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HOUSE BILL NO. 2237

Offered January 13, 2025

Prefiled January 7, 2025

A BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-315 of the Code of Virginia, relating to public school employees; suspension; conditions for continued receipt of salary.

Patrons—Cousins, Clark, Convirs-Fowler, Feggans, Henson, Martinez, McQuinn, Shin and Ward

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 22.1-315 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 22.1-315. Grounds and procedure for suspension.

A. A teacher or other public school employee, whether full-time or part-time, permanent, or temporary, may be suspended for good and just cause when the safety or welfare of the school division or the students therein is threatened or when the teacher or school employee has been charged by summons, warrant, indictment, or information with the commission of a felony; a misdemeanor involving (i) sexual assault as established in Article 7 (§ 18.2-61 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2, (ii) obscenity and related offenses as established in Article 5 (§ 18.2-372 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 18.2, (iii) drugs as established in Article 1 (§ 18.2-247 et seq.) of Chapter 7 of Title 18.2, (iv) moral turpitude, or (v) the physical or sexual abuse or neglect of a child; or an equivalent offense in another state. Except when a teacher or school employee is suspended because of being charged by summons, warrant, indictment, or information with the commission of one of the above-listed criminal offenses, a division superintendent or appropriate central office designee shall not suspend a teacher or school employee for longer than ~~sixty~~ 60 days and shall not suspend a teacher or school employee for a period in excess of five days unless such teacher or school employee is advised in writing of the reason for the suspension and afforded an opportunity for a hearing before the school board in accordance with §§ 22.1-311 and 22.1-313, if applicable. ~~Any~~ Except as otherwise provided in subsection B, any teacher or other school employee ~~so~~ who is suspended, regardless of the length of such suspension, shall continue to receive his ~~or her~~ then applicable salary unless and until the school board, after a hearing, determines otherwise. No teacher or school employee shall be suspended solely on the basis of his ~~or her~~ refusal to submit to a polygraph examination requested by the school board.

B. Any school employee suspended because of being charged by summons, warrant, information, or indictment with one of the offenses listed in subsection A may be suspended with or without pay. In the event any school employee is suspended without pay, an amount equal to his ~~or her~~ salary while on suspended status shall be placed in an interest-bearing demand escrow account. Upon being found not guilty of one of the offenses listed in subsection A or upon the dismissal or nolle prosequi of the charge, such school employee shall be reinstated with all unpaid salary and accrued interest from the escrow account, less any earnings received by the school employee during the period of suspension, but in no event shall such payment exceed one year's salary.

C. In the event any school employee is found guilty by an appropriate court of one of the offenses listed in subsection A and, after all available appeals have been exhausted and such conviction is upheld, all funds in the escrow account shall be repaid to the school board.

D. No school employee shall have his ~~or her~~ insurance benefits suspended or terminated because of such suspension in accordance with this section.

E. Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the authority of a school board to dismiss or place on probation a teacher or school employee pursuant to Article 3 (§ 22.1-306 et seq.) of this chapter.

F. For the purposes of this section, the placing of a school employee on probation pursuant to the terms and conditions of § 18.2-251 shall be deemed a finding of guilt.