

# 1998 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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## HOUSE BILL NO. 218

Offered January 15, 1998

*A BILL to amend and reenact § 15.2-963 of the Code of Virginia, relating to local offices of consumer affairs.*

Patrons—Keating, Almand, Darner, Hull, Moran, Plum, Puller, Scott and Watts; Senators: Barry, Gartlan, Howell, Ticer and Woods

Referred to Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns

### **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

#### **1. That § 15.2-963 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 15.2-963. Local offices of consumer affairs; establishment; powers and duties.

Any county or city may, by ordinance, establish a local office of consumer affairs which shall have only such powers as may be necessary to perform the following duties:

1. To serve as a central coordinating agency and clearinghouse for receiving and investigating complaints ~~from citizens of the county or city~~ of illegal, fraudulent, deceptive or dangerous practices, and referring such complaints to the local departments or agencies charged with enforcement of consumer laws. The processing of complaints involving statutes or regulations administered by state agencies shall be coordinated, where applicable, with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services;

2. To attempt to resolve complaints received pursuant to subdivision 1 hereof by means of voluntary mediation or arbitration which may involve the creation of written agreements to resolve individual complaints between complainants and respondents to complaints;

3. To develop programs of community consumer education and information; and

4. To maintain records of consumer complaints and their eventual disposition, provided that records disclosing that business interests of any person, trade secrets, or the names of customers shall be held confidential except to the extent that disclosures of such matters may be necessary for the enforcement of laws. A copy of all periodic reports compiled by any local office of consumer affairs shall be filed with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

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