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HOUSE BILL NO. 2016

Offered January 11, 2023

Prefiled January 10, 2023

A BILL to amend and reenact § 19.2-163 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 19.2-160.1, relating to appointment of counsel; Class 1 felonies or any other felony that carries a mandatory life sentence.

Patron—Adams, L.R.

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 19.2-163 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 19.2-160.1 as follows:

§ 19.2-160.1. Appointment of counsel in Class 1 felony cases or any other felony that carries a mandatory life sentence.

A. In any case in which an indigent defendant is charged with a Class 1 felony, or any other felony that carries a mandatory life sentence, in a jurisdiction in which a public defender office is established, the court shall, upon request for the appointment of counsel and in the absence of a conflict, appoint such public defender office to represent the defendant. Upon motion of the attorney from a public defender office, the judge of the circuit court shall appoint a competent, qualified, and experienced attorney from the list maintained by the Indigent Defense Commission pursuant to § 19.2-163.01 to serve as co-counsel.

If the public defender notifies the court of a conflict and withdraws from representation, and the court had appointed one additional counsel to assist the public defender's office, then upon the withdrawal of the public defender's office the court shall appoint one additional competent, qualified, and experienced attorney from the list maintained by the Indigent Defense Commission pursuant to § 19.2-163.01 to serve as co-counsel for the defendant.

B. In any case in which an indigent defendant is charged with a Class 1 felony, or any other felony that carries a mandatory life sentence, in a jurisdiction in which there is no public defender, upon request for the appointment of counsel, the court shall appoint two competent, qualified, and experienced attorneys, from the list maintained by the Indigent Defense Commission pursuant to § 19.2-163.01 to serve as co-counsels for the defendant.

§ 19.2-163. Compensation of court-appointed counsel.

Upon submission to the court, for which appointed representation is provided, of a detailed accounting of the time expended for that representation, made within 30 days of the completion of all proceedings in that court, counsel appointed to represent an indigent accused in a criminal case shall be compensated for his services on an hourly basis at a rate set by the Supreme Court of Virginia in a total amount not to exceed the amounts specified in the following schedule:

1. In a district court, a sum not to exceed \$120, provided that, notwithstanding the foregoing limitation, the court in its discretion, and subject to guidelines issued by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, may waive the limitation of fees up to (i) an additional \$120 when the effort expended, the time reasonably necessary for the particular representation, the novelty and difficulty of the issues, or other circumstances warrant such a waiver; or (ii) an amount up to \$650 to defend, in the case of a juvenile, an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult that may be punishable by confinement in the state correctional facility for a period of more than 20 years, or a charge of violation of probation for such offense, when the effort expended, the time reasonably necessary for the particular representation, the novelty and difficulty of the issues, or other circumstances warrant such a waiver; or (iii) such other amount as may be provided by law. Such amount shall be allowed in any case wherein counsel conducts the defense of a single charge against the indigent through to its conclusion or a charge of violation of probation at any hearing conducted under § 19.2-306; thereafter, compensation for additional charges against the same accused also conducted by the same counsel shall be allowed on the basis of additional time expended as to such additional charges;

2. In a circuit court (i) to defend a Class 1 felony or any other felony that carries a mandatory life sentence charge, compensation for each appointed attorney in an amount deemed reasonable by the court; (ii) to defend a felony charge that may be punishable by confinement in the state correctional facility for a period of more than 20 years, or a charge of violation of probation for such offense, a sum not to exceed \$1,235, provided that, notwithstanding the foregoing limitation, the court in its discretion,

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59 and subject to guidelines issued by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, may
60 waive the limitation of fees up to an additional \$850 when the effort expended, the time reasonably
61 necessary for the particular representation, the novelty and difficulty of the issues, or other
62 circumstances warrant such a waiver; (iii) to defend any other felony charge, or a charge of violation of
63 probation for such offense, a sum not to exceed \$445, provided that, notwithstanding the foregoing
64 limitation, the court in its discretion, and subject to guidelines issued by the Executive Secretary of the
65 Supreme Court of Virginia, may waive the limitation of fees up to an additional \$155 when the effort
66 expended, the time reasonably necessary for the particular representation, the novelty and difficulty of
67 the issues, or other circumstances warrant such a waiver; and (iv) in the circuit court only, to defend
68 any misdemeanor charge punishable by confinement in jail or a charge of violation of probation for such
69 offense, a sum not to exceed \$158. In the event any case is required to be retried due to a mistrial for
70 any cause or reversed on appeal, the court may allow an additional fee for each case in an amount not
71 to exceed the amounts allowable in the initial trial. In the event counsel is appointed to defend an
72 indigent charged with a felony that is punishable as a Class 1 felony, ~~such counsel~~ *each attorney*
73 *appointed* shall continue to receive compensation as provided in this paragraph for defending such a
74 felony, regardless of whether the charge is reduced or amended to a lesser felony, prior to final
75 disposition of the case. In the event counsel is appointed to defend an indigent charged with any other
76 felony, such counsel shall receive compensation as provided in this paragraph for defending such a
77 felony, regardless of whether the charge is reduced or amended to a misdemeanor or lesser felony prior
78 to final disposition of the case in either the district court or circuit court.

79 Counsel appointed to represent an indigent accused in a criminal case, who are not public defenders,
80 may request an additional waiver exceeding the amounts provided for in this section. The request for
81 any additional amount shall be submitted to the presiding judge, in writing, with a detailed accounting
82 of the time spent and the justification for the additional amount. The presiding judge shall determine,
83 subject to guidelines issued by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, whether the
84 request for an additional amount is justified in whole or in part, by considering the effort expended and
85 the time reasonably necessary for the particular representation, and, if so, shall forward the request as
86 approved to the chief judge of the circuit court or district court for approval.

87 If at any time the funds appropriated to pay for waivers under this section become insufficient, the
88 Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia shall so certify to the courts and no further
89 waivers shall be approved.

90 The circuit or district court shall direct the payment of such reasonable expenses incurred by such
91 court-appointed counsel as it deems appropriate under the circumstances of the case. Counsel appointed
92 by the court to represent an indigent charged with repeated violations of the same section of the Code of
93 Virginia, with each of such violations arising out of the same incident, occurrence, or transaction, shall
94 be compensated in an amount not to exceed the fee prescribed for the defense of a single charge, if such
95 offenses are tried as part of the same judicial proceeding. The trial judge shall consider any guidelines
96 established by the Supreme Court but shall have the sole discretion to fix the amount of compensation
97 to be paid counsel appointed by the court to defend a felony charge that is punishable as a Class 1
98 felony.

99 The circuit or district court shall direct that the foregoing payments shall be paid out by the
100 Commonwealth, if the defendant is charged with a violation of a statute, or by the county, city or town,
101 if the defendant is charged with a violation of a county, city or town ordinance, to the attorney so
102 appointed to defend such person as compensation for such defense.

103 Counsel representing a defendant charged with a Class 1 felony may submit to the court, on a
104 monthly basis, a statement of all costs incurred and fees charged by him in the case during that month.
105 Whenever the total charges as are deemed reasonable by the court for which payment has not previously
106 been made or requested exceed \$1,000, the court may direct that payment be made as otherwise
107 provided in this section.

108 When such directive is entered upon the order book of the court, the Commonwealth, county, city or
109 town, as the case may be, shall provide for the payment out of its treasury of the sum of money so
110 specified. If the defendant is convicted, the amount allowed by the court to the attorney appointed to
111 defend him shall be taxed against the defendant as a part of the costs of prosecution and, if collected,
112 the same shall be paid to the Commonwealth, or the county, city or town, as the case may be. In the
113 event that counsel for the defendant requests a waiver of the limitations on compensation, the court shall
114 assess against the defendant an amount equal to the pre-waiver compensation limit specified in this
115 section for each charge for which the defendant was convicted. An abstract of such costs shall be
116 docketed in the judgment docket and execution lien book maintained by such court.

117 Any statement submitted by an attorney for payments due him for indigent representation or for
118 representation of a child pursuant to § 16.1-266 shall, after the submission of the statement, be
119 forwarded forthwith by the clerk to the Commonwealth, county, city or town, as the case may be,
120 responsible for payment.

121 For the purposes of this section, the defense of a case may be considered conducted through to its
122 conclusion and an appointed counsel entitled to compensation for his services in the event an indigent
123 accused fails to appear in court subject to a capias for his arrest or a show cause summons for his
124 failure to appear and remains a fugitive from justice for one year following the issuance of the capias or
125 the summons to show cause, and appointed counsel has appeared at a hearing on behalf of the accused.

126 Effective July 1, 2007, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia shall track and
127 report the number and category of offenses charged involving adult and juvenile offenders in cases in
128 which court-appointed counsel is assigned. The Executive Secretary shall also track and report the
129 amounts paid by waiver above the initial cap to court-appointed counsel. The Executive Secretary shall
130 provide these reports to the Governor, members of the House Committee on Appropriations, and
131 members of the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations on a quarterly basis.