



Fiscal Impact Statement for Proposed Legislation

Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission

House Bill 1977 (Patron - Hernandez)

LD#: 25104317

Date: 01/08/2025

Topic: Carrying certain firearms in public areas

Fiscal Impact Summary:

- **State Adult Correctional Facilities:**
\$50,000*
- **Local Adult Correctional Facilities:**
Cannot be determined
- **Adult Community Corrections Programs:**
Cannot be determined

- **Juvenile Direct Care:**
Cannot be determined**
- **Juvenile Detention Facilities:**
Cannot be determined**

**Provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice

* The estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 2 of the Acts of Assembly of 2024, Special Session I, requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, fiscal impact statements prepared by the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission only include the estimated increase in operating costs associated with additional state-responsible prison beds and do not reflect any other costs or savings that may be associated with the proposed legislation.

Summary of Proposed Legislation:

The proposal adds § 18.2-283.3 to the *Code of Virginia*, relating to carrying certain weapons into a hospital that provides mental health or developmental services. The proposal would make it unlawful for any person to intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly possess any (i) firearm, (ii) location-restricted knife, as defined in the bill, or (iii) other dangerous weapon, including explosives and stun weapons, in the building of any hospital that provides mental health services or developmental services, including a facility rendering emergency medical care. The proposal provides for certain exceptions. A violation of the proposed section would be a Class 1 misdemeanor. The proposal also specifies that any weapon associated with the violation will be subject to seizure by a law-enforcement officer and forfeited to the Commonwealth.

The proposal expands an existing Class 1 misdemeanor to include additional circumstances. Pursuant to § 18.2-311.2, a third or subsequent Class 1 misdemeanor weapon violation (defined in Article 4, 5, 6, or 7 of Chapter 7 of Title 18.2) is punishable as a Class 6 felony.¹

¹ Under current law, the felony offense defined in § 18.2-311.2 is eligible for the enhanced sentence credits specified in § 53.1-202.3, whereby offenders will serve a minimum of 67% of the sentence ordered by the court. The proposed legislation does not change the earned sentence credits available to offenders convicted of this felony.

Analysis:

Existing databases do not provide sufficient detail to identify the number of new convictions likely to result from enactment of the proposal.

Offenders convicted of the affected Class 1 misdemeanor who accumulate three or more weapon convictions could be found guilty of a Class 6 felony under § 18.2-311.2. According to the Circuit Court Case Management System (CMS) for fiscal year (FY) 2019 through FY2024, eight offenders were convicted of a felony under § 18.2-311.2 for a third or subsequent weapon offense. The felony violation of § 18.2-311.2 was the primary, or most serious, offense for three offenders; of these, one offender was given a local-responsible (jail) term of 11.0 months, while the remaining two offenders received state-responsible (prison) terms of 1.3 years and 1.5 years.

Impact of Proposed Legislation:

State adult correctional facilities. By expanding the applicability of an existing Class 6 felony, the proposal may increase the future state-responsible (prison) bed space needs of the Commonwealth. Available data do not provide sufficient detail to estimate the number of new felony convictions that may result from the proposal; therefore, the magnitude of the impact on prison bed space needs cannot be determined.

Local adult correctional facilities. Similarly, by expanding the applicability of existing felony offense and creating a new Class 1 misdemeanor, the proposal may increase local-responsible (jail) bed space needs. Because the number of new convictions resulting from the proposal cannot be determined, the magnitude of the impact on jail beds cannot be quantified.

Adult community corrections programs. Because the proposal could result in convictions and subsequent supervision requirements for an additional number of offenders, the proposal may increase the need for adult community corrections resources. Since the number of cases that may be affected cannot be determined, the potential impact on community corrections resources cannot be estimated.

Virginia's Sentencing Guidelines. Felony convictions under § 18.2-311.2 are not covered by the Sentencing Guidelines when this offense is the primary (or most serious) offense. Such a conviction could augment the Guidelines recommendation (as an additional offense) if the most serious offense at sentencing is covered by the Guidelines. This offense is not defined as violent under § 17.1-805(C) for the purposes of the Guidelines. No adjustment to the Guidelines would be necessary under the proposal.

Juvenile direct care. According to the Department of Juvenile Justice, the impact of the proposal on direct care (juvenile correctional center or alternative commitment placement) bed space needs cannot be determined.

Juvenile detention facilities. The Department of Juvenile Justice reports that the proposal's impact on the bed space needs of juvenile detention facilities cannot be determined.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 2 of the Acts of Assembly of 2024, Special Session I, requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.