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**HOUSE BILL NO. 2489**

Offered January 20, 2023

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 32.1-19 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 2 of Title 63.2 a section numbered 63.2-214.4, by adding a section numbered 63.2-319.1, and by adding in Title 63.2 a chapter numbered 24, consisting of a section numbered 63.2-2400, relating to Responsible Fatherhood Initiative; fatherhood needs assessment; Fatherhood Support Grants Program and Fund established.*

Patron—LaRock

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

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

**1. That § 32.1-19 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 2 of Title 63.2 a section numbered 63.2-214.4, by adding a section numbered 63.2-319.1, and by adding in Title 63.2 a chapter numbered 24, consisting of a section numbered 63.2-2400, as follows:**

**§ 32.1-19. Duties prescribed by Board.**

A. The Commissioner shall perform such duties as the Board may require, in addition to the duties required by law.

B. The Commissioner shall, along with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, work to combat childhood obesity and other chronic health conditions that affect school-age children.

C. The Commissioner shall ensure, in the licensure of health care facilities, that quality of care, patient safety, and patient privacy are the overriding goals of such licensure and related enforcement efforts.

D. The Commissioner shall coordinate the Department's emergency preparedness and response efforts.

E. The Commissioner shall ensure that prevention of disease and protection of public health remain the Department's overriding goals.

F. The Commissioner shall designate a senior staff member of the Department, who shall be a licensed physician, to oversee minority health efforts of the Department.

G. The Commissioner shall designate a senior official of the Department, who shall be a licensed physician or nurse practitioner, to coordinate all women's health efforts in the Department including, but not limited to, the "Every Woman's Life Program," and other efforts to prevent, detect, and treat breast cancer, cervical cancer, and other diseases that primarily affect women.

H. *The Commissioner shall coordinate father engagement activities, such as providing individualized support to fathers to increase participation in services that strengthen family and child well-being.*

**§ 63.2-214.4. Responsible Fatherhood Initiative.**

A. *The Department shall contract for the development and implementation of the Responsible Fatherhood Initiative (the initiative). The initiative shall provide an opportunity for every father in the Commonwealth to be able to obtain information and inspiration that will motivate and enable him to enhance his abilities as a father, recognizing that some fathers have greater challenges than others and would benefit from greater support.*

B. *The initiative shall, at a minimum:*

1. *Include a website and other related electronic resources that allow a father to obtain information about effective parenting, identify areas in which support would enable a father to enhance his ability to be an effective father, and be connected to such support, including support provided by organizations receiving grants under § 63.2-2400;*

2. *Use appropriate materials from the fatherhood media campaign available through the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse; and*

3. *Include print, television, digital, and social media elements and public events, and may include appearances by and involvement from public figures and influencers.*

C. *The entity with which the Department contracts for the Responsible Fatherhood Initiative shall be a nonprofit organization that:*

1. *Has a history of focusing on responsible fatherhood, including providing online resources to fathers, and engaging fathers, father figures, and children through community-based and school-based events to encourage responsible fatherhood; and*

2. *Has the organizational capacity to manage a statewide initiative and successfully carry out the requirements of this section.*

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59 *D. The entity shall collaborate with other relevant agencies of the Commonwealth and private*  
 60 *organizations to develop and implement the initiative. Such agencies of the Commonwealth shall*  
 61 *collaborate with the entity with which the Department contracts to carry out the initiative.*

62 **§ 63.2-319.1. Fatherhood needs assessment.**

63 *A. Each local board shall ensure that it is addressing the unique needs of the fathers of children*  
 64 *who are served by the local department of social services.*

65 *B. Each local board shall:*

66 *1. Conduct an initial assessment of its engagement with such fathers and provision of and referral to*  
 67 *father-oriented services.*

68 *2. Create an action plan to address any gaps identified through the assessment and implement the*  
 69 *action plan.*

70 *3. Employ a father-engagement specialist to, at a minimum, build relationships with fathers, help*  
 71 *identify their needs, assist them in accessing services, and communicate with the local board about the*  
 72 *challenges faced by these fathers and how to appropriately meet their unique needs. The local board*  
 73 *shall prioritize individuals who have faced experiences similar to the fathers who are being served by*  
 74 *the lead agency for selection as a father-engagement specialist.*

75 *C. The Department shall annually review how the local board is meeting the needs of fathers,*  
 76 *including, at a minimum, how the local board is helping fathers establish positive, stable relationships*  
 77 *with their children and assisting fathers in receiving needed services. The local board shall provide any*  
 78 *relevant information on how it is meeting the needs of these fathers to the Department.*

79 **CHAPTER 24.**

80 **FATHERHOOD SUPPORT GRANTS PROGRAM AND FUND.**

81 **§ 63.2-2400. Fatherhood Support Grants Program and Fund.**

82 *A. From the funds appropriated for such purpose and from the gifts, donations, grants, bequests, and*  
 83 *other funds received on its behalf, there is established (i) the Fatherhood Support Grants Program, to*  
 84 *be administered by the Department, and (ii) a special nonreverting fund to be known as the Fatherhood*  
 85 *Support Grants Fund, referred to in this section as "the Fund." The Fund shall be established on the*  
 86 *books of the Comptroller. All moneys appropriated by the General Assembly for the Fund, and received*  
 87 *from any other sources, public or private, shall be paid into the state treasury and credited to the Fund.*  
 88 *Interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it. Any moneys*  
 89 *remaining in the Fund, including interest thereon, at the end of each fiscal year shall not revert to the*  
 90 *general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Expenditures and disbursements from the Fund shall be*  
 91 *made by the State Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written request signed by the*  
 92 *Commissioner.*

93 *B. Subject to the authority of the Department to provide for its disbursement, the Fund shall be*  
 94 *disbursed to award grants to nonprofit community-based organizations to address the needs of fathers.*  
 95 *Grants shall be awarded for no more than three years, with subsequent year funding contingent on*  
 96 *compliance with grant requirements and adequate performance. Such organizations may apply for*  
 97 *grants from the Program on a form approved by the Department. Grant recipients shall submit reports*  
 98 *to the Department in a format and at intervals, which shall be at least annually, prescribed by the*  
 99 *Department.*

100 *C. The Department shall award the following types of grants:*

101 *1. Grants that comprehensively address the needs of fathers, such as assisting them in finding*  
 102 *employment, managing child support obligations, transitioning from a period of incarceration, accessing*  
 103 *health care, understanding child development, and enhancing parenting skills. Services provided shall be*  
 104 *tailored to the needs of the father being served. Case management services shall be provided by the*  
 105 *grant recipient, either directly or by subcontract, to the fathers who are served by the grants under this*  
 106 *subdivision. If the father receiving case management services through a grant awarded under this*  
 107 *subdivision has a child receiving case management services from a local department of social services*  
 108 *because the child is the subject of a dependency proceeding under Article 9 (§ 16.1-278 et seq.) of*  
 109 *Chapter 11 of Title 16.1, the case management services may be coordinated.*

110 *2. Grants that provide evidence-based parenting education specifically for fathers. The grants under*  
 111 *this subdivision shall not require case management services.*

112 *C. The Department shall establish criteria for making grants from the Fund, including procedures*  
 113 *for determining the amount of a grant. The Department may adopt guidelines governing the Program as*  
 114 *it deems necessary and appropriate.*

115 *D. The Department shall prioritize applicants for a grant specified under subsection C based on:*

116 *1. Need in a geographic area and the population to be served by the grant as indicated by, at a*  
 117 *minimum, unemployment rates, incarceration rates, housing instability, the number of single-parent*  
 118 *households, the number of public benefit recipients, graduation rates, and levels of academic*  
 119 *achievement;*

120 *2. If an applicant has a primary mission of, or a history of a significant focus on and effective work*

- 121 *towards, addressing the needs of men in their role as fathers;*  
122 *3. The applicant's current and historical involvement in the community being served;*  
123 *4. The applicant's commitment and capability to employ competent staff who can effectively engage*  
124 *with the fathers being served, including, at a minimum, those individuals who share a similar*  
125 *background as the fathers being served;*  
126 *5. The number of individuals the applicant plans to serve through the grant and the projected costs*  
127 *for the program; and*  
128 *6. The applicant's organizational capacity to effectively meet the requirements of the grant and to*  
129 *deliver the programs proposed by the applicant. The department may offer technical assistance to*  
130 *applicants and grant recipients that have lower organizational capacity as long as such organizations*  
131 *have, or the organization's leadership has, significant experience serving fathers.*