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HOUSE BILL NO. 1217

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee for Courts of Justice
on February 2, 2024)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Zehr)

A BILL to amend and reenact § 19.2-70.3 of the Code of Virginia, relating to cell phone records; missing persons.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 19.2-70.3 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 19.2-70.3. Obtaining records concerning electronic communication service or remote computing service.

A. A provider of electronic communication service or remote computing service, which, for purposes of subdivisions 2, 3, and 4, includes a foreign corporation that provides such services, shall disclose a record or other information pertaining to a subscriber to or customer of such service, excluding the contents of electronic communications and real-time location data, to an investigative or law-enforcement officer only pursuant to:

1. A subpoena issued by a grand jury of a court of the Commonwealth;
2. A search warrant issued by a magistrate, general district court, or circuit court;
3. A court order issued by a circuit court for such disclosure issued as provided in subsection B; or
4. The consent of the subscriber or customer to such disclosure.

B. A court shall issue an order for disclosure under this section only if the investigative or law-enforcement officer shows that there is reason to believe the records or other information sought are relevant and material to an ongoing criminal investigation, or the investigation of any missing child as defined in § 52-32, any missing senior adult as defined in § 52-34.4, ~~or~~ an incapacitated person as defined in § 64.2-2000 who meets the definition of a missing senior adult except for the age requirement, *or any critically missing adult as defined in § 15.2-1718.2*. Upon issuance of an order for disclosure under this section, the order and any written application or statement of facts may be sealed by the court for 90 days for good cause shown upon application of the attorney for the Commonwealth in an ex parte proceeding. The order and any written application or statement of facts may be sealed for additional 90-day periods for good cause shown upon subsequent application of the attorney for the Commonwealth in an ex parte proceeding. A court issuing an order pursuant to this section, on a motion made promptly by the service provider, may quash or modify the order, if the information or records requested are unusually voluminous in nature or compliance with such order would otherwise cause an undue burden on such provider.

C. Except as provided in subsection D or E, a provider of electronic communication service or remote computing service, including a foreign corporation that provides such services, shall disclose the contents of electronic communications or real-time location data to an investigative or law-enforcement officer only pursuant to a search warrant issued by a magistrate, a juvenile and domestic relations district court, a general district court, or a circuit court, based upon complaint on oath supported by an affidavit as required in § 19.2-54, or judicial officer or court of any of the several states of the United States or its territories, or the District of Columbia when the warrant issued by such officer or such court complies with the provisions of subsection G. In the case of a search warrant directed to a foreign corporation, the affidavit shall state that the complainant believes that the records requested are actually or constructively possessed by a foreign corporation that provides electronic communication service or remote computing service within the Commonwealth of Virginia. If satisfied that probable cause has been established for such belief and as required by Chapter 5 (§ 19.2-52 et seq.), the magistrate, the juvenile and domestic relations district court, the general district court, or the circuit court shall issue a warrant identifying those records to be searched for and commanding the person seeking such warrant to properly serve the warrant upon the foreign corporation. A search warrant for real-time location data shall be issued if the magistrate, the juvenile and domestic relations district court, the general district court, or the circuit court is satisfied that probable cause has been established that the real-time location data sought is relevant to a crime that is being committed or has been committed or that an arrest warrant exists for the person whose real-time location data is sought.

D. A provider of electronic communication service or remote computing service, including a foreign corporation that provides such services, shall disclose a record or other information pertaining to a subscriber to or customer of such service, including real-time location data but excluding the contents of electronic communications, to an investigative or law-enforcement officer pursuant to an administrative subpoena issued pursuant to § 19.2-10.2 concerning a violation of § 18.2-374.1 or 18.2-374.1:1, former § 18.2-374.1:2, or § 18.2-374.3 when the information sought is relevant and material to an ongoing

60 criminal investigation.

61 E. When disclosure of real-time location data is not prohibited by federal law, an investigative or
62 law-enforcement officer may obtain real-time location data without a warrant in the following
63 circumstances:

64 1. To respond to the user's call for emergency services;

65 2. With the informed, affirmative consent of the owner or user of the electronic device concerned if
66 (i) the device is in his possession; (ii) the owner or user knows or believes that the device is in the
67 possession of an employee or agent of the owner or user with the owner's or user's consent; or (iii) the
68 owner or user knows or believes that the device has been taken by a third party without the consent of
69 the owner or user;

70 3. With the informed, affirmative consent of the legal guardian or next of kin of the owner or user,
71 if reasonably available, if the owner or user is reasonably believed to be deceased, is reported missing,
72 or is unable to be contacted;

73 4. To locate a child who is reasonably believed to have been abducted or to be missing and
74 endangered; or

75 5. If the investigative or law-enforcement officer reasonably believes that an emergency involving the
76 immediate danger to a person requires the disclosure, without delay, of real-time location data
77 concerning a specific person and that a warrant cannot be obtained in time to prevent the identified
78 danger.

79 No later than three business days after seeking disclosure of real-time location data pursuant to this
80 subsection, the investigative or law-enforcement officer seeking the information shall file with the
81 appropriate court a written statement setting forth the facts giving rise to the emergency and the facts as
82 to why the person whose real-time location data was sought is believed to be important in addressing
83 the emergency.

84 F. In order to comply with the requirements of § 19.2-54, any search of the records of a foreign
85 corporation shall be deemed to have been made in the same place wherein the search warrant was
86 issued.

87 G. A Virginia corporation or other entity that provides electronic communication services or remote
88 computing services to the general public, when properly served with a search warrant and affidavit in
89 support of the warrant, issued by a judicial officer or court of any of the several states of the United
90 States or its territories, or the District of Columbia with jurisdiction over the matter, to produce a record
91 or other information pertaining to a subscriber to or customer of such service, including real-time
92 location data, or the contents of electronic communications, or both, shall produce the record or other
93 information, including real-time location data, or the contents of electronic communications as if that
94 warrant had been issued by a Virginia court. The provisions of this subsection shall only apply to a
95 record or other information, including real-time location data, or contents of electronic communications
96 relating to the commission of a criminal offense that is substantially similar to (i) a violent felony as
97 defined in § 17.1-805, (ii) an act of violence as defined in § 19.2-297.1, (iii) any offense for which
98 registration is required pursuant to § 9.1-902, (iv) computer fraud pursuant to § 18.2-152.3, or (v)
99 identity theft pursuant to § 18.2-186.3. The search warrant shall be enforced and executed in the
100 Commonwealth as if it were a search warrant described in subsection C.

101 H. The provider of electronic communication service or remote computing service may verify the
102 authenticity of the written reports or records that it discloses pursuant to this section by providing an
103 affidavit from the custodian of those written reports or records or from a person to whom said custodian
104 reports certifying that they are true and complete copies of reports or records and that they are prepared
105 in the regular course of business. When so authenticated, no other evidence of authenticity shall be
106 necessary. The written reports and records, excluding the contents of electronic communications, shall be
107 considered business records for purposes of the business records exception to the hearsay rule.

108 I. No cause of action shall lie in any court against a provider of a wire or electronic communication
109 service or remote computing service or such provider's officers, employees, agents, or other specified
110 persons for providing information, facilities, or assistance in accordance with the terms of a court order,
111 warrant, administrative subpoena, or subpoena under this section or the provisions of subsection E.

112 J. A search warrant or administrative subpoena for the disclosure of real-time location data pursuant
113 to this section shall require the provider to provide ongoing disclosure of such data for a reasonable
114 period of time, not to exceed 30 days. A court may, for good cause shown, grant one or more
115 extensions, not to exceed 30 days each.

116 K. An investigative or law-enforcement officer shall not use any device to obtain electronic
117 communications or collect real-time location data from an electronic device without first obtaining a
118 search warrant authorizing the use of the device if, in order to obtain the contents of such electronic
119 communications or such real-time location data from the provider of electronic communication service
120 or remote computing service, such officer would be required to obtain a search warrant pursuant to this
121 section. However, an investigative or law-enforcement officer may use such a device without first

obtaining a search warrant under the circumstances set forth in subsection E. For purposes of subdivision E 5, the investigative or law-enforcement officer using such a device shall be considered to be the possessor of the real-time location data.

L. Upon issuance of any subpoena, search warrant, or order for disclosure issued under this section, upon written certification by the attorney for the Commonwealth that there is a reason to believe that the victim is under the age of 18 and that notification or disclosure of the existence of the subpoena, search warrant, or order will endanger the life or physical safety of an individual, or lead to flight from prosecution, the destruction of or tampering with evidence, the intimidation of potential witnesses, or otherwise seriously jeopardize an investigation, the court may in an ex parte proceeding order a provider of electronic communication service or remote computing service not to disclose for a period of 90 days the existence of the subpoena, search warrant, or order and written application or statement of facts to another person, other than an attorney to obtain legal advice. The nondisclosure order may be renewed for additional 90-day periods for good cause shown upon subsequent application of the attorney for the Commonwealth in an ex parte proceeding. A court issuing an order for disclosure pursuant to this section, on a motion made promptly by the service provider, may quash or modify the order if the information or records requested are unusually voluminous in nature or compliance with such order would otherwise cause an undue burden on such provider.

M. For the purposes of this section:

"Electronic device" means a device that enables access to, or use of, an electronic communication service, remote computing service, or location information service, including a global positioning service or other mapping, locational, or directional information service.

"Foreign corporation" means any corporation or other entity, whose primary place of business is located outside of the boundaries of the Commonwealth, that makes a contract or engages in a terms of service agreement with a resident of the Commonwealth to be performed in whole or in part by either party in the Commonwealth, or a corporation that has been issued a certificate of authority pursuant to § 13.1-759 to transact business in the Commonwealth. The making of the contract or terms of service agreement or the issuance of a certificate of authority shall be considered to be the agreement of the foreign corporation or entity that a search warrant or subpoena, which has been properly served on it, has the same legal force and effect as if served personally within the Commonwealth.

"Properly served" means delivery of a search warrant or subpoena by hand, by United States mail, by commercial delivery service, by facsimile or by any other manner to any officer of a corporation or its general manager in the Commonwealth, to any natural person designated by it as agent for the service of process, or if such corporation has designated a corporate agent, to any person named in the latest annual report filed pursuant to § 13.1-775.

"Real-time location data" means any data or information concerning the current location of an electronic device that, in whole or in part, is generated, derived from, or obtained by the operation of the device.