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SENATE BILL NO. 637

Offered January 10, 2024

A BILL to amend and reenact § 19.2-349 of the Code of Virginia, relating to collections of fines, costs, forfeitures, penalties, etc.; duty of attorneys for the Commonwealth; notice and concurrence of clerk.

Patron—Jordan

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 19.2-349 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 19.2-349. Responsibility for collections; clerks to report unsatisfied fines, etc.; duty of attorneys for Commonwealth; duties of Department of Taxation.

A. The clerk of the circuit court and district court of every county and city shall submit to the judge of his court, the Department of Taxation, the State Compensation Board and the attorney for the Commonwealth of his county or city a monthly report of all fines, costs, forfeitures and penalties which are delinquent more than 90 days, including court-ordered restitution of a sum certain, imposed in his court for a violation of state law or a local ordinance which remain unsatisfied, including those which are delinquent in installment payments. The monthly report shall include the social security number or driver's license number of the defendant, if known, and such other information as the Department of Taxation and the Compensation Board deem appropriate. The Executive Secretary shall make the report required by this subsection on behalf of those clerks who participate in the Supreme Court's automated information system.

B. The clerk of the circuit court and district court of every county and city shall submit quarterly to the attorney for the Commonwealth of his county or city and any probation agency that serves such county or city:

1. A list of all defendants with an outstanding balance of restitution ordered by the court served by such clerk. Such report shall include the defendant's name, case number, total amount of restitution ordered, amount of restitution remaining due, and last date of payment; and

2. A list of all accounts where more than 90 days have passed since an account was sent to collections and no payments have been made toward fines, costs, forfeitures, penalties, or restitution. For accounts where restitution is owed, such report shall include the defendant's name, case number, and total amount of restitution and restitution interest due.

C. It shall be the duty of the attorney for the Commonwealth to cause proper proceedings to be instituted for the collection and satisfaction of all fines, costs, forfeitures, penalties and restitution. The attorney for the Commonwealth shall determine whether it would be impractical or uneconomical for such service to be rendered by the office of the attorney for the Commonwealth. If the defendant does not enter into an installment payment agreement under § 19.2-354, the attorney for the Commonwealth and the clerk may agree to a process by which collection activity may be commenced 90 days after judgment.

If the attorney for the Commonwealth does not undertake collection, he shall (i) contract with (i) private attorneys or private collection agencies, (ii) enter into an agreement with a local governing body, (iii) enter into an agreement with the county or city treasurer, or (iv) use the services of the Department of Taxation, upon such terms and conditions as may be established by guidelines promulgated by the Office of the Attorney General, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court with the Department of Taxation and the Compensation Board. *Prior to contracting with private attorneys or private collection agencies pursuant to clause (i), the attorney for the Commonwealth shall notify and obtain the concurrence of the clerk of the circuit court. Such notice and concurrence is not required when the attorney for the Commonwealth enters into an agreement pursuant to clause (ii), (iii), or (iv).* If the attorney for the Commonwealth undertakes collection, he shall follow the procedures established by the Department of Taxation and the Compensation Board. Such guidelines shall not supersede contracts between attorneys for the Commonwealth and private attorneys and collection agencies when active collection efforts are being undertaken. As part of such contract, private attorneys or collection agencies shall be given access to the social security number of the defendant in order to assist in the collection effort. Any such private attorney shall be subject to the penalties and provisions of § 18.2-186.3.

The fees of any private attorneys or collection agencies shall be paid on a contingency fee basis out of the proceeds of the amounts collected. However, in no event shall such attorney or collection agency receive a fee for amounts collected by the Department of Taxation under the Setoff Debt Collection Act (§ 58.1-520 et seq.). A local treasurer undertaking collection pursuant to an agreement with the attorney

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59 for the Commonwealth may collect the administrative fee authorized by § 58.1-3958.

60 D. The Department of Taxation and the State Compensation Board shall be responsible for the
61 collection of any judgment which remains unsatisfied or does not meet the conditions of § 19.2-354.
62 Persons owing such unsatisfied judgments or failing to comply with installment payment agreements
63 under § 19.2-354 shall be subject to the delinquent tax collection provisions of Title 58.1. The
64 Department of Taxation and the State Compensation Board shall establish procedures to be followed by
65 clerks of courts, attorneys for the Commonwealth, other state agencies and any private attorneys or
66 collection agents and may employ private attorneys or collection agencies, or engage other state agencies
67 to collect the judgment. The Department of Taxation and the Commonwealth shall be entitled to deduct
68 a fee for services from amounts collected for violations of local ordinances.

69 The Department of Taxation and the State Compensation Board shall annually report to the Governor
70 and the General Assembly the total of fines, costs, forfeitures and penalties assessed, collected, and
71 unpaid and those which remain unsatisfied or do not meet the conditions of § 19.2-354 by each circuit
72 and district court. The report shall include the procedures established by the Department of Taxation and
73 the State Compensation Board pursuant to this section and a plan for increasing the collection of unpaid
74 fines, costs, forfeitures and penalties. The Auditor of Public Accounts shall annually report to the
75 Governor, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court and the General Assembly as to the adherence
76 of clerks of courts, attorneys for the Commonwealth and other state agencies to the procedures
77 established by the Department of Taxation and the State Compensation Board.

78 The Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court shall annually report to the Governor,
79 the General Assembly, the Chairmen of the House Committee for Courts of Justice and Senate
80 Committee on the Judiciary, and the Virginia State Crime Commission on the total of restitution
81 assessed, collected, and unpaid for each circuit and district court and the total of restitution collected and
82 deposited into the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund pursuant to subsection I of § 19.2-305.1 by each
83 circuit and district court.

84 E. The provisions of this section shall not apply to any orders of restitution docketed in the name of
85 the victim or when it is ordered that an assignment of the judgment for restitution to the victim be
86 docketed.