

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2024 SESSION

CHAPTER 299

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 22.1-211.1, relating to public schools; certain local school divisions; youth and community violence prevention; Community Builders Pilot Program established; report.

[H 626]

Approved April 2, 2024

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 22.1-211.1 as follows:

§ 22.1-211.1. Community Builders Pilot Program established; report.

A. The Community Builders Pilot Program (the Program) is established for the purpose of reducing youth involvement in behaviors that lead to gun violence and increasing community engagement among public school students by providing students enrolled in Roanoke City Public Schools and Petersburg City Public Schools opportunities during the school year after regular school hours and during the summer months for community engagement, workforce development, postsecondary education exploration, and social-emotional education and development.

B. The Program shall have after-school sessions, to be offered during the school year after regular school hours, and one summer session, to be offered during the summer months when school is not in session. The Program shall provide a group of up to 100 students each session, selected in accordance with subdivision C 1, community, workforce, and education building opportunities, including opportunities for:

1. Workforce development and professional readiness, including career and technical education exploration and opportunities for soft-skill development;

2. Exploring opportunities available in postsecondary education;

3. Social-emotional development and instruction on the role and importance of restorative justice in the community; and

4. Family engagement and empowerment.

C. The school boards of Roanoke City Public Schools and Petersburg City Public Schools shall be responsible for the administration of the Program. In administering the Program, the school boards may collaborate with such other entities as they deem appropriate. In administering the Program, the school boards shall:

1. Establish and administer an application and referral process by which students who are entering eighth grade can apply or be referred for participation in the Program, including students who may be referred by a teacher for compulsory participation;

2. Develop and administer an application and hiring process for Program staff, including a Program coordinator and professional staff;

3. Develop and implement a Program curriculum and itinerary for the after-school sessions of the Program to be offered during the school year after regular school hours and for the summer session of the Program to be offered during the summer months; and

4. Collect data and report to the Governor, the Senate Committee on Education and Health, and the House Committee on Education by November 1 each year on the progress of the Program, including: (i) the number of students participating in the Program as a whole and disaggregated by (a) the number of students participating during the after-school session of the Program and the summer session of the Program and (b) the number of participating students who are enrolled in Roanoke City Public Schools and the number of participating students enrolled in Petersburg City Public Schools; (ii) data relating to the progress of participating students, including a comparison of pre-participation and post-participation absenteeism rates, disciplinary incidents, and academic performance; and (iii) the number and rate of reported incidents of gun violence involving participants in the Community Builders program, in the City of Roanoke as a whole, and in the City of Petersburg as a whole in comparison to previous years.

2. That the provisions of this act shall expire on July 1, 2027.