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HOUSE BILL NO. 547

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 11, 2022

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 22.1-217.04, relating to the Department of Education; statewide strategic plan; speech-language pathologists.*

Patron—Hudson

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 22.1-217.04 as follows:****§ 22.1-217.04. *Statewide strategic plan for recruitment and retention of speech-language pathologists.***

The Department shall develop and maintain a statewide strategic plan for recruiting and retaining speech-language pathologists. At a minimum, such plan shall (i) analyze data to determine the specific staffing needs of local school divisions on an ongoing basis; (ii) evaluate the potential effectiveness of strategies for addressing recruitment and retention challenges, including tuition assistance, differentiated pay for speech-language pathologists, and the expansion of speech-language pathologist mentorships; and (iii) estimate the costs of implementing each such strategy, including the extent to which federal funds could be used to support implementation. The Department shall, no later than November 1 of each year, update the Chairmen of the Senate Committee on Education and Health and the House Committee on Education on its progress in implementing such plan.

2. That the provisions of the first enactment shall become effective on July 1, 2023.**3. That, in order to inform the Department of Education's development and maintenance of a statewide strategic plan for recruiting and retaining speech-language pathologists pursuant to § 22.1-217.04 of the Code of Virginia, as created by this act, the Department of Education and the Board of Education, in consultation with each local school board, shall (i) examine the caseloads and compensation of speech-language pathologists in each local school division, (ii) compare such caseloads and compensation to those of speech-language pathologists in contiguous states, and (iii) make recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly no later than November 1, 2022, for such amendments to 8VAC20-81-340, § 22.1-253.13:2 of the Code of Virginia, and the general appropriations act as may be necessary to effectuate a reduction in caseloads and increase in compensation that would facilitate stronger recruitment and retention of speech-language pathologists in public elementary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth.**

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