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HOUSE BILL NO. 1790

Offered January 13, 2021

Prefiled January 1, 2021

A BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-98 of the Code of Virginia, relating to public schools; severe weather conditions and other emergency situations; unscheduled remote learning days.

Patrons—McNamara; Senator: Suetterlein

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 22.1-98 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 22.1-98. Reduction of state aid when length of school term below 180 days or 990 hours.**

A. For the purposes of this section:

1. "Declared state of emergency" means the declaration of an emergency before or after an event, by the Governor or by officials in a locality, that requires the closure of any or all schools within a school division.

2. "Severe weather conditions or other emergency situations" means those circumstances presenting a threat to the health or safety of students that result from severe weather conditions or other emergencies, including natural and man-made disasters, energy shortages, or power failures.

B. Except as provided in this section:

1. The length of every school's term in every school division shall be at least 180 teaching days or 990 teaching hours in any school year; and

2. If the length of the term of any school or the schools in a school division shall be less than 180 teaching days or 990 teaching hours in any school year, the amount paid by the Commonwealth from the Basic School Aid Fund shall, except as otherwise hereinafter provided or as otherwise provided by law, be reduced in the same proportion as the length of the school term has been reduced in any school or the schools in the school division from 180 teaching days or 990 teaching hours.

C. Notwithstanding the requirements of subsection B, in any case in which severe weather conditions or other emergency situations, as defined in this section, result in the closing of a school or the schools in a school division or in an unscheduled remote learning day for a school or the schools in a school division, the amount paid by the Commonwealth from the Basic School Aid Fund shall not be reduced if one of the following schedule methods of make-up days, make-up hours, or unscheduled remote learning days, as appropriate in the circumstances, is followed:

1. When severe weather conditions or other emergency situations have resulted in the closing of a school or the schools in a school division for five or fewer days, the school or the schools in the school division shall make up all missed days by adding teaching days to the school calendar or extending the length of the school day;

2. When severe weather conditions or other emergency situations have resulted in the closing of a school or the schools in a school division for six days or more, the school or the schools in the school division shall make up the first five days plus one day for each two days missed in excess of the first five by adding teaching days to the school calendar or extending the length of the school day; or

3. When severe weather conditions or other emergency situations have resulted in the closing of any school in a school division and such school has been unable to meet the 180 teaching day requirement, the school division may make up the missed teaching days by providing its students with instructional hours equivalent to such missed teaching days to meet the minimum 990 teaching hour requirement; or

4. When severe weather conditions or other emergency situations have resulted in the closing of any school in a school division for in-person instruction, the school division may declare an unscheduled remote learning day whereby the school provides synchronous or asynchronous instruction, or some combination thereof, to all students in the school in lieu of in-person instruction, provided that the school division has established an unscheduled remote learning day plan that ensures that every learner is provided instruction and services on such unscheduled remote learning day that are comparable in quality to the instruction and services provided to students on any other remote learning day.

D. The local appropriations for educational purposes necessary to fund 180 teaching days or 990 teaching hours shall also not be proportionally reduced by any local governing body because of any reduction in the length of the term of any school or the schools in a school division authorized by subsection C.

E. The foregoing provisions of this section notwithstanding, the Board of Education may waive the requirement that school divisions provide additional teaching days or teaching hours to compensate for

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59 school closings resulting from a declared state of emergency or severe weather conditions or other
60 emergency situations. If the local school board desires a waiver, it shall submit a request to the Board of
61 Education. The request shall include evidence of efforts that have been made by the school division to
62 reschedule as many days as possible and certification by the division superintendent and chairman of the
63 local school board that every reasonable effort for making up lost teaching days or teaching hours was
64 exhausted before requesting a waiver of this requirement. If the waiver is denied, the school division
65 shall make up the missed instructional time in accordance with this section.

66 If the Board grants such a waiver, there shall be no proportionate reduction in the amount paid by
67 the Commonwealth from the Basic School Aid Fund. Further, the local appropriations for educational
68 purposes necessary to fund 180 teaching days or 990 teaching hours shall not be proportionally reduced
69 by any local governing body due to any reduction in the length of the term of any school or the schools
70 in a school division permitted by such waiver.

71 F. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, the Board of Education shall waive the requirement
72 that school divisions provide additional teaching days or teaching hours to compensate for school
73 closings resulting from an evacuation directed and compelled by the Governor pursuant to § 44-146.17
74 for up to five teaching days. If the local school board desires such a waiver, it shall notify the Board of
75 Education and provide evidence of efforts that have been made by the school division to reschedule as
76 many days as possible and certification by the division superintendent and chairman of the local school
77 board that every reasonable effort for making up lost teaching days or teaching hours was exhausted.
78 After receiving such notification, the Board shall grant the waiver and there shall be no proportionate
79 reduction in the amount paid by the Commonwealth from the Basic School Aid Fund. Further, the local
80 appropriations for educational purposes necessary to fund 180 teaching days or 990 teaching hours shall
81 not be proportionally reduced by any local governing body due to any reduction in the length of the
82 term of any school or the schools in a school division permitted by such waiver.

83 G. If the professional personnel of any such school division actually render service for less than the
84 contracted period for such school year and their compensation is reduced because of insufficient funds
85 or other reason, the proportionate amount paid by the Commonwealth for the personnel component of
86 the Basic School Aid Fund for such school year shall be reduced pro rata.

87 Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the school board of any school division in
88 which the length of the term for any school or for the schools in the school division is reduced as
89 provided in this section may pay its professional personnel such salary as they would have received if
90 the term had not been so reduced.

91 H. In developing the school calendar as provided for in § 22.1-79.1, each local school board shall
92 establish such calendars and teaching contracts in accordance with applicable regulations of the Board of
93 Education to include contingencies for making up teaching days and teaching hours missed for
94 emergency situations described in this section. Historical data shall be used to determine the needs of
95 the locality including scheduled holidays and breaks and work days.

96 I. The Board of Education may authorize the Superintendent of Public Instruction to approve, in
97 compliance with this section, reductions in the school term for a school or the schools in a school
98 division without a proportionate reduction in the amount paid by the Commonwealth from the Basic
99 School Aid Fund.

100 J. With the exception of the Basic School Aid Fund as provided for above, the Commonwealth shall
101 not distribute funds to a locality for costs not incurred when the school term is reduced below 180
102 teaching days or 990 teaching hours.

103 K. As part of the annual report required by § 22.1-81, the division superintendent and local school
104 board chairman shall certify the total number of teaching days and teaching hours each year.