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HOUSE BILL NO. 2169

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services on February 17, 2023)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Williams)

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 2.2-3703, 53.1-136, and 53.1-155 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Parole Board; eligibility determinations; reports.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 2.2-3703, 53.1-136, and 53.1-155 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 2.2-3703. Public bodies and records to which chapter inapplicable; voter registration and election records; access by persons incarcerated in a state, local, or federal correctional facility.

A. The provisions of this chapter shall not apply to:

1. The Virginia Parole Board (the Board), except that (i) information from the Board providing the number of inmates considered by the Board for discretionary parole, the number of inmates granted or denied parole, and the number of parolees returned to the custody of the Department of Corrections solely as a result of a determination by the Board of a violation of parole shall be open to inspection and available for release, on a monthly basis, as provided by § 2.2-3704; (ii) all guidance documents, as defined in § 2.2-4101, shall be public records and subject to the provisions of this chapter; (iii) all records concerning the finances of the Board shall be public records and subject to the provisions of this chapter; and (iv) individual Board member votes shall be public records and subject to the provisions of this chapter. The information required by clause (i) shall be furnished by offense, sex, race, age of the inmate, and the locality in which the conviction was obtained, upon the request of the party seeking the information. The information required by clause (ii) shall include all documents establishing the policy of the Board or any change in or clarification of such policy with respect to grant, denial, deferral, revocation, or supervision of parole or geriatric release or the process for consideration thereof, and shall be clearly and conspicuously posted on the Board's website. However, such information shall not include any portion of any document reflecting the application of any policy or policy change or clarification of such policy to an individual inmate;

2. Petit juries and grand juries;

3. 2. Family assessment and planning teams established pursuant to § 2.2-5207;

4. 3. Sexual assault response teams established pursuant to § 15.2-1627.4, except that records relating to (i) protocols and policies of the sexual assault response team and (ii) guidelines for the community's response established by the sexual assault response team shall be public records and subject to the provisions of this chapter;

5. 4. Multidisciplinary child sexual abuse response teams established pursuant to § 15.2-1627.5;

6. 5. The Virginia State Crime Commission; and

7. 6. The records maintained by the clerks of the courts of record, as defined in § 1-212, for which clerks are custodians under § 17.1-242, and courts not of record, as defined in § 16.1-69.5, for which clerks are custodians under § 16.1-69.54, including those transferred for storage, maintenance, or archiving. Such records shall be requested in accordance with the provisions of §§ 16.1-69.54:1 and 17.1-208, as appropriate. However, other records maintained by the clerks of such courts shall be public records and subject to the provisions of this chapter.

B. Public access to voter registration and election records shall be governed by the provisions of Title 24.2 and this chapter. The provisions of Title 24.2 shall be controlling in the event of any conflict.

C. No provision of this chapter or Chapter 21 (§ 30-178 et seq.) of Title 30 shall be construed to afford any rights to any person (i) incarcerated in a state, local or federal correctional facility, whether or not such facility is (a) located in the Commonwealth or (b) operated pursuant to the Corrections Private Management Act (§ 53.1-261 et seq.) or (ii) civilly committed pursuant to the Sexually Violent Predators Act (§ 37.2-900 et seq.). However, this subsection shall not be construed to prevent such persons from exercising their constitutionally protected rights, including, but not limited to, their right to call for evidence in their favor in a criminal prosecution.

§ 53.1-136. Powers and duties of Board; notice of release of certain inmates.

In addition to the other powers and duties imposed upon the Board by this article, the Board shall:

1. Adopt, subject to approval by the Governor, general rules governing the granting of parole and eligibility requirements, which shall be published and posted for public review. Such eligibility rules shall require a public safety and scientific risk assessment and consideration of the prisoner's demonstrated rehabilitation, economic and educational development, commitment to prosocial behavior, and community and family supports;

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60 2. Adopt, subject to approval by the Governor, rules providing for the granting of parole to those
61 prisoners who are eligible for parole pursuant to § 53.1-165.1 on the basis of demonstrated maturity and
62 rehabilitation and the lesser culpability of juvenile offenders;

63 3. a. Release on parole for such time and upon such terms and conditions as the Board shall
64 prescribe, persons convicted of felonies and confined under the laws of the Commonwealth in any
65 correctional facility in Virginia when those persons become eligible and are found suitable for parole,
66 according to those rules adopted pursuant to subdivisions 1 and 2;

67 b. Establish the conditions of postrelease supervision authorized pursuant to § 18.2-10 and subsection
68 A of § 19.2-295.2;

69 c. Notify the Department of Corrections of its decision to grant discretionary parole or conditional
70 release to an inmate. The Department of Corrections shall set the release date for such inmate no sooner
71 than 30 business days from the date that the Department of Corrections receives such notification from
72 the Chairman of the Board, except that the Department of Corrections may set an earlier release date in
73 the case of an inmate granted conditional release pursuant to § 53.1-40.02. In the case of an inmate
74 granted parole who was convicted of a felony and sentenced to a term of 10 or more years, or an
75 inmate granted conditional release, the Board shall notify the attorney for the Commonwealth in the
76 jurisdiction where the inmate was sentenced (i) by electronic means at least 21 business days prior to
77 such inmate's release that such inmate has been granted discretionary parole or conditional release
78 pursuant to § 53.1-40.01 or 53.1-40.02 or (ii) by telephone or other electronic means prior to such
79 inmate's release that such inmate has been granted conditional release pursuant to § 53.1-40.02 where
80 death is imminent. Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter the obligations of the Board under
81 § 53.1-155 for investigation prior to release on discretionary parole;

82 d. Provide that in any case where a person who is released on parole or postrelease supervision has
83 been committed to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services under the
84 provisions of Chapter 9 (§ 37.2-900 et seq.) of Title 37.2 the conditions of his parole or postrelease
85 supervision shall include the requirement that the person comply with all conditions given him by the
86 Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and that he follow all of the terms of his
87 treatment plan;

88 4. Revoke parole and any period of postrelease and order the reincarceration of any parolee or felon
89 serving a period of postrelease supervision or impose a condition of participation in any component of
90 the Statewide Community-Based Corrections System for State-Responsible Offenders (§ 53.1-67.2 et
91 seq.) on any eligible parolee, when, in the judgment of the Board, he has violated the conditions of his
92 parole or postrelease supervision or is otherwise unfit to be on parole or on postrelease supervision;

93 5. Issue final discharges to persons released by the Board on parole when the Board is of the opinion
94 that the discharge of the parolee will not be incompatible with the welfare of such person or of society;

95 6. Make investigations and reports with respect to any commutation of sentence, pardon, reprieve or
96 remission of fine, or penalty when requested by the Governor;

97 7. Publish a statement *by the fifteenth day of each month* regarding the ~~action~~ *actions* taken by the
98 Board on the parole of prisoners ~~within 30 days of such action during the prior month~~. The statement
99 shall list (i) the name of each prisoner considered for parole, (ii) the offense of which the prisoner was
100 convicted, (iii) the jurisdiction in which such offense was committed, (iv) the length of the prisoner's
101 sentence and the date such sentence was imposed, (v) the amount of time the prisoner has served, (vi)
102 whether the prisoner was granted or denied parole, ~~and~~ (vii) *the basis individualized reasons* for the
103 grant or denial of parole, ~~and~~ (viii) *the final vote and the names of the Board members who voted in*
104 *favor of granting parole and those who voted against*. However, in the case of a prisoner granted parole,
105 the information set forth in clauses (i) through ~~(vii)~~ (viii) regarding such prisoner shall be included in
106 the statement published in the month immediately succeeding the month in which notification of the
107 decision to grant parole was given to the attorney for the Commonwealth and any victims; ~~and~~

108 8. *Publish an annual report regarding actions taken by the Board on the parole of prisoners during*
109 *the prior year. Such report shall contain each monthly statement published by the Board pursuant to*
110 *subdivision 7 and a summary that identifies (i) the total number of prisoners considered for parole, (ii)*
111 *the number of persons granted parole, (iii) the number of persons denied parole, (iv) the most common*
112 *reasons for which parole was granted or denied, and (v) the extent to which the Board relied on*
113 *prisoner participation in prison programs when granting parole;*

114 9. Ensure that each person eligible for parole receives a timely and thorough review of his suitability
115 for release on parole, including a review of any relevant post-sentencing information. If parole is denied,
116 the basis for the denial of parole shall be in writing and shall give specific, *individualized* reasons for
117 such denial to such inmate. *The Board shall provide guidance steps to a prisoner who is denied parole*
118 *and may at the next hearing consider whether the prisoner has taken such steps; and*

119 10. *Convene a public meeting, either in person or via video conference, when conducting the final*
120 *deliberation and vote regarding whether the Board will grant parole to a prisoner. The prisoner being*
121 *considered for parole or his attorney shall be permitted to attend such meeting either, in the Board's*

122 *discretion, in person or via video conference. The victim shall be permitted to attend and participate in*
123 *such meeting either, in the Board's discretion, in person or via video or phone conference or to provide*
124 *written or recorded testimony.*

125 **§ 53.1-155. Investigation prior to release; transition assistance.**

126 A. No person shall be released on parole by the Board until a thorough investigation has been made
127 into the prisoner's history, physical and mental condition and character, and his conduct, employment,
128 and attitude while in prison. *All information collected through such investigation shall be made*
129 *available to the prisoner or his attorney; however, the Board shall redact all personal information of*
130 *the victim.* The Board shall also determine that his release on parole will not be incompatible with the
131 interests of society or of the prisoner. The provisions of this section shall not be applicable to persons
132 released on parole pursuant to § 53.1-159.

133 B. An investigation conducted pursuant to this section shall include notification that a victim may
134 submit to the Virginia Parole Board evidence concerning the impact that the release of the prisoner will
135 have on such victim. This notification shall be sent to the last address provided to the Board by any
136 victim of a crime for which the prisoner was incarcerated. If additional victim research is necessary,
137 electronic notification shall be sent to the attorney for the Commonwealth and the director of the
138 victim/witness program, if one exists, of the jurisdiction in which the offense occurred. The Board shall
139 endeavor diligently to contact the victim prior to making any decision to release any inmate on
140 discretionary parole. The victim of a crime for which the prisoner is incarcerated may present to the
141 Board oral or written testimony concerning the impact that the release of the prisoner will have on the
142 victim, and the Board shall consider such testimony in its review. Once testimony is submitted by a
143 victim, such testimony shall remain in the prisoner's parole file and shall be considered by the Board at
144 every parole review. The victim of a crime for which the prisoner is incarcerated may submit a request
145 in writing or by electronic means to the Board to be notified of (i) the prisoner's parole eligibility date
146 and mandatory release date as determined by the Department of Corrections, (ii) any parole-related
147 interview dates, and (iii) the Board's decision regarding parole for the prisoner. The victim may request
148 that the Board only notify the victim if, following its review, the Board is inclined to grant parole to the
149 prisoner, in which case the victim shall have ~~forty-five~~ 45 days to present written or oral testimony for
150 the Board's consideration. If the victim has requested to be notified only if the Board is inclined to grant
151 parole and no testimony, either written or oral, is received from the victim within at least ~~forty-five~~ 45
152 days of the date of the Board's notification, the Board shall render its decision based on information
153 available to it in accordance with subsection A. The definition of victim in § 19.2-11.01 shall apply to
154 this section.

155 Although any information presented by the victim of a crime for which the prisoner is incarcerated
156 shall be retained in the prisoner's parole file and considered by the Board, such information shall not
157 infringe on the Board's authority to exercise its decision-making authority.

158 C. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection A, if a physical or mental examination of a prisoner
159 eligible for parole has been conducted within the last ~~twelve~~ 12 months, and the prisoner has not
160 required medical or psychiatric treatment within a like period while incarcerated, the prisoner may be
161 released on parole by the Parole Board directly from a local correctional facility.

162 The Department shall offer each prisoner to be released on parole or under mandatory release who
163 has been sentenced to serve a term of imprisonment of at least three years the opportunity to participate
164 in a transition program within six months of such prisoner's projected or mandatory release date. The
165 program shall include advice for job training opportunities, recommendations for living a law-abiding
166 life, and financial literacy information. The Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security shall
167 prescribe guidelines to govern these programs.

168 **2. That the provisions of this act shall become effective on July 1, 2024.**

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