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HOUSE BILL NO. 744

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Commerce and Labor
on February 26, 2024)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Maldonado)

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 59.1-200, 59.1-207.45, and 59.1-207.46 of the Code of Virginia, relating to consumer protection; automatic renewal or continuous service offers.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 59.1-200, 59.1-207.45, and 59.1-207.46 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 59.1-200. Prohibited practices.

A. The following fraudulent acts or practices committed by a supplier in connection with a consumer transaction are hereby declared unlawful:

1. Misrepresenting goods or services as those of another;
2. Misrepresenting the source, sponsorship, approval, or certification of goods or services;
3. Misrepresenting the affiliation, connection, or association of the supplier, or of the goods or services, with another;
4. Misrepresenting geographic origin in connection with goods or services;
5. Misrepresenting that goods or services have certain quantities, characteristics, ingredients, uses, or benefits;
6. Misrepresenting that goods or services are of a particular standard, quality, grade, style, or model;
7. Advertising or offering for sale goods that are used, secondhand, repossessed, defective, blemished, deteriorated, or reconditioned, or that are "seconds," irregulars, imperfects, or "not first class," without clearly and unequivocally indicating in the advertisement or offer for sale that the goods are used, secondhand, repossessed, defective, blemished, deteriorated, reconditioned, or are "seconds," irregulars, imperfects or "not first class";
8. Advertising goods or services with intent not to sell them as advertised, or with intent not to sell at the price or upon the terms advertised.

In any action brought under this subdivision, the refusal by any person, or any employee, agent, or servant thereof, to sell any goods or services advertised or offered for sale at the price or upon the terms advertised or offered, shall be prima facie evidence of a violation of this subdivision. This paragraph shall not apply when it is clearly and conspicuously stated in the advertisement or offer by which such goods or services are advertised or offered for sale, that the supplier or offeror has a limited quantity or amount of such goods or services for sale, and the supplier or offeror at the time of such advertisement or offer did in fact have or reasonably expected to have at least such quantity or amount for sale;

9. Making false or misleading statements of fact concerning the reasons for, existence of, or amounts of price reductions;

10. Misrepresenting that repairs, alterations, modifications, or services have been performed or parts installed;

11. Misrepresenting by the use of any written or documentary material that appears to be an invoice or bill for merchandise or services previously ordered;

12. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, using in any manner the words "wholesale," "wholesaler," "factory," or "manufacturer" in the supplier's name, or to describe the nature of the supplier's business, unless the supplier is actually engaged primarily in selling at wholesale or in manufacturing the goods or services advertised or offered for sale;

13. Using in any contract or lease any liquidated damage clause, penalty clause, or waiver of defense, or attempting to collect any liquidated damages or penalties under any clause, waiver, damages, or penalties that are void or unenforceable under any otherwise applicable laws of the Commonwealth, or under federal statutes or regulations;

13a. Failing to provide to a consumer, or failing to use or include in any written document or material provided to or executed by a consumer, in connection with a consumer transaction any statement, disclosure, notice, or other information however characterized when the supplier is required by 16 C.F.R. Part 433 to so provide, use, or include the statement, disclosure, notice, or other information in connection with the consumer transaction;

14. Using any other deception, fraud, false pretense, false promise, or misrepresentation in connection with a consumer transaction;

15. Violating any provision of § 3.2-6509, 3.2-6512, 3.2-6513, 3.2-6513.1, 3.2-6514, 3.2-6515, 3.2-6516, or 3.2-6519 is a violation of this chapter;

16. Failing to disclose all conditions, charges, or fees relating to:

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60 a. The return of goods for refund, exchange, or credit. Such disclosure shall be by means of a sign
61 attached to the goods, or placed in a conspicuous public area of the premises of the supplier, so as to be
62 readily noticeable and readable by the person obtaining the goods from the supplier. If the supplier does
63 not permit a refund, exchange, or credit for return, he shall so state on a similar sign. The provisions of
64 this subdivision shall not apply to any retail merchant who has a policy of providing, for a period of not
65 less than 20 days after date of purchase, a cash refund or credit to the purchaser's credit card account
66 for the return of defective, unused, or undamaged merchandise upon presentation of proof of purchase.
67 In the case of merchandise paid for by check, the purchase shall be treated as a cash purchase and any
68 refund may be delayed for a period of 10 banking days to allow for the check to clear. This subdivision
69 does not apply to sale merchandise that is obviously distressed, out of date, post season, or otherwise
70 reduced for clearance; nor does this subdivision apply to special order purchases where the purchaser
71 has requested the supplier to order merchandise of a specific or unusual size, color, or brand not
72 ordinarily carried in the store or the store's catalog; nor shall this subdivision apply in connection with a
73 transaction for the sale or lease of motor vehicles, farm tractors, or motorcycles as defined in
74 § 46.2-100;

75 b. A layaway agreement. Such disclosure shall be furnished to the consumer (i) in writing at the time
76 of the layaway agreement, or (ii) by means of a sign placed in a conspicuous public area of the
77 premises of the supplier, so as to be readily noticeable and readable by the consumer, or (iii) on the bill
78 of sale. Disclosure shall include the conditions, charges, or fees in the event that a consumer breaches
79 the agreement;

80 16a. Failing to provide written notice to a consumer of an existing open-end credit balance in excess
81 of \$5 (i) on an account maintained by the supplier and (ii) resulting from such consumer's overpayment
82 on such account. Suppliers shall give consumers written notice of such credit balances within 60 days of
83 receiving overpayments. If the credit balance information is incorporated into statements of account
84 furnished consumers by suppliers within such 60-day period, no separate or additional notice is required;

85 17. If a supplier enters into a written agreement with a consumer to resolve a dispute that arises in
86 connection with a consumer transaction, failing to adhere to the terms and conditions of such an
87 agreement;

88 18. Violating any provision of the Virginia Health Club Act, Chapter 24 (§ 59.1-294 et seq.);

89 19. Violating any provision of the Virginia Home Solicitation Sales Act, Chapter 2.1 (§ 59.1-21.1 et
90 seq.);

91 20. Violating any provision of the Automobile Repair Facilities Act, Chapter 17.1 (§ 59.1-207.1 et
92 seq.);

93 21. Violating any provision of the Virginia Lease-Purchase Agreement Act, Chapter 17.4
94 (§ 59.1-207.17 et seq.);

95 22. Violating any provision of the Prizes and Gifts Act, Chapter 31 (§ 59.1-415 et seq.);

96 23. Violating any provision of the Virginia Public Telephone Information Act, Chapter 32
97 (§ 59.1-424 et seq.);

98 24. Violating any provision of § 54.1-1505;

99 25. Violating any provision of the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers' Warranty Adjustment Act, Chapter
100 17.6 (§ 59.1-207.34 et seq.);

101 26. Violating any provision of § 3.2-5627, relating to the pricing of merchandise;

102 27. Violating any provision of the Pay-Per-Call Services Act, Chapter 33 (§ 59.1-429 et seq.);

103 28. Violating any provision of the Extended Service Contract Act, Chapter 34 (§ 59.1-435 et seq.);

104 29. Violating any provision of the Virginia Membership Camping Act, Chapter 25 (§ 59.1-311 et
105 seq.);

106 30. Violating any provision of the Comparison Price Advertising Act, Chapter 17.7 (§ 59.1-207.40 et
107 seq.);

108 31. Violating any provision of the Virginia Travel Club Act, Chapter 36 (§ 59.1-445 et seq.);

109 32. Violating any provision of §§ 46.2-1231 and 46.2-1233.1;

110 33. Violating any provision of Chapter 40 (§ 54.1-4000 et seq.) of Title 54.1;

111 34. Violating any provision of Chapter 10.1 (§ 58.1-1031 et seq.) of Title 58.1;

112 35. Using the consumer's social security number as the consumer's account number with the supplier,
113 if the consumer has requested in writing that the supplier use an alternate number not associated with
114 the consumer's social security number;

115 36. Violating any provision of Chapter 18 (§ 6.2-1800 et seq.) of Title 6.2;

116 37. Violating any provision of § 8.01-40.2;

117 38. Violating any provision of Article 7 (§ 32.1-212 et seq.) of Chapter 6 of Title 32.1;

118 39. Violating any provision of Chapter 34.1 (§ 59.1-441.1 et seq.);

119 40. Violating any provision of Chapter 20 (§ 6.2-2000 et seq.) of Title 6.2;

120 41. Violating any provision of the Virginia Post-Disaster Anti-Price Gouging Act, Chapter 46
121 (§ 59.1-525 et seq.);

42. Violating any provision of Chapter 47 (§ 59.1-530 et seq.);
43. Violating any provision of § 59.1-443.2;
44. Violating any provision of Chapter 48 (§ 59.1-533 et seq.);
45. Violating any provision of Chapter 25 (§ 6.2-2500 et seq.) of Title 6.2;
46. Violating the provisions of clause (i) of subsection B of § 54.1-1115;
47. Violating any provision of § 18.2-239;
48. Violating any provision of Chapter 26 (§ 59.1-336 et seq.);
49. Selling, offering for sale, or manufacturing for sale a children's product the supplier knows or has reason to know was recalled by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. There is a rebuttable presumption that a supplier has reason to know a children's product was recalled if notice of the recall has been posted continuously at least 30 days before the sale, offer for sale, or manufacturing for sale on the website of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. This prohibition does not apply to children's products that are used, secondhand or "seconds";
50. Violating any provision of Chapter 44.1 (§ 59.1-518.1 et seq.);
51. Violating any provision of Chapter 22 (§ 6.2-2200 et seq.) of Title 6.2;
52. Violating any provision of § 8.2-317.1;
53. Violating subsection A of § 9.1-149.1;
54. Selling, offering for sale, or using in the construction, remodeling, or repair of any residential dwelling in the Commonwealth, any drywall that the supplier knows or has reason to know is defective drywall. This subdivision shall not apply to the sale or offering for sale of any building or structure in which defective drywall has been permanently installed or affixed;
55. Engaging in fraudulent or improper or dishonest conduct as defined in § 54.1-1118 while engaged in a transaction that was initiated (i) during a declared state of emergency as defined in § 44-146.16 or (ii) to repair damage resulting from the event that prompted the declaration of a state of emergency, regardless of whether the supplier is licensed as a contractor in the Commonwealth pursuant to Chapter 11 (§ 54.1-1100 et seq.) of Title 54.1;
56. Violating any provision of Chapter 33.1 (§ 59.1-434.1 et seq.);
57. Violating any provision of § 18.2-178, 18.2-178.1, or 18.2-200.1;
58. Violating any provision of Chapter 17.8 (§ 59.1-207.45 et seq.). *For the purposes of this subdivision, "consumer transaction" also includes transactions involving an automatic renewal or continuous service offer by a supplier to a small business, as those terms are defined in § 59.1-207.45;*
59. Violating any provision of subsection E of § 32.1-126;
60. Violating any provision of § 54.1-111 relating to the unlicensed practice of a profession licensed under Chapter 11 (§ 54.1-1100 et seq.) or Chapter 21 (§ 54.1-2100 et seq.) of Title 54.1;
61. Violating any provision of § 2.2-2001.5;
62. Violating any provision of Chapter 5.2 (§ 54.1-526 et seq.) of Title 54.1;
63. Violating any provision of § 6.2-312;
64. Violating any provision of Chapter 20.1 (§ 6.2-2026 et seq.) of Title 6.2;
65. Violating any provision of Chapter 26 (§ 6.2-2600 et seq.) of Title 6.2;
66. Violating any provision of Chapter 54 (§ 59.1-586 et seq.);
67. Knowingly violating any provision of § 8.01-27.5;
68. Failing to, in accordance with § 59.1-207.46, (i) make available a conspicuous online option to cancel a recurring purchase of a good or service or (ii) with respect to a free trial lasting more than 30 days, notify a consumer of his option to cancel such free trial within 30 days of the end of the trial period to avoid an obligation to pay for the goods or services;
69. Selling or offering for sale any substance intended for human consumption, orally or by inhalation, that contains a synthetic derivative of tetrahydrocannabinol. As used in this subdivision, "synthetic derivative" means a chemical compound produced by man through a chemical transformation to turn a compound into a different compound by adding or subtracting molecules to or from the original compound. This subdivision shall not (i) apply to products that are approved for marketing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and scheduled in the Drug Control Act (§ 54.1-3400 et seq.) or (ii) be construed to prohibit any conduct permitted under Chapter 16 (§ 4.1-1600 et seq.) of Title 4.1;
70. Selling or offering for sale to a person younger than 21 years of age any substance intended for human consumption, orally or by inhalation, that contains tetrahydrocannabinol. This subdivision shall not (i) apply to products that are approved for marketing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and scheduled in the Drug Control Act (§ 54.1-3400 et seq.) or (ii) be construed to prohibit any conduct permitted under Chapter 16 (§ 4.1-1600 et seq.) of Title 4.1;
71. Selling or offering for sale any substance intended for human consumption, orally or by inhalation, that contains tetrahydrocannabinol, unless such substance is (i) contained in child-resistant packaging, as defined in § 4.1-600; (ii) equipped with a label that states, in English and in a font no less than 1/16 of an inch, (a) that the substance contains tetrahydrocannabinol and may not be sold to

persons younger than 21 years of age, (b) all ingredients contained in the substance, (c) the amount of such substance that constitutes a single serving, and (d) the total percentage and milligrams of tetrahydrocannabinol included in the substance and the number of milligrams of tetrahydrocannabinol that are contained in each serving; and (iii) accompanied by a certificate of analysis, produced by an independent laboratory that is accredited pursuant to standard ISO/IEC 17025 of the International Organization of Standardization by a third-party accrediting body, that states the tetrahydrocannabinol concentration of the substance or the tetrahydrocannabinol concentration of the batch from which the substance originates. This subdivision shall not (i) apply to products that are approved for marketing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and scheduled in the Drug Control Act (§ 54.1-3400 et seq.) or (ii) be construed to prohibit any conduct permitted under Chapter 16 (§ 4.1-1600 et seq.) of Title 4.1;

72. Manufacturing, offering for sale at retail, or selling at retail an industrial hemp extract, as defined in § 3.2-5145.1, a food containing an industrial hemp extract, or a substance containing tetrahydrocannabinol that depicts or is in the shape of a human, animal, vehicle, or fruit;

73. Selling or offering for sale any substance intended for human consumption, orally or by inhalation, that contains tetrahydrocannabinol and, without authorization, bears, is packaged in a container or wrapper that bears, or is otherwise labeled to bear the trademark, trade name, famous mark as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1125, or other identifying mark, imprint, or device, or any likeness thereof, of a manufacturer, processor, packer, or distributor of a product intended for human consumption other than the manufacturer, processor, packer, or distributor that did in fact so manufacture, process, pack, or distribute such substance;

74. Selling or offering for sale a topical hemp product, as defined in § 3.2-4112, that does not include a label stating that the product is not intended for human consumption. This subdivision shall not (i) apply to products that are approved for marketing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and scheduled in the Drug Control Act (§ 54.1-3400 et seq.), (ii) be construed to prohibit any conduct permitted under Chapter 16 (§ 4.1-1600 et seq.) of Title 4.1, or (iii) apply to topical hemp products that were manufactured prior to July 1, 2023, provided that the person provides documentation of the date of manufacture if requested;

75. Violating any provision of § 59.1-466.8;

76. Violating subsection F of § 36-96.3:1;

77. Selling or offering for sale (i) any kratom product to a person younger than 21 years of age or (ii) any kratom product that does not include a label listing all ingredients and with the following guidance: "This product may be harmful to your health, has not been evaluated by the FDA, and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease." As used in this subdivision, "kratom" means any part of the leaf of the plant *Mitragyna speciosa* or any extract thereof; and

78. Failing to disclose the total cost of a good or continuous service, as defined in § 59.1-207.45, to a consumer, including any mandatory fees or charges, prior to entering into an agreement for the sale of any such good or provision of any such continuous service.

B. Nothing in this section shall be construed to invalidate or make unenforceable any contract or lease solely by reason of the failure of such contract or lease to comply with any other law of the Commonwealth or any federal statute or regulation, to the extent such other law, statute, or regulation provides that a violation of such law, statute, or regulation shall not invalidate or make unenforceable such contract or lease.

§ 59.1-207.45. Definitions.

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

"Automatic renewal" means a plan or arrangement in which a paid subscription or purchasing agreement is automatically renewed at the end of a definite term for a subsequent term of more than one month.

"Automatic renewal offer terms" means the following clear and conspicuous disclosures:

1. That the subscription or purchasing agreement will continue until the consumer cancels;
2. The description of the cancellation policy that applies to the offer;
3. The recurring charges that will be charged to the consumer's credit or debit card or payment account with a third party as part of the automatic renewal plan or arrangement and that the amount of the charge may change, if that is the case, and the amount to which the charge will change, if known;
4. The length of the automatic renewal term or that the service is continuous, unless the length of the term is chosen by the consumer; and
5. The minimum purchase obligation, if any.

"Clear and conspicuous" or "clearly and conspicuously" means in larger type than the surrounding text, or in contrasting type, font, or color to the surrounding text of the same size, or set off from the surrounding text of the same size by symbols or other marks, in a manner that clearly calls attention to the language. In the case of an audio disclosure, "clear and conspicuous" or "clearly and conspicuously" means in a volume and cadence sufficient to be readily audible and understandable.

"Consumer" means (i) any individual who seeks or acquires, by purchase or lease, any goods,

services, money, or credit for personal, family, or household purposes or (ii) any small business that seeks or acquires, by purchase or lease, any goods, services, money, or credit for business purposes.

"Continuous service" means a plan or arrangement in which a subscription or purchasing agreement continues until the consumer cancels the service.

"Small business" means a business that is at least 51 percent independently owned and controlled by one or more individuals, or in the case of a cooperative association organized pursuant to Chapter 3 (§ 13.1-301 et seq.) of Title 13.1 as a nonstock corporation, is at least 51 percent independently controlled by one or more members, who are U.S. citizens or legal resident aliens and, together with affiliates, has 250 or fewer employees or annual gross receipts of \$10 million or less averaged over the previous three years. One or more of the individual owners or members shall control both the management and daily business operations of the small business.

"Supplier" has the same meaning ascribed thereto in § 59.1-198.

§ 59.1-207.46. Making automatic renewal or continuous service offer to consumer; affirmative consent required; disclosures; prohibited conduct.

A. No supplier making an automatic renewal or continuous service offer to a consumer in the Commonwealth shall do any of the following:

1. ~~Fail~~ Prior to the completion of the initial order for the automatic renewal or continuous service, fail to present the automatic renewal offer terms or continuous service offer terms in a clear and conspicuous manner before the consumer becomes obligated on the automatic renewal or continuous service offer and in visual proximity, or in the case of an offer conveyed by voice, in temporal proximity, to the request for consent to the offer.

2. ~~Charge~~ Prior to the completion of the initial order for the automatic renewal or continuous service, charge the consumer's credit or debit card or the consumer's account with a third party for an automatic renewal or continuous service without first obtaining the consumer's affirmative consent to the agreement containing the automatic renewal offer terms or continuous service offer terms.

3. Fail to provide an acknowledgment that includes the automatic renewal or continuous service offer terms, cancellation policy, and information regarding how to cancel in a manner that is capable of being retained by the consumer. If the offer includes a free trial, the supplier shall also disclose in the acknowledgment how to cancel the free trial before the consumer pays or becomes obligated to pay for the goods or services.

B. A supplier making automatic renewal or continuous service offers shall provide a toll-free telephone number, an electronic mail address, a postal address only when the supplier directly bills the consumer, or another cost-effective, timely, and easy-to-use mechanism for cancellation that shall be described in the acknowledgment specified in subdivision A 3. Each supplier making automatic renewal or continuous service offers through an online website shall make available a conspicuous online option to cancel a recurring purchase of a good or service.

C. In the case of a material change in the terms of the automatic renewal or continuous service offer that has been accepted by a consumer in the Commonwealth, the supplier shall, prior to implementation of the material change, provide the consumer with a clear and conspicuous notice of the material change and provide information regarding how to cancel in a manner that is capable of being retained by the consumer.

D. A supplier making automatic renewal or continuous service offers that include a free trial lasting more than 30 days shall, within 30 days of the end of any such free trial, notify the consumer of his option to cancel the free trial before the end of the trial period to avoid an obligation to pay for the goods or services.

E. The requirements of this section shall apply only prior to the completion of the initial order for the automatic renewal or continuous service, except:

1. The requirement in subdivision A 3 may be fulfilled after completion of the initial order; and

2. The requirement in subsection C shall be fulfilled prior to implementation of the material change.

A supplier making automatic renewal or continuous service offers that will automatically renew after a period of more than 30 days and extend the automatic renewal or continuous service offer for a period of more than 12 months shall notify the consumer of his option to cancel the automatic renewal or continuous service offer no less than 30 days and no more than 60 days before the cancellation deadline or the end of the current contract term. Such notice shall conspicuously disclose (i) that the automatic renewal or continuous service offer will automatically renew unless the consumer cancels, (ii) the date by which the consumer must cancel to avoid automatic renewal or continuous service, (iii) the method by which the consumer may cancel, and (iv) a copy of the automatic renewal or continuous service offer provisions.