipients and shall include a written agreement of personal responsibility requiring parents to participate in work activities while receiving TANF, earned-income disregards to reduce disincentives to work, and a limit on TANF financial assistance.

VIEW shall require all able-bodied recipients of TANF who do not meet an exemption to participate in a work activity. VIEW shall require eligible TANF recipients to participate in unsubsidized, partially subsidized or fully subsidized employment or other allowable TANF work activity as defined by federal law and enter into an agreement of personal responsibility.

B. To the maximum extent permitted by federal law, and notwithstanding other provisions of Virginia law, the Department and local departments may, through applicable procurement laws and regulations, engage the services of public and private organizations to operate VIEW and to provide services incident to such operation.

C. All VIEW participants shall be under the direction and supervision of a case manager.

D. The Department shall ensure that participants are assigned to one of the following work activities within 90 days after the approval of TANF assistance:

1. Unsubsidized private-sector employment;

2. Subsidized employment, as follows:

a. The Department shall conduct a program in accordance with this section that shall be known as the Full Employment Program (FEP). FEP replaces TANF with subsidized employment. Persons not able to find unsubsidized employment who are otherwise eligible for TANF may participate in FEP unless exempted by this chapter. FEP shall assign participants to subsidized wage-paying private-sector jobs designed to increase the participants' self-sufficiency and improve their competitive position in the workforce.

b. Participants in FEP shall be placed in full-time employment when appropriate and shall be paid by the employer at an hourly rate not less than the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is higher. At no point shall a participant's spendable income received from wages and tax credits be less than the value of TANF received prior to the work placement.

c. Every employer subject to the Virginia unemployment insurance tax shall be eligible for assignment of FEP participants, but no employer shall be required to utilize such participants. Employers shall ensure that jobs made available to FEP participants are in conformity with § 3304(a)(5) of the Federal Unemployment Tax Act. FEP participants cannot be used to displace regular workers.

d. FEP employers shall:

(i) Endeavor to make FEP placements positive learning and training experiences;

(ii) Provide on-the-job training to the degree necessary for the participants to perform their duties;

(iii) Pay wages to participants at the same rate that they are paid to other employees performing the same type of work and having similar experience and employment tenure;

(iv) Provide sick leave, holiday and vacation benefits to participants to the same extent and on the same basis that they are provided to other employees performing the same type of work and having similar employment experience and tenure;

(v) Maintain health, safety and working conditions at or above levels generally acceptable in the industry and no less than those in which other employees perform the same type of work;

(vi) Provide workers' compensation coverage for participants;

(vii) Encourage volunteer mentors from among their other employees to assist participants in

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60 becoming oriented to work and the workplace; and

61 (viii) Sign an agreement with the local department outlining the employer requirements to participate  
62 in FEP. All agreements shall include notice of the employer's obligation to repay FEP reimbursements in  
63 the event the employer violates FEP rules.

64 e. As a condition of FEP participation, employers shall be prohibited from discriminating against any  
65 person, including program participants, on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender  
66 identity, national origin, religion, age, or disability;

67 3. Part-time or temporary employment;

68 4. Community work experience, as follows:

69 a. The Department and local departments shall work with other state, regional and local agencies and  
70 governments in developing job placements that serve a useful public purpose as provided in § 482(f) of  
71 the Social Security Act, as amended. Placements shall be selected to provide skills and serve a public  
72 function. VIEW participants shall not displace regular workers.

73 b. The number of hours per week for participants shall be determined by combining the total dollar  
74 amount of TANF and ~~food stamps~~ SNAP benefits and dividing by the minimum wage with a maximum  
75 of a work week of 32 hours, of which up to 12 hours of employment-related education and training may  
76 substitute for work experience employment; ~~or~~

77 5. *Educational activities that lead to a post-secondary credential, such as a degree or*  
78 *industry-recognized credential, certification, or license from an accredited institution of higher education*  
79 *or other postsecondary school licensed or certified by the Board of Education or the State Council of*  
80 *Higher Education for Virginia; or*

81 6. Any other allowable TANF work activity as defined by federal law.

82 E. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections A and D, if a local department determines that a  
83 VIEW participant is in need of job skills and would benefit from immediate job skills training, it may  
84 place the participant in a program preparing individuals for a high school equivalency examination  
85 approved by the Board of Education, a career and technical education program targeted at skills required  
86 for particular employment opportunities, or an apprenticeship program developed by the local department  
87 in accordance with requirements established by the Department. Eligible participants include those with  
88 problems related to obtaining and retaining employment, such as participants (i) with less than a high  
89 school education, (ii) whose reading or math skills are at or below the eighth grade level, (iii) who have  
90 not retained a job for a period of at least six months during the prior two years, or (iv) who are in a  
91 treatment program for a substance abuse problem or are receiving services through a family violence  
92 treatment program. The VIEW participant may continue in a high school equivalency examination  
93 preparation program, career and technical education program, or apprenticeship program for as long as  
94 the local department determines he is progressing satisfactorily and to the extent permitted by the  
95 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193), as amended.

96 F. Participants may be reevaluated after a period determined by the local department and reassigned  
97 to another work component. In addition, the number of hours worked may be reduced by the local  
98 department so that a participant may complete additional training or education to further his  
99 employability.

100 G. Local departments shall be authorized to sanction parents up to the full amount of the TANF  
101 grant for noncompliance, unless good cause exists.

102 H. VIEW participants shall not be assigned to projects that require that they travel unreasonable  
103 distances from their homes or remain away from their homes overnight without their consent.

104 Any injury to a VIEW participant arising out of and in the course of community work experience  
105 shall be covered by the participant's existing Medicaid coverage. If a community work experience  
106 participant is unable to work due to such an accident, his status shall be reviewed to determine whether  
107 he is eligible for an exemption from the limitation on TANF financial assistance.

108 A community work experience participant who becomes incapacitated for 30 days or more shall be  
109 eligible for TANF financial assistance for the duration of the incapacity, if otherwise eligible.

110 The Board shall adopt regulations providing for the accrual of paid sick leave or other equivalent  
111 mechanism for community work experience participants.

112 **§ 63.2-801. SNAP benefits program.**

113 A. The Board is authorized, in accordance with the federal Food Stamp Act, to implement a ~~food~~  
114 ~~stamp~~ SNAP benefits program in which each political subdivision in the Commonwealth shall participate.  
115 Such program shall include participation in the Restaurant Meals Program and shall be administered in  
116 conformity with the Board regulations.

117 B. *To the extent authorized by federal law and regulations, the Board shall (i) establish broad-based*  
118 *categorical eligibility for SNAP benefits in accordance with 7 C.F.R. § 273.2(j)(2), (ii) set the gross*  
119 *income eligibility standard for SNAP benefits at 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, and (iii)*  
120 *not impose an asset limit for eligibility for SNAP benefits.*

121 C. *The Board shall increase opportunities for self-sufficiency through postsecondary education by*

122 allowing SNAP benefits program participants, to the greatest extent allowed by federal law and  
123 regulations, to satisfy applicable employment and training requirements through enrollment in an  
124 accredited public institution of higher education or other postsecondary school licensed or certified by  
125 the Board of Education or the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. The Board shall (i)  
126 identify postsecondary education opportunities in the Commonwealth that meet the definition of  
127 "employment and training program" as set forth in 7 C.F.R. § 271.2 and the definition of "career and  
128 technical education" as set forth in 20 U.S.C. § 2302; (ii) average a SNAP benefits program  
129 participant's classroom and study hours on a monthly basis to determine whether the SNAP benefits  
130 program participant has met applicable education hour requirements; (iii) deem a SNAP benefits  
131 program participant who is approved for a federal or state work study position but who has not yet  
132 been placed in a work study position to have satisfied applicable employment and training requirements,  
133 as permitted under federal law; (iv) create a standardized form and process for SNAP benefits program  
134 participants to verify compliance with education requirements; (v) allow accredited public institutions of  
135 higher education or other postsecondary schools licensed or certified by the Board of Education or the  
136 State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to apply for SNAP ET third party reimbursement  
137 designation through the established procurement process; and (vi) establish and make available to  
138 SNAP benefits program participants materials that provide clear guidance regarding satisfaction of  
139 employment and training requirements through postsecondary education.