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HOUSE BILL NO. 798

Offered January 8, 2020

Prefiled January 7, 2020

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 40.1-27.3, relating to the protection of employees from retaliatory actions by their employer.*

Patrons—Delaney, Hope, Jenkins, Levine, Lindsey and Rasoul; Senator: Morrissey

Referred to Committee on Labor and Commerce

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 40.1-27.3 as follows:

§ 40.1-27.3. Retaliatory action against employee prohibited.

A. An employer shall not discharge, discipline, threaten, discriminate against, or penalize an employee, or take other retaliatory action regarding an employee's compensation, terms, conditions, location, or privileges of employment, because the employee:

1. Or a person acting on behalf of the employee in good faith reports a violation or suspected violation of any federal or state law or regulation to a supervisor or to any governmental body or law-enforcement official;

2. Is requested by a governmental body or law-enforcement official to participate in an investigation, hearing, or inquiry;

3. Refuses to engage in a criminal act that would subject the employee to criminal liability;

4. Refuses an employer's order to perform an action that the employee believes, which belief has an objective basis in fact, violates any federal or state law or regulation and the employee informs the employer that the order is being refused for that reason; or

5. Provides information to or testifies before any governmental body or law-enforcement official conducting an investigation, hearing, or inquiry into any alleged violation by the employer of federal or state law or regulation.

B. This section does not:

1. Authorize an employee to make a disclosure of data otherwise protected by law;

2. Permit an employee to make statements or disclosures knowing that they are false or that they are in reckless disregard of the truth; or

3. Permit disclosures that would violate federal or state law or diminish or impair the rights of any person to the continued protection of confidentiality of communications provided by common law.

C. A person who alleges a violation of this section may bring a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction within one year of the employer's prohibited retaliatory action. The court may order as a remedy to the employee (i) an injunction to restrain continued violation of this section, (ii) the reinstatement of the employee to the same position held before the retaliatory action or to an equivalent position, and (iii) compensation for lost wages, benefits, and other remuneration, together with interest thereon. The court may award to the prevailing party reasonable attorney fees and costs.

INTRODUCED

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