

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2023 SESSION

CHAPTER 128

An Act to amend and reenact § 18.2-371.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to operating or engaging in the conduct of a child day program or family day system without a license; penalty.

[H 1636]

Approved March 21, 2023

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 18.2-371.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 18.2-371.1. Abuse and neglect of children; penalty; abandoned infant.

A. Any parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the care of a child under the age of 18 who by willful act or willful omission or refusal to provide any necessary care for the child's health causes or permits serious injury to the life or health of such child is guilty of a Class 4 felony. For purposes of this subsection, "serious injury" includes but is not limited to (i) disfigurement, (ii) a fracture, (iii) a severe burn or laceration, (iv) mutilation, (v) maiming, (vi) forced ingestion of dangerous substances, and (vii) life-threatening internal injuries. For purposes of this subsection, "willful act or willful omission" includes operating or engaging in the conduct of a child welfare agency as defined in § 63.2-100 *or a child day program or family day system as defined in § 22.1-289.02* without first obtaining a license such person knows is required by Subtitle IV (§ 63.2-1700 et seq.) of Title 63.2 *or Article 3 (§ 22.1-289.010 et seq.) of Chapter 14.1 of Title 22.1* or after such license has been revoked or has expired and not been renewed.

B. 1. Any parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the care of a child under the age of 18 whose willful act or omission in the care of such child was so gross, wanton, and culpable as to show a reckless disregard for human life is guilty of a Class 6 felony.

2. If a prosecution under this subsection is based solely on the accused parent having left the child at a hospital or emergency medical services agency, it shall be an affirmative defense to prosecution of a parent under this subsection that such parent safely delivered the child within the first 30 days of the child's life to (i) a hospital that provides 24-hour emergency services, (ii) an attended emergency medical services agency that employs emergency medical services personnel, or (iii) a newborn safety device located at and operated by such hospital or emergency medical services agency. In order for the affirmative defense to apply, the child shall be delivered in a manner reasonably calculated to ensure the child's safety.

C. Any parent, guardian, or other person having care, custody, or control of a minor child who in good faith is under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination shall not, for that reason alone, be considered in violation of this section.

2. That the provisions of this act may result in a net increase in periods of imprisonment or commitment. Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4 of the Code of Virginia, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 2 of the Acts of Assembly of 2022, Special Session I, requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000. Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4 of the Code of Virginia, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.