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HOUSE BILL NO. 1818

Offered January 13, 2025

Prefiled January 6, 2025

A BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-280.2:2 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 22.1-280.2:2.1, relating to Public School Security Equipment Grant Act of 2013; eligible security equipment; Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program established.

Patron—Reid

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 22.1-280.2:2 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section number 22.1-280.2:2.1 as follows:

§ 22.1-280.2:2. Public School Security Equipment Grant Act of 2013.

A. This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Public School Security Equipment Grant Act of 2013."

B. For purposes of this section:

"Authority" means the Virginia Public School Authority.

"Eligible school division" means a (i) local school division or (ii) regional vocational center, special education center, alternative education center, or academic year Governor's School serving public school students in grades K through 12. "Eligible school division" includes the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind.

"Local school division" means a school division with schools subject to state accreditation and whose students are required to be reported in fall membership for grades K through 12.

"Security equipment" includes building modifications and fixtures, including security vestibules, vaping detectors, security-related devices located outside of the school building on school property, ~~and~~ security-related devices located on school buses, *and firearm detection software, as that term is defined in § 22.1-280.2:2.1.*

C. The Authority shall issue bonds for the purpose of grant payments to eligible school divisions of the Commonwealth to be used exclusively for purchasing security equipment for schools, including any related installation, that is designed to improve and help ensure the safety of students attending public schools in the Commonwealth, *including the award of grant payments awarded to eligible schools pursuant to the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program, established in accordance with § 22.1-280.2:2.1.* Such grants shall not be used to pay for security equipment that is not included or described in a grant application approved by the Department pursuant to subsection D. The amount of grants provided to each eligible school division pursuant to this section shall not exceed \$100,000 for each fiscal year of the Commonwealth. Funds for the payment of such grants shall be provided from the issuance of bonds by the Authority, provided that the Authority shall not issue more than an aggregate of \$6 million in bonds, after all costs, for such grants during each fiscal year of the Commonwealth. In addition, the Authority shall ensure that no more than an aggregate principal amount of \$30 million in bonds issued under this section shall be outstanding at any time. Eligible school divisions seeking a grant shall apply to the Department, which shall be responsible for administering the grant program.

The Authority shall work with the Department to determine the schedule for the issuance of the bonds, which shall be based in part upon eligible school divisions having sufficient funds to purchase such security equipment. The payment of debt service on such bonds shall be as provided in the general appropriation act.

Such grants shall be in addition to all other grants made to local governments, school boards, or school divisions according to law. In addition, such grants shall not replace or be in lieu of loans to local school boards or interest rate subsidy payments to local school boards pursuant to Chapter 11.1 (§ 22.1-175.1 et seq.), and the issuance of such bonds and the payment of such grants shall not, except as herein provided, affect or otherwise amend the provisions of such chapter as they relate to the powers and duties of the Authority, local school boards, local governments, or any other entity.

D. Based on the criteria developed by the Department in collaboration with the Department of Criminal Justice Services, eligible school divisions shall apply for a grant by August 1 of each year. As a condition of receiving a grant, a local match of 25 percent of the grant amount shall be required. The Superintendent is authorized to reduce the local match for local school divisions with a composite index of local ability-to-pay less than 0.2000, including any such school division participating in a regional vocational center, special education center, alternative education center, or academic year Governor's School. The Virginia School for

the Deaf and the Blind *and any school division receiving a grant pursuant to the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program established in accordance with § 22.1-280.2:2.1* shall be exempt from the match requirement.

Grants shall be awarded by the Department on a competitive basis, *provided, however, that the Department shall give priority to eligible school divisions that are applying for grants under the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program on behalf of at least one Title 1 school in the school division, such that grants are first awarded under the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program to such eligible school divisions and in such an amount sufficient to support the purchase, installation or integration, maintenance, and operation of firearm detection software in two Title 1 schools in each congressional district for the duration of the Pilot Program.* As part of the application for a grant, each eligible school division shall (i) *specify whether it is applying for a grant under this section generally or whether it is applying for a grant under the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program pursuant to § 22.1-280.2:2.1;* (ii) identify with specificity the security equipment for which grants are being sought, as well as the estimated costs to purchase and install the security equipment, ~~and (ii)~~ *including, if such eligible school division is applying for a grant under the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program, such documentation or information as determined necessary by the Department to verify that the firearm detection software for which grants are being sought meet the criteria set forth in § 22.1-280.2:2.1;* (iii) *if such eligible school division specifies that it is applying for a grant under the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program, identify with specificity the two Title 1 schools within the eligible school division at which the firearm detection software purchased with the grant funds shall be installed;* and (iv) certify that it is the intent of the eligible school division to purchase the security equipment within six months of approval of any grant by the Department.

If the Department determines that a grant shall be paid to an eligible school division under this section, it shall provide a written certification to the chairman of the Authority directing him to make a grant payment in a specific amount to the eligible school division. The Department, however, shall not make such written certification until it has established that the Authority has sufficient funds to make such grant payment. The Authority shall only make grant payments to an eligible school division for the grants provided under this section upon receipt of such written certification. The Authority shall make such grant payments, and in the amounts as directed by the Department, within 30 days of receipt of the certification.

E. The Department shall develop guidelines concerning the requirements for applying for a grant and the administration of such grants. Such guidelines shall not be subject to the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.). *Such guidelines shall include requirements and criteria specific to the application for and administration of grants under the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program, including:*

1. *Reporting requirements for each school division selected to receive a grant on behalf of a Title 1 school pursuant to the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program, including an annual reporting deadline; and*

2. *Guidance on policies and procedures for implementing, maintaining, and evaluating the efficacy of any firearm detection software integrated or installed pursuant to the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program, including:*

a. *Guidance on the protection of any confidential information and privacy interests of students and staff at each participating Title 1 school;*

b. *Best practices for ensuring the safe and secure storage and handling of any surveillance data gathered or obtained through use of the firearm detection software; and*

c. *Training requirements for any relevant faculty and staff employed by each such school in the use of the firearm detection software, including the integration of the firearm detection software into existing school security protocols.*

F. ~~In~~ *Except in the case of the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program, in the event that two or more local school divisions became one local school division, whether by consolidation of only the local school divisions or by consolidation of the local governments, such resulting local school division shall be eligible for grants on the basis of the same number of local school divisions as existed prior to September 30, 2012.*

G. The Authority shall take all necessary and proper steps as it is authorized to take under law to carry out the provisions of this section.

H. The Department shall make an annual report to the General Assembly by September 1 of each year reporting (i) the total grants paid during the immediately prior fiscal year to each eligible school division ~~and, disaggregated by the number of grants paid to eligible school divisions under the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program and the number of grants paid to eligible school divisions under this provisions of this section generally;~~ (ii) a general description of the security equipment purchased by eligible school divisions; and (iii) *for grants paid to eligible school divisions under the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program, data relating to the progress and efficacy of the School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program in each Title 1 school for which eligible school divisions received a grant.*

§ 22.1-280.2:2.1. School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program.

120 A. As used in this section, "firearm detection software" means any technology software or system that (i)
121 is provided by a vendor that is (a) headquartered in the Commonwealth, (b) has at least 10 years of
122 experience in providing school safety technology to educational institutions, and (c) is a small business
123 consisting of fewer than 100 employees and (ii) uses artificial intelligence to analyze video streams from
124 surveillance cameras in real time for the detection of firearms and, upon detecting a firearm, immediately
125 notifies local law enforcement, school security personnel, the school administration, and other appropriate
126 public safety authorities.

127 B. The School Safety Firearm Detection Software Pilot Program (the Pilot Program) is established as a
128 part of the Public School Security Equipment Grant Act of 2013, established pursuant to § 22.1-280.2:2, for
129 the purpose of enhancing security and firearm violence prevention measures in public schools in the
130 Commonwealth through awarding grants to certain eligible school divisions, pursuant to § 22.1-280.2:2, for
131 the purchase and integration of firearm detection software into existing security cameras or the installation
132 of new security cameras equipped with firearm detection software in two Title 1 schools in each
133 congressional district in the Commonwealth.

134 C. Any school board that governs a school division that contains at least one Title 1 school shall be
135 eligible to receive a grant through the Pilot Program upon application submitted on behalf of any such Title
136 1 school in accordance with the provisions of § 22.1-280.2:2. In awarding grants under the Pilot Program,
137 the Department shall ensure that grants are awarded to eligible school divisions in a manner sufficient to
138 support the purchase, installation or integration, and ongoing maintenance and operation of firearm
139 detection software in two Title 1 schools in each congressional district in the Commonwealth.

140 D. The Pilot Program shall be administered as a part of the Public School Security Equipment Grant Act
141 of 2013 pursuant to § 22.1-280.2:2.

142 2. That the provisions of this act shall expire on July 1, 2028.