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HOUSE BILL NO. 1228

Offered January 11, 2006

Prefiled January 11, 2006

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 9 of Title 2.2 a section numbered 2.2-904.1, relating to the Department of Business Assistance; Office of Small Business Advocacy.*

Patron—Jones, D.C.

Referred to Committee on General Laws

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 9 of Title 2.2 a section numbered 2.2-904.1 as follows:

§ 2.2-904.1. Office of Small Business Advocacy; Director; duties; reports.

A. There is established within the Department, the Office of Small Business Advocacy (the Office). The director of the Office shall, under the direction and control of the director of the Department, exercise the powers and perform the duties conferred or imposed upon him by law and perform such other duties as may be required by the director of the Department.

B. The Office shall have the power and duty to:

1. Examine the role of small business in the Commonwealth's economy and the contribution that small business can make in improving competition, encouraging economic and social mobility, restraining inflation, expanding employment opportunities, increasing productivity, and stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship;

2. Assess the effectiveness of existing assistance programs in the Commonwealth for small businesses;

3. Measure the direct costs and other effects of government regulation on small businesses, and make legislative and nonlegislative proposals for eliminating excessive or unnecessary regulations of small businesses;

4. Determine the impact of the state tax structure on small businesses and make recommendations for change;

5. Determine financial resource ability and recommend methods for delivery of financial assistance to minority enterprises, including methods for securing equity capital, generating markets for goods and services, providing effective business education; and increasing management and technical assistance;

6. Make such other recommendations as may be appropriate to assist the development and strengthening of minority and other small business enterprises; and

7. Recommend specific measures for creating an environment in which all businesses will have the opportunity to compete effectively.

C. In addition to subsection B, the Office shall perform the following duties on a continuing basis:

1. Serve as a focal point for the receipt of complaints, criticisms, and suggestions concerning the policies and activities of state and local agencies that affect small businesses;

2. Counsel small businesses on how to resolve questions and problems concerning the relationship of small businesses to state and local government;

3. Represent the views and interests of small businesses before other state agencies; and

4. Enlist the cooperation and assistance of public and private agencies, businesses, and other organizations in disseminating information about the programs and services provided by the Commonwealth that are of benefit to small businesses, and information on how small businesses can participate in or make use of such programs and services.

D. Every state agency shall cooperate with and provide such assistance to the Council as the Council may request.

E. The Director of the Office may from time to time prepare and publish such reports as he deems necessary.

F. For the purposes of this section, small business means a business entity, including its affiliates, located in Virginia that (i) is independently owned and operated and (ii) employs fewer than 500 full-time employees or has gross annual sales of less than \$6 million.