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HOUSE BILL NO. 1300

Offered January 22, 1996

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 63.1-133.49 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Virginia Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW).*

Patrons—Melvin, Christian, Crittenden, Cunningham, Jones, J.C., McEachin and Spruill; Senators: Lambert, Lucas, Maxwell and Miller, Y.B.

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 63.1-133.49 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 63.1-133.49. Virginia Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW).

A. The Department shall establish and administer the Virginia Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW), to reduce long-term dependence on welfare, to emphasize personal responsibility and to enhance opportunities for personal initiative and self-sufficiency by promoting the value of work. The Department shall endeavor to develop placements for VIEW participants that will enable participants to develop job skills that are likely to result in independent employment and that take into consideration the proficiency, experience, skills and prior training of a participant. The State Board shall promulgate the necessary regulations and shall implement VIEW within 280 days of the enactment of this chapter.

VIEW shall recognize clearly defined responsibilities and obligations on the part of public assistance recipients and shall include a written agreement of personal responsibility requiring parents to participate in work activities while receiving AFDC, earned-income disregards to reduce disincentives to work, and a limit on AFDC financial assistance.

VIEW shall require all able-bodied recipients of AFDC who do not meet an exemption and who are not employed within ninety days of receipt of AFDC benefits to participate in a work activity. VIEW shall require eligible AFDC recipients to participate in unsubsidized, partially subsidized or fully subsidized employment and enter into an agreement of personal responsibility. If recipients cannot be placed in an unsubsidized or subsidized job, they shall be required to participate in a six-month community work experience placement. Upon completion of the initial six-month work requirement, participants may receive education and training in conjunction with continued work experience to make them more employable.

B. To the maximum extent permitted by federal law, and notwithstanding other provisions of Virginia law, the Department and local departments may, through applicable procurement laws and regulations, engage the services of public and private organizations to operate VIEW and to provide services incident to such operation.

C. All VIEW participants shall be under the direction and supervision of a case manager.

D. The Department shall ensure that participants are assigned to one of the following employment categories in priority order not less than ninety days after AFDC eligibility determination:

1. Unsubsidized private-sector employment;

2. Subsidized employment, as follows:

(a) The Department shall conduct a program in accordance with this section and any applicable federal waivers that shall be known as the Full Employment Program (FEP). FEP replaces AFDC and food stamp benefits with subsidized employment. Persons not able to find unsubsidized employment who are otherwise eligible for both AFDC and food stamp benefits shall participate in FEP unless exempted by this chapter. FEP will assign participants to and subsidize wage-paying private-sector jobs designed to increase the participants' self-sufficiency and improve their competitive position in the work force.

(b) The Department shall administer a wage fund, which shall be used exclusively to meet the necessary expenditures of FEP. Funds to operate FEP, drawn from funds appropriated for expenditure by or apportioned to Virginia for operation of the AFDC and food stamp programs, shall be deposited in this pool. All payments by the Department to participating employers for FEP participants shall be made from the pool.

(c) Participants in FEP shall be placed in full-time employment when appropriate and shall be paid by the employer at an hourly rate not less than the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is higher. For each participant hour worked, the Department shall reimburse the employer the amount of the federal or state minimum wage and costs up to the available amount of the participant's combined value of AFDC and food stamps. At no point shall a participant's spendable income received from wages and tax credits be less than the value of AFDC and food stamps received prior to the work placement.

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60 (d) Every employer subject to the Virginia unemployment insurance tax shall be eligible for
61 assignment of FEP participants, but no employer shall be required to utilize such participants. ~~Employers~~
62 ~~may provide on-the-job training to the degree necessary for the participants to perform their duties.~~
63 Employers shall ensure that jobs made available to FEP participants are in conformity with Section 3304
64 (a) (5) of the Federal Unemployment Tax Act, ~~which requires that the job offered cannot be available as~~
65 ~~a result of a strike or labor dispute, that the job cannot require the employee to join nor prohibit the~~
66 ~~employee from joining a labor organization, and that. FEP participants cannot shall be used neither to~~
67 ~~displace regular workers; nor to fill unfilled positions previously established.~~

68 (e) FEP employers shall:

69 (i) Endeavor to make FEP placements positive learning and training experiences;

70 (ii) Provide on-the-job training to the degree necessary for the participants to perform their duties;

71 (iii) Pay wages to participants at the same rate that they are paid to other employees performing the
72 same type of work and having similar employment tenure;

73 (iv) Provide sick leave, holiday and vacation benefits to participants to the same extent and on the
74 same basis that they are provided to other employees performing the same type of work and having
75 similar employment tenure;

76 (v) Maintain health, safety and working conditions at or above levels generally acceptable in the
77 industry and no less than those in which other employees perform the same type of work;

78 (vi) Provide workers' compensation coverage for participants;

79 (vii) Recruit volunteer mentors from among their other employees to assist participants in become
80 oriented to work and the workplace; and

81 (viii) Sign an agreement for each placement outlining the specific job offered to the participant and
82 agreeing to abide by all requirements of the Program, including the requirement that FEP not supplant
83 existing jobs. All agreements shall include notice of the employer's obligation to repay FEP
84 reimbursements in the event the employer violates Program rules.

85 (f) As a condition of FEP participation, employers shall be prohibited from discriminating against
86 any person, including program participants, on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion,
87 age, or disability.

88 (g) If after four months in a job placement, a participant has not been offered unsubsidized
89 employment, his FEP employer shall allow such participant to undertake eight hours of job search per
90 week. FEP employers shall consider such time as hours worked for purposes of paying wages.

91 (h) If a FEP employer violates the requirements of this chapter of any regulation or policy
92 promulgated to implement the Program, such employer shall be obligated to repay all reimbursements
93 received by it from the wage fund administered by the Department pursuant to subdivision 2 (b) of this
94 subsection.

95 (a) The Department and local departments shall expand the community work experience program
96 authorized under the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS) to include job
97 placement in community work experience programs which serve a useful public purpose as provided in
98 § 482 (f) of the Social Security Act.

99 (b) The Department and local departments shall work with other state, regional and local agencies
100 and governments in developing job placements. Placements shall be selected to provide skills and serve
101 a public function. Program participants shall ~~not~~ be used neither to displace regular workers nor to fill
102 unfilled positions previously established.

103 (c) The number of hours per week for participants shall be determined by combining the total dollar
104 amount of AFDC and food stamps and dividing by the minimum wage with a maximum of a work
105 week of thirty-two-hours, of which up to eight hours of employment-related education and training may
106 substitute for work experience employment.

107 E. Participants may be re-evaluated after a period determined by the local department and re-assigned
108 to another work component. In addition, the number of hours worked may be reduced by the local
109 department so that a participant may complete additional training and/or education to further his
110 employability.

111 F. Local departments shall be authorized to sanction participants up to the full amount of the AFDC
112 grant and food stamps allotment for noncompliance.

113 G. VIEW participants shall not be assigned to projects which require that they travel unreasonable
114 distances from their homes or remain away from their homes overnight without their consent.

115 Any injury to a VIEW participant by accident arising out of and in the course of community work
116 experience shall be covered by the participant's existing Medicaid coverage. If a community work
117 experience participant is unable to work due to such an accident, his status shall be reviewed to
118 determine whether he is eligible for an exemption from the limitation on AFDC financial assistance.

119 A community work experience participant who becomes incapacitated for thirty days or more shall
120 be eligible for AFDC financial assistance for the duration of the incapacity, if otherwise eligible.

121 The State Board shall promulgate regulations providing for the accrual of paid sick leave or other

122 equivalent mechanism for community work experience participants.