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HOUSE BILL NO. 1980

Offered January 13, 2021

Prefiled January 11, 2021

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 23.1-615.1, relating to the establishment of the Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship Program.

Patrons—Reid, Bagby, Ayala, Carr, Carter, Cole, J.G., Helmer, Hope, Kory, Levine, McQuinn, Mugler, Plum, Rasoul, Samirah, Simon, Simonds, Subramanyam and Sullivan; Senators: Bell, Boysko and Morrissey

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 23.1-615.1 as follows:

§ 23.1-615.1. Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship Program.

A. The Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship Program (the Program) is established for the purpose of reckoning with the history of the Commonwealth, addressing the long legacy of slavery in the Commonwealth, and acknowledging that the foundational success of several public institutions of higher education was based on the labor of enslaved individuals.

B. Consistent with the purpose set forth in subsection A, Longwood University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, the Virginia Military Institute, and The College of William and Mary in Virginia shall each implement and execute the Program by annually providing, with any source of funds other than state funds or tuition or fee increases, at least one African American Virginia student who was born in the Commonwealth and has a total household income that is not more than 400 percent of the federal poverty guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services with a renewable scholarship in an amount sufficient to cover tuition, mandatory fees, room and board, books and other educational supplies, and tutoring at the institution.

C. The Council shall collaborate with the institutions set forth in subsection B to establish guidelines for the implementation of the Program, including guidelines for the prioritization of applicants based on factors such as first-generation college status, income level, level of activity within community, and program of study.

D. Each institution set forth in subsection B shall:

1. Advertise the Program in the same manner as it advertises other scholarship programs;

2. To the extent practicable, award each scholarship pursuant to the Program in the memory of an enslaved individual who has a connection to the history of the institution;

3. Provide for the renewal of scholarships made pursuant to the Program to recipients who maintain (i) continuous enrollment, except in cases in which good cause is shown, and (ii) satisfactory academic progress, provided, however, that no scholarship shall be renewed for any academic term beyond the standard length of the recipient's degree program; and

4. Continue to award scholarships pursuant to the Program for a period equal in length to the period during which the institution used enslaved individuals to support the institution or until scholarships have been awarded to a number of recipients equal to 100 percent of the population of enslaved individuals in the Commonwealth, whichever occurs first.

E. Each institution set forth in subsection B shall annually submit to the Council information on the implementation of the Program. The Council shall compile such information in a report and submit such report no later than November 1 of each year to the Chairmen of the House Committee on Appropriations, the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on Education and Health, the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations, and the Virginia African American Advisory Board.

F. Each private institution of higher education is strongly encouraged to establish a scholarship that is similar to Program scholarships.

2. That the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall collaborate with Longwood University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, the Virginia Military Institute, and The College of William and Mary in Virginia to establish guidelines for the Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship Program, as created by this act, pursuant to the provisions of this act no later than July 1, 2022.

3. That Longwood University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, the Virginia Military Institute, and The College of William and Mary in Virginia shall advertise for and award the first scholarships pursuant to the Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship Program, as created by this act, in advance of the 2022-2023 academic year.