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HOUSE BILL NO. 1149

Offered January 14, 2022

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Title 2.2 a chapter numbered 4.5, consisting of a section numbered 2.2-450, relating to the Virginia Children's Cabinet.

Patrons—Guzman, Convirs-Fowler, Hope, Kory, Maldonado, Plum, Rasoul and Shin

Referred to Committee on General Laws

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Title 2.2 a chapter numbered 4.5, consisting of a section numbered 2.2-450, as follows:

CHAPTER 4.5.

VIRGINIA CHILDREN'S CABINET.

§ 2.2-450. Virginia Children's Cabinet created; membership; purpose.

A. The Virginia Children's Cabinet (the Cabinet) is hereby established as an advisory body, in accordance with § 2.2-2100, to advise the Governor regarding policies to improve the health and well-being of children in the Commonwealth. The Cabinet shall be composed of the Lieutenant Governor and the Secretaries of Agriculture and Forestry, Education, Health and Human Resources, and Public Safety and Homeland Security, or their designees. The Lieutenant Governor shall serve as chairman of the Cabinet and may invite other Governor's Secretaries to participate as needed and appropriate to improve and coordinate services for children provided by state and local agencies.

B. The Cabinet shall encourage state agencies to collaborate with each other and nongovernmental entities to align policies, programs, and resources to improve outcomes for children and their families, particularly those at high risk of negative outcomes, and shall develop specific goals, identify and facilitate implementation of strategies, and measure impacts and outcomes related to the following priorities:

1. Early childhood development and school readiness, including promoting healthy pregnancies and social supports for new mothers and families during the first years of a child's life and ensuring the availability of affordable, accessible, high-quality early childhood education in all areas of the Commonwealth;

2. Nutrition and food security, including expanding access to nutritious food and decreasing food insecurity for pregnant women and children and promoting community-based food systems to increase access to healthy, local foods; and

3. Systems of care and safety for school-aged children, including student safety and a consistent, evidence-based, and culturally competent statewide response to childhood trauma.

C. The Cabinet shall meet at least four times per year upon the call of the chairman or a majority of the members of the Cabinet.

D. Staff support for the Cabinet shall be provided by the Secretariats represented in the Cabinet. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Cabinet upon request.

INTRODUCED