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HOUSE BILL NO. 1757

Offered January 13, 2025

Prefiled January 5, 2025

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

Patrons—Hernandez, Bennett-Parker, Cohen, Cousins, Glass, Hope, Maldonado, Price, Reaser and Shin

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 this section, or other such amount as may be provided by law. Such amounts shall be allowed in any case wherein counsel conducts the defense of a single charge against the indigent accused 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:

1. In a district court, except as provided in subdivisions 2 and 3, (i) a sum not to exceed \$330 or (ii) for a charge of violation of probation for any misdemeanor offense, a sum not to exceed \$180, 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 provided under clause (i) or (ii) up to an additional \$120 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;

2. For a misdemeanor charge in a district court for a violation of § 18.2-266, 18.2-266.1, 18.2-270, or 46.2-341.24, (i) a sum not to exceed \$448 or (ii) for a charge of violation of probation for such a misdemeanor offense, a sum not to exceed \$180, 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 provided under clause (i) or (ii) up to an additional \$120 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;

3. For a juvenile charge in a district court, (i) a sum not to exceed \$680 or (ii) for a charge of violation of probation for any offense, a sum not to exceed \$180, 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 provided under clause (i) or (ii) up to (a) an additional \$120 or (b) an additional \$650 for 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;

4. 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 or any felony violation of § 18.2-35, 18.2-36, 18.2-36.1, 18.2-41, 18.2-51, 18.2-67.3, 18.2-79, 18.2-80, 18.2-370, 18.2-370.1, or 18.2-371.1, a sum not to exceed \$1,692, 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, except those described in clause (i) or (ii), a sum not to exceed \$834, 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 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; (iv) for a charge of violation of probation for any felony offense, except Class 1 felonies, 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

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fees up to (a) an additional \$850 for a charge of violation of probation for any felony described in clause (ii) or (b) an additional \$155 for a charge of violation of probation of any other felony 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; (v) to defend a misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-266, 18.2-266.1, 18.2-270, or 46.2-341.24, a sum not to exceed \$448 and to defend any other misdemeanor charge punishable by confinement in jail, a sum not to exceed \$330; (vi) for a charge of violation of probation for any misdemeanor offense, a sum not to exceed \$180; (vii) for a juvenile adjudication appealed from a district court, a sum not to exceed \$680; or (viii) for a charge of violation of probation for any juvenile adjudication appealed from a district court, a sum not to exceed \$180. 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 defending such a felony, regardless of whether the charge is reduced or amended to a misdemeanor or lesser felony prior to final disposition of the case in either the district court or circuit court.

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

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

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

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

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

When such directive is entered upon the order book of the court, the Commonwealth, county, city, or town, as the case may be, shall provide for the payment out of its treasury of the sum of money so specified. If the defendant is convicted, the amount allowed by the court to the attorney appointed to defend him shall be taxed against the defendant as a part of the costs of prosecution and, if collected, the same shall be paid to the Commonwealth, or the county, city, or town, as the case may be. In the event that counsel for the defendant requests a waiver of the limitations on compensation, the court shall assess against the defendant an amount equal to the pre-waiver compensation limit specified in this section for each charge for which the defendant was convicted. An abstract of such costs shall be docketed in the judgment docket and execution lien book maintained by such court. Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary, no person found indigent

pursuant to § 19.2-159 *who is represented by either a public defender or court-appointed counsel* shall have fees assessed against him ~~for any amount paid~~ for his legal representation pursuant to this ~~article~~ chapter in an amount greater than the amount such defendant would have owed if the assessment took place on or before June 30, 2024.

Any statement submitted by an attorney for payments due him for indigent representation or for representation of a child pursuant to § 16.1-266 shall, after the submission of the statement, be forwarded forthwith by the clerk to the Commonwealth, county, city, or town, as the case may be, responsible for payment. Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary, if the court has determined such child's parents or other persons responsible for his care to be indigent pursuant to § 19.2-159 *and such child was represented by either a public defender or court-appointed counsel*, no fee shall be taxed by the clerk against any such child in an amount greater than the amount the clerk would have taxed against such child if the assessment took place on or before June 30, 2024.

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

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