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HOUSE BILL NO. 102

Offered January 10, 2024

Prefiled December 30, 2023

A BILL to amend and reenact § 19.2-163 of the Code of Virginia, relating to compensation of court-appointed counsel.

Patrons—Reaser, Ballard, Hope, Rasoul, Anthony, Askew, Bennett-Parker, Callsen, Clark, Cohen, Cole, Cousins, Feggans, Gardner, Henson, Jones, Keys-Gamarra, Kilgore, Laufer, LeVere Bolling, Maldonado, Martinez, McClure, Price, Seibold, Shin, Simon, Simonds, Srinivasan, Thomas, Tran, Watts and Willett

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 19.2-163 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 19.2-163. Compensation of court-appointed counsel.**

Upon submission to the court, for which appointed representation is provided, of a detailed accounting of the time expended for that representation, made within 30 days of the completion of all proceedings in that court, counsel appointed to represent an indigent accused in a criminal case shall be compensated for his services on an hourly basis at a rate set by the Supreme Court of Virginia in a total amount not to exceed the amounts specified in the following schedule:

1. In a district court, a sum not to exceed \$120 \$500, provided that, notwithstanding the foregoing limitation, the court in its discretion, and subject to guidelines issued by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, may waive the limitation of fees up to (i) an additional \$120 \$500 when the effort expended, the time reasonably necessary for the particular representation, the novelty and difficulty of the issues, or other circumstances warrant such a waiver; or (ii) an amount up to \$650 \$1,000 to defend, in the case of a juvenile, an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult that may be punishable by confinement in the state correctional facility for a period of more than 20 years, or a charge of violation of probation for such offense, when the effort expended, the time reasonably necessary for the particular representation, the novelty and difficulty of the issues, or other circumstances warrant such a waiver; or (iii) such other amount as may be provided by law. Such amount shall be allowed in any case wherein counsel conducts the defense of a single charge against the indigent through to its conclusion or a charge of violation of probation at any hearing conducted under § 19.2-306; thereafter, compensation for additional charges against the same accused also conducted by the same counsel shall be allowed on the basis of additional time expended as to such additional charges;

2. In a circuit court (i) to defend a Class 1 felony charge, compensation for each appointed attorney in an amount deemed reasonable by the court; (ii) to defend a felony charge that may be punishable by confinement in the state correctional facility for a period of more than 20 years defined in § 19.2-297.1, a sum not to exceed \$2,500, or a charge of violation of probation for such offense, a sum not to exceed \$1,235 \$1,250, provided that, notwithstanding the foregoing limitation, the court in its discretion, and subject to guidelines issued by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, may waive the limitation of fees up to an additional \$850 when the effort expended, the time reasonably necessary for the particular representation, the novelty and difficulty of the issues, or other circumstances warrant such a waiver; (iii) to defend any other felony charge, a sum not to exceed \$1,250, or a charge of violation of probation for such offense, a sum not to exceed \$445, provided that, notwithstanding the foregoing limitation, the court in its discretion, and subject to guidelines issued by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, may waive the limitation of fees up to an additional \$155 \$500 when the effort expended, the time reasonably necessary for the particular representation, the novelty and difficulty of the issues, or other circumstances warrant such a waiver; and (iv) in the circuit court only, to defend any misdemeanor charge punishable by confinement in jail, a sum not to exceed \$500, or a charge of violation of probation for such offense, a sum not to exceed \$158. In the event any case is required to be retried due to a mistrial for any cause or reversed on appeal, the court may allow an additional fee for each case in an amount not to exceed the amounts allowable in the initial trial. In the event counsel is appointed to defend an indigent charged with a felony that is punishable as a Class 1 felony, each attorney appointed shall continue to receive compensation as provided in this paragraph for defending such a felony, regardless of whether the charge is reduced or amended to a lesser felony, prior to final disposition of the case. In the event counsel is appointed to defend an indigent charged with any other felony, such counsel shall receive compensation as provided in this paragraph for

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56 defending such a felony, regardless of whether the charge is reduced or amended to a misdemeanor or
57 lesser felony prior to final disposition of the case in either the district court or circuit court.

58 Counsel appointed to represent an indigent accused in a criminal case, who are not public defenders,
59 may request an additional waiver exceeding the amounts provided for in this section. The request for
60 any additional amount shall be submitted to the presiding judge, in writing, with a detailed accounting
61 of the time spent and the justification for the additional amount. The presiding judge shall determine,
62 subject to guidelines issued by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, whether the
63 request for an additional amount is justified in whole or in part, by considering the effort expended and
64 the time reasonably necessary for the particular representation, and, if so, shall forward the request as
65 approved to the chief judge of the circuit court or district court for approval. If the presiding judge
66 determines that the request for an additional amount is not justified in whole or in part, such presiding
67 judge shall provide to the requesting attorney, in writing, the reasons for such determination and shall, if
68 such request has been approved in part, include a copy of such writing when forwarding the request as
69 approved to the chief judge of the circuit court or district court for approval. If the chief judge of the
70 circuit court or district court, upon review of the request as approved, determines, subject to the
71 guidelines issued by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, that any part of the
72 request for an additional amount is not justified, such chief judge shall provide to the requesting
73 attorney and to the presiding judge, in writing, the reason for such determination.

74 If at any time the funds appropriated to pay for waivers under this section become insufficient, the
75 Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia shall so certify to the courts and no further
76 waivers shall be approved.

77 The circuit or district court shall direct the payment of such reasonable expenses incurred by such
78 court-appointed counsel as it deems appropriate under the circumstances of the case. Counsel appointed
79 by the court to represent an indigent charged with repeated violations of the same section of the Code of
80 Virginia, with each of such violations arising out of the same incident, occurrence, or transaction, shall
81 be compensated in an amount not to exceed the fee prescribed for the defense of a single charge, if such
82 offenses are tried as part of the same judicial proceeding. The trial judge shall consider any guidelines
83 established by the Supreme Court but shall have the sole discretion to fix the amount of compensation
84 to be paid counsel appointed by the court to defend a felony charge that is punishable as a Class 1
85 felony.

86 The circuit or district court shall direct that the foregoing payments shall be paid out by the
87 Commonwealth, if the defendant is charged with a violation of a statute, or by the county, city or town,
88 if the defendant is charged with a violation of a county, city or town ordinance, to the attorney so
89 appointed to defend such person as compensation for such defense.

90 Counsel representing a defendant charged with a Class 1 felony may submit to the court, on a
91 monthly basis, a statement of all costs incurred and fees charged by him in the case during that month.
92 Whenever the total charges as are deemed reasonable by the court for which payment has not previously
93 been made or requested exceed \$1,000, the court may direct that payment be made as otherwise
94 provided in this section.

95 When such directive is entered upon the order book of the court, the Commonwealth, county, city or
96 town, as the case may be, shall provide for the payment out of its treasury of the sum of money so
97 specified. If the defendant is convicted, the amount allowed by the court to the attorney appointed to
98 defend him shall be taxed against the defendant as a part of the costs of prosecution and, if collected,
99 the same shall be paid to the Commonwealth, or the county, city or town, as the case may be. In the
100 event that counsel for the defendant requests a waiver of the limitations on compensation, the court shall
101 assess against the defendant an amount equal to the pre-waiver compensation limit specified in this
102 section for each charge for which the defendant was convicted. An abstract of such costs shall be
103 docketed in the judgment docket and execution lien book maintained by such court.

104 Any statement submitted by an attorney for payments due him for indigent representation or for
105 representation of a child pursuant to § 16.1-266 shall, after the submission of the statement, be
106 forwarded forthwith by the clerk to the Commonwealth, county, city or town, as the case may be,
107 responsible for payment.

108 For the purposes of this section, the defense of a case may be considered conducted through to its
109 conclusion and an appointed counsel entitled to compensation for his services in the event an indigent
110 accused fails to appear in court subject to a capias for his arrest or a show cause summons for his
111 failure to appear and remains a fugitive from justice for one year following the issuance of the capias or
112 the summons to show cause, and appointed counsel has appeared at a hearing on behalf of the accused.

113 Effective July 1, 2007, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia shall track and
114 report the number and category of offenses charged involving adult and juvenile offenders in cases in
115 which court-appointed counsel is assigned. The Executive Secretary shall also track and report the
116 amounts paid by waiver above the initial cap to court-appointed counsel. The Executive Secretary shall
117 provide these reports to the Governor, members of the House Committee on Appropriations, and

118 members of the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations on a quarterly basis.

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