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## HOUSE BILL NO. 2169

House Amendments in [ ] - February 6, 2023

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 53.1-136, 53.1-154, and 53.1-155 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Parole Board; decision requirements; annual reports.

Patron Prior to Engrossment—Delegate Williams

Referred to Committee on Public Safety

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

**1. That §§ 53.1-136, 53.1-154, and 53.1-155 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**

**§ 53.1-136. Powers and duties of Board; notice of release of certain inmates.**

In addition to the other powers and duties imposed upon the Board by this article, the Board shall:

1. Adopt, subject to approval by the Governor, general rules governing the granting of parole and eligibility requirements, which shall be published and posted for public review;

2. Adopt, subject to approval by the Governor, rules providing for the granting of parole to those prisoners who are eligible for parole pursuant to § 53.1-165.1 on the basis of demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation and the lesser culpability of juvenile offenders;

3. a. Release on parole for such time and upon such terms and conditions as the Board shall prescribe; persons convicted of felonies and confined under the laws of the Commonwealth in any correctional facility in Virginia when those persons become eligible and are found suitable for parole, according to those rules adopted pursuant to subdivisions 1 and 2. *No decision to grant discretionary parole shall be made by the Board unless such decision was discussed and debated at a meeting at which all Board members were present. If the Board grants discretionary parole to an inmate, each Board member shall identify his reasoning for such decision at the time such member's vote is cast;*

b. Establish the conditions of postrelease supervision authorized pursuant to § 18.2-10 and subsection A of § 19.2-295.2;

c. Notify the Department of Corrections of its decision to grant discretionary parole or conditional release to an inmate. The Department of Corrections shall set the release date for such inmate no sooner than 30 business days from the date that the Department of Corrections receives such notification from the Chairman of the Board, except that the Department of Corrections may set an earlier release date in the case of an inmate granted conditional release pursuant to § 53.1-40.02. In the case of an inmate granted parole who was convicted of a felony and sentenced to a term of 10 or more years, or an inmate granted conditional release, the Board shall notify the attorney for the Commonwealth in the jurisdiction where the inmate was sentenced (i) by electronic means at least 21 business days prior to such inmate's release that such inmate has been granted discretionary parole or conditional release pursuant to § 53.1-40.01 or 53.1-40.02 or (ii) by telephone or other electronic means prior to such inmate's release that such inmate has been granted conditional release pursuant to § 53.1-40.02 where death is imminent. Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter the obligations of the Board under § 53.1-155 for investigation prior to release on discretionary parole;

d. Provide that in any case where a person who is released on parole or postrelease supervision has been committed to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services under the provisions of Chapter 9 (§ 37.2-900 et seq.) of Title 37.2 the conditions of his parole or postrelease supervision shall include the requirement that the person comply with all conditions given him by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and that he follow all of the terms of his treatment plan;

4. Revoke parole and any period of postrelease and order the reincarceration of any parolee or felon serving a period of postrelease supervision or impose a condition of participation in any component of the Statewide Community-Based Corrections System for State-Responsible Offenders (§ 53.1-67.2 et seq.) on any eligible parolee, when, in the judgment of the Board, he has violated the conditions of his parole or postrelease supervision or is otherwise unfit to be on parole or on postrelease supervision;

5. Issue final discharges to persons released by the Board on parole when the Board is of the opinion that the discharge of the parolee will not be incompatible with the welfare of such person or of society. *Final discharges shall be granted only upon approval by a majority of Board members. The Board shall publish an annual report regarding final discharges issued by the Board during the previous 12 months. The report shall include (i) the name of each prisoner granted final discharge, (ii) the offense of which the prisoner was convicted; (iii) the jurisdiction in which such offense was committed, (iv) the length of the prisoner's sentence and the date such sentence was imposed, (v) the amount of time the prisoner has*

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HB2169E

59 *been on parole or postrelease supervision in the community, (vi) the basis for the final discharge, and*  
60 *(vii) the vote of each Board member;*

61 6. Make investigations and reports with respect to any commutation of sentence, pardon, reprieve or  
62 remission of fine, or penalty when requested by the Governor;

63 7. Publish a statement regarding the action taken by the Board on the parole of prisoners within 30  
64 days of such action. The statement shall list (i) the name of each prisoner considered for parole, (ii) the  
65 offense of which the prisoner was convicted, (iii) the jurisdiction in which such offense was committed,  
66 (iv) the length of the prisoner's sentence and the date such sentence was imposed, (v) the amount of  
67 time the prisoner has served, (vi) whether the prisoner was granted or denied parole, and (vii) the basis  
68 for the grant or denial of parole. However, in the case of a prisoner granted parole, the information set  
69 forth in clauses (i) through (vii) regarding such prisoner shall be included in the statement published in  
70 the month immediately succeeding the month in which notification of the decision to grant parole was  
71 given to the attorney for the Commonwealth and any victims; and

72 8. Ensure that each person eligible for parole receives a timely and thorough review of his suitability  
73 for release on parole, including a review of any relevant post-sentencing information. If parole is denied,  
74 the basis for the denial of parole shall be in writing and shall give specific reasons for such denial to  
75 such inmate.

76 **§ 53.1-154. Times at which Virginia Parole Board to review cases.**

77 The Virginia Parole Board shall by regulation divide each calendar year into such equal parts as it  
78 may deem appropriate to the efficient administration of the parole system. Unless there ~~be~~ *is* reasonable  
79 cause for extension of the time within which to review and decide a case, the Board shall review and  
80 decide the case of each prisoner no later than that part of the calendar year in which he becomes  
81 eligible for parole, and at least annually thereafter, until he is released on parole or discharged, except  
82 that upon any such review the Board may schedule the next review as much as three years thereafter,  
83 provided there are ~~ten~~ *10* years or more or life imprisonment remaining on the sentence in such case.  
84 *Such reviews shall include a live interview of the prisoner by a Board member or a staff member*  
85 *designated by the Board. Such interviews may be conducted in person or by videoconference or*  
86 *telephone at the discretion of the Board. Absent imminent death of the prisoner or other extraordinary*  
87 *circumstances, which shall be documented by the Board in the prisoner's file, the Board shall not grant*  
88 *parole to any prisoner who has not received a live interview within the prior calendar year.*  
89 Notwithstanding any other provision of this article, in the case of a parole revocation, if such person is  
90 otherwise eligible for parole, the Board shall review and decide his case no later than that part of the  
91 calendar year one year subsequent to the part of the calendar year in which he was returned to a facility  
92 as provided in § 53.1-161. Thereafter, his case shall be reviewed as specified in this section. The Board,  
93 in addition, may review the case of any prisoner eligible for parole at any other time and may review  
94 the case of any prisoner prior to that part of the year otherwise specified. In the discretion of the Board,  
95 interviews may be conducted by the Board or its representatives and may be either public or private.

96 **§ 53.1-155. Investigation prior to release; transition assistance.**

97 A. No person shall be released on parole by the Board until a thorough investigation has been made  
98 into the prisoner's history, physical and mental condition, and character and his conduct, employment,  
99 and attitude while in prison. The Board shall also determine that his release on parole will not be  
100 incompatible with the interests of society or of the prisoner. The provisions of this section shall not be  
101 applicable to persons released on parole pursuant to § 53.1-159.

102 B. An investigation conducted pursuant to this section shall include notification that a victim may  
103 submit to the Virginia Parole Board evidence concerning the impact that the release of the prisoner will  
104 have on such victim. This notification shall be sent to the last address provided to the Board by any  
105 victim of a crime for which the prisoner was incarcerated. If additional victim research is necessary,  
106 electronic notification shall be sent to the attorney for the Commonwealth and the director of the  
107 victim/witness program, if one exists, of the jurisdiction in which the offense occurred. The Board shall  
108 [ endeavor diligently to ] contact the victim prior to making any decision to release any inmate on  
109 discretionary parole. The victim of a crime for which the prisoner is incarcerated may present to the  
110 Board oral, *including by virtual means*, or written testimony concerning the impact that the release of  
111 the prisoner will have on the victim, and the Board shall consider such testimony in its review. Once  
112 testimony is submitted by a victim, such testimony shall remain in the prisoner's parole file and shall be  
113 considered by the Board at every parole review. The victim of a crime for which the prisoner is  
114 incarcerated may submit a request in writing or by electronic means to the Board to be notified of (i)  
115 the prisoner's parole eligibility date and mandatory release date as determined by the Department of  
116 Corrections, (ii) any parole-related interview dates, and (iii) the Board's decision regarding parole for the  
117 prisoner. The victim may request that the Board only notify the victim if, following its review, the  
118 Board is inclined to grant parole to the prisoner, in which case the victim shall have ~~forty-five~~ *45* days  
119 to present written or oral testimony for the Board's consideration. If the victim has requested to be  
120 notified only if the Board is inclined to grant parole and no testimony, either written or oral, is received

from the victim within at least ~~forty-five~~ 45 days of the date of the Board's notification, the Board shall render its decision based on information available to it in accordance with subsection A. The definition of victim in § 19.2-11.01 shall apply to this section.

Although any information presented by the victim of a crime for which the prisoner is incarcerated shall be retained in the prisoner's parole file and considered by the Board, such information shall not infringe on the Board's authority to exercise its decision-making authority.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection A, if a physical or mental examination of a prisoner eligible for parole has been conducted within the last ~~twelve~~ 12 months, and the prisoner has not required medical or psychiatric treatment within a like period while incarcerated, the prisoner may be released on parole by the Parole Board directly from a local correctional facility.

The Department shall offer each prisoner to be released on parole or under mandatory release who has been sentenced to serve a term of imprisonment of at least three years the opportunity to participate in a transition program within six months of such prisoner's projected or mandatory release date. The program shall include advice for job training opportunities, recommendations for living a law-abiding life, and financial literacy information. The Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security shall prescribe guidelines to govern these programs.

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