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## SENATE BILL NO. 818

Offered January 8, 2020

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A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 18.2-254.3, relating to the Behavioral Health Docket Act.*

Patrons—Morrissey, Boysko and Mason; Delegates: Hope and Samirah

Referred to Committee on the Judiciary

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

**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 18.2-254.3 as follows:**

**§ 18.2-254.3. Behavioral Health Docket Act.**

A. *This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Behavioral Health Docket Act."*

B. *The General Assembly recognizes the critical need to promote public safety and reduce recidivism by addressing co-occurring behavioral health issues, such as mental illness and substance abuse, related to previously incarcerated persons in the criminal justice system. It is the intention of the General Assembly to enhance public safety by facilitating the creation of behavioral health dockets to accomplish this purpose.*

C. *The goals of behavioral health dockets shall include (i) reducing recidivism; (ii) increasing personal, familial, and societal accountability among offenders through ongoing judicial intervention; (iii) addressing mental illness, substance abuse, and other conditions that contribute to criminal behavior and recidivism; (iv) promoting law-abiding behavior and successful reentry of offenders following incarceration; and (v) promoting effective planning and use of resources within the criminal justice system and community agencies. Behavioral health dockets promote outcomes that will benefit not only the offender but society as well.*

D. *Behavioral health dockets are specialized criminal court dockets within the existing structure of Virginia's court system that enable the judiciary to manage its workload more efficiently. Under the leadership and regular interaction of presiding judges, and through voluntary offender participation, behavioral health dockets shall address offenders with mental health conditions and drug addictions that contribute to criminal behavior. Behavioral health dockets shall employ evidence-based practices to diagnose behavioral health illness and provide treatment, enhance public safety, reduce recidivism, ensure offender accountability, and promote offender rehabilitation in the community. Local officials shall complete a planning process recognized by the state behavioral health docket advisory committee before establishing a behavioral health docket program.*

E. *Administrative oversight of implementation of the Behavioral Health Docket Act shall be conducted by the Supreme Court of Virginia. The Supreme Court of Virginia shall be responsible for (i) providing oversight of the distribution of funds for behavioral health dockets; (ii) providing technical assistance to behavioral health dockets; (iii) providing training to judges who preside over behavioral health dockets; (iv) providing training to the providers of administrative, case management, and treatment services to behavioral health dockets; and (v) monitoring the completion of evaluations of the effectiveness and efficiency of behavioral health dockets in the Commonwealth.*

F. *A state behavioral health docket advisory committee shall be established in the judicial branch. The committee shall be chaired by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia, who shall appoint a vice-chair to act in his absence. The membership of the committee shall include a behavioral health circuit court judge, a behavioral health general district court judge, a behavioral health juvenile and domestic relations district court judge, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court or his designee, the Governor or his designee, and a representative from each of the following entities: the Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council, the Virginia Court Clerks' Association, the Virginia Indigent Defense Commission, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, a community services board or behavioral health authority, and a local community-based probation and pretrial services agency.*

G. *Each jurisdiction or combination of jurisdictions that intend to establish a behavioral health docket or continue the operation of an existing behavioral health docket shall establish a local behavioral health docket advisory committee. Jurisdictions that establish separate adult and juvenile behavioral health dockets may establish an advisory committee for each such docket. Each local behavioral health docket advisory committee shall ensure quality, efficiency, and fairness in the planning, implementation, and operation of the behavioral health dockets that serve the jurisdiction or combination of jurisdictions. Advisory committee membership may include, but shall not be limited to,*

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SB818

59 the following persons or their designees: (i) the behavioral health docket judge; (ii) the attorney for the  
60 Commonwealth or, where applicable, the city or county attorney who has responsibility for the  
61 prosecution of misdemeanor offenses; (iii) the public defender or a member of the local criminal defense  
62 bar in jurisdictions in which there is no public defender; (iv) the clerk of the court in which the  
63 behavioral health docket is located; (v) a representative of the Virginia Department of Corrections or  
64 the Department of Juvenile Justice, or both, from the local office that serves the jurisdiction or  
65 combination of jurisdictions; (vi) a representative of a local community-based probation and pretrial  
66 services agency; (vii) a local law-enforcement officer; (viii) a representative of the Department of  
67 Behavioral Health and Developmental Services or a representative of local treatment providers, or both;  
68 (ix) a representative of the local community services board or behavioral health authority; (x) the  
69 behavioral health docket administrator; (xi) a public health official; (xii) the county administrator or  
70 city manager; and (xiii) any other persons selected by the local behavioral health docket advisory  
71 committee.

72 H. Each local behavioral health docket advisory committee shall establish criteria for the eligibility  
73 and participation of offenders who have been determined to have problems with drug addiction, mental  
74 illness, societal reentry difficulties, or related issues. The committee shall identify and use a  
75 comprehensive, valid, and reliable screening instrument to assess whether the individual is a candidate  
76 for a behavioral health docket. Once an individual is identified as a candidate appropriate for a  
77 behavioral health court docket, a full diagnosis and treatment plan shall be prepared by qualified  
78 professionals.

79 Subject to the provisions of this section, neither the establishment of a behavioral health docket nor  
80 anything in this section shall be construed as limiting the discretion of the attorney for the  
81 Commonwealth to prosecute any criminal case arising therein that he deems advisable to prosecute,  
82 except to the extent that the participating attorney for the Commonwealth agrees to do so. No adult  
83 offender who has been convicted of an act of violence, as defined in § 19.2-297.1, within the preceding  
84 10 years, and no juvenile offender who has previously been adjudicated not innocent of any such offense  
85 within the preceding 10 years, shall be eligible to participate in any behavioral health docket  
86 established or continued in operation pursuant to this section.

87 I. Each local behavioral health docket advisory committee shall establish policies and procedures for  
88 the operation of the docket to attain the following goals: (i) effective integration of appropriate  
89 treatment services with criminal justice system case processing; (ii) enhanced public safety through  
90 intensive offender supervision and treatment; (iii) prompt identification and placement of eligible  
91 participants; (iv) efficient access to a continuum of related treatment and rehabilitation services; (v)  
92 verified participant abstinence through frequent alcohol and other drug testing and mental health status  
93 assessments, where applicable; (vi) prompt response to participants' noncompliance with program  
94 requirements through a coordinated strategy; (vii) ongoing judicial interaction with each behavioral  
95 health docket participant; (viii) ongoing monitoring and evaluation of program effectiveness and  
96 efficiency; (ix) ongoing interdisciplinary education and training in support of program effectiveness and  
97 efficiency; and (x) ongoing collaboration among behavioral health dockets, public agencies, and  
98 community-based organizations to enhance program effectiveness and efficiency.

99 J. If a defendant was going through the throes of a mental health crisis then his case will be  
100 assigned to a behavioral health docket and he will not be subject to incarceration. The defendant will  
101 need to establish that he was going through the throes of a mental health crisis by a preponderance of  
102 the evidence before his case will be assigned to such behavioral health docket.

103 K. Each offender shall contribute to the cost of the treatment he receives while participating in a  
104 behavioral health docket pursuant to guidelines developed by the local behavioral health docket  
105 advisory committee.

106 L. Nothing contained in this section shall confer a right or an expectation of a right to treatment for  
107 an offender or be construed as requiring a local behavioral health docket advisory committee to accept  
108 for participation every offender.

109 M. The Office of the Executive Secretary shall, with the assistance of the state behavioral health  
110 docket advisory committee, develop a statewide evaluation model and conduct ongoing evaluations of  
111 the effectiveness and efficiency of all behavioral health dockets. The Executive Secretary shall submit an  
112 annual report of these evaluations to the General Assembly by December 1 of each year. The annual  
113 report shall be submitted as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of  
114 Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be  
115 posted on the General Assembly's website. Each local behavioral health docket advisory committee shall  
116 submit evaluative reports to the Office of the Executive Secretary as requested.