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SENATE BILL NO. 1356

Offered January 11, 2023

Prefiled January 11, 2023

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Title 23.1 a chapter numbered 3.1, consisting of sections numbered 23.1-311 through 23.1-314, relating to public institutions of higher education; admissions; Virginia Promise to Veterans Act; report.*

Patrons—Reeves, Cosgrove, Hackworth, McDougle, Newman, Obenshain and Ruff; Delegate: Durant

Referred to Committee on Education and Health

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Title 23.1 a chapter numbered 3.1, consisting of sections numbered 23.1-311 through 23.1-314, as follows:

CHAPTER 3.1.

VIRGINIA PROMISE TO VETERANS ACT.

§ 23.1-311. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Eligible veteran applicant" means any individual applying for admission to any public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth who (i) is a veteran member of the uniformed services and (ii) (a) graduated from a high school in the Commonwealth or (b) graduated from a high school in a state other than the Commonwealth and served in the uniformed services while assigned to a location in the Commonwealth.

"High school" means any public or private secondary school for grades nine through 12.

"Uniformed services" means the United States Armed Forces, including the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps; the commissioned corps of the U.S. Public Health Service; and the Virginia National Guard.

"Veteran" or "veteran member of the uniformed services" means any individual who served in the uniformed services and was discharged or released from such service under conditions other than dishonorable.

§ 23.1-312. Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to remove barriers to higher education for veteran members of the uniformed services and help assist such eligible veteran applicants in making the transition to civilian life in the Commonwealth.

§ 23.1-313. Admission of eligible veteran applicants guaranteed; criteria; process; report.

A. Each public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth shall, upon application, accept for admission to such institution any eligible veteran applicant who otherwise meets the admissions requirements to enroll as an undergraduate student.

B. The Council, in collaboration with the System, shall develop guidelines for the governing board of each public institution of higher education relating to the administration of the provisions of this chapter.

C. The Council, in collaboration with the System, shall develop guidelines for potential eligible veteran applicants providing information on this chapter and any additional resources available to eligible veteran applicants for further guidance on the application process at any public institution of higher education.

D. The governing board of each public institution of higher education shall post on such institution's official website information about the guaranteed acceptance policy for eligible veteran applicants developed pursuant to the provisions of this chapter, including:

1. A general description of this chapter;

2. Information on the application requirements and applicable deadlines for such institution; and

3. Any additional resources or assistance programs available to eligible veteran applicants, including any programs or grants relating to application or tuition fees.

E. Each public institution of higher education shall submit an annual report to the General Assembly on or before December 31 of each year detailing the following information pursuant to this chapter:

1. The number of eligible veteran applicants who applied to such institution;

2. The number of eligible veteran applicants who enrolled at such institution;

3. The amount of any application fees waived for eligible veteran applicants at such institution; and

4. Any additional support, service, or assistance provided to participating eligible veteran applicants

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59 *who enrolled at such institution.*

60 **§ 23.1-314. Construction.**

61 *A. Except as it relates to the admission of eligible veteran applicants, nothing in this chapter shall*
62 *be construed to change any policy or practice of any public institution of higher education in the*
63 *Commonwealth, including any additional admissions criteria or prioritization for capped enrollment*
64 *academic programs.*

65 *B. The provisions of this chapter shall be construed in a manner consistent with applicable state and*
66 *federal law.*