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HOUSE BILL NO. 622

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
(Proposed by the House Committee on Labor or Commerce
on January 30, 2020)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Hurst)

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 3 of Title 40.1 a section numbered 40.1-28.7:7, relating to a prohibition on employers' limiting employees' discussions of wage information; civil penalty.*

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 3 of Title 40.1 a section numbered 40.1-28.7:7 as follows:

§ 40.1-28.7:7. *Limiting employees' sharing wage information with other persons prohibited; civil penalty.*

A. No employer shall discharge from employment or take other retaliatory action against an employee because the employee (i) inquired about or discussed with, or disclosed to, another employee any information about either the employee's own wages or other compensation or about any other employee's wages or other compensation or (ii) filed a complaint with the Department alleging a violation of this section. However, the provisions of this section shall not apply to employees who have access to the compensation information of other employees or applicants for employment as part of their essential job functions who disclose the pay of other employees or applicants to individuals who do not otherwise have access to compensation information, unless the disclosure is (a) in response to a formal complaint or charge, (b) in furtherance of an investigation, proceeding, hearing, or action, including an investigation conducted by the employer, or (c) consistent with a legal duty to furnish information.

B. Any employer that violates the provisions of this section shall be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed \$100 for each violation. The Commissioner shall notify any employer who he alleges has violated any provision of this section by certified mail. Such notice shall contain a description of the alleged violation. Within 15 days of receipt of notice of the alleged violation, the employer may request an informal conference regarding such violation with the Commissioner. In determining the amount of any penalty to be imposed, the Commissioner shall consider the size of the business of the employer charged and the gravity of the violation. The decision of the Commissioner shall be final. Civil penalties under this section shall be assessed by the Commissioner and paid to the Literary Fund. The Commissioner shall prescribe procedures for the payment of proposed penalties that are not contested by employers.

C. The Commissioner or his authorized representative shall have the right to petition a circuit court for injunctive or such other relief as may be necessary for enforcement of this section.