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SENATE BILL NO. 1262

Offered January 8, 2025

Prefiled January 8, 2025

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 22.1-279.6:1, relating to public schools; student discipline; Restorative Schools in Virginia Pilot Program; established.

Patron—Pekarsky

Referred to Committee on Education and Health

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 22.1-279.6:1 as follows:

§ 22.1-279.6:1. Restorative Schools in Virginia Pilot Program established; purpose, implementation, administration.

A. As used in this section:

"Eligible school" means any public school in the Commonwealth (i) at which at least 40 percent of the enrolled students are eligible to receive free or reduced price meals in a federally funded school lunch or breakfast program or (ii) that is eligible to receive funding pursuant to Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, P.L. 89-10, as amended.

"Evidence-based restorative practices" means a system of dispute resolution tools that are communally and culturally responsive and aim to allow all parties of a dispute to be involved in defining the harm and devising remedies while giving appropriate consideration to the perspectives of all parties involved, the needs and values of the community, the needs of those who have been harmed, and the need for taking accountability and responsibility for one's actions. "Evidence-based restorative practices" includes conflict resolution, mediation, including peer mediation, circle processes, restorative conferences, social-emotional learning, trauma-informed care, positive behavioral intervention supports, and rehabilitation.

B. The Restorative Schools in Virginia Pilot Program (the Program) is established for the purpose of addressing school discipline issues and promoting evidence-based restorative practices in public schools in the Commonwealth by awarding grants to an eligible school in each superintendent's region in the Commonwealth to be used in developing and implementing a comprehensive plan to integrate evidence-based restorative practices in such school pursuant to subsection D.

C. The Department shall be responsible for the implementation and administration of the Program. In implementing and administering the Program, the Department shall:

1. Develop an application process that requires any school board applying for participation in the Program on behalf of an eligible school in the applicable school division to include in such application:

a. Identification of the eligible school in the school division on behalf of which the school board is applying to receive funds pursuant to the Program and the population of the eligible school, including (i) the number of enrolled students, (ii) the school suspension and expulsion rates and any other data collected on student disciplinary actions or practices, (iii) absenteeism and truancy rates, (iv) academic performance indicators, and (v) such information as necessary to establish that such school meets the criteria for an eligible school pursuant to the Program;

b. A description of how funds awarded pursuant to the Program would be used, including a description of the evidence-based restorative practices that would be implemented and relevant services that would be provided; and

c. A description of any relevant stakeholders with whom the administration of the eligible school and the school board would collaborate in implementing such evidence-based restorative practices and satisfying the Program requirements set forth in subsection D;

2. Establish criteria for the selection and award of grants in accordance with the application requirements set forth in subdivision 1 and such other criteria that the Department deems appropriate; and

3. Develop a process for evaluating the progress and performance of each eligible school that is awarded funds under the Program in implementing the evidence-based restorative practices and satisfying the Program requirements set forth in subsection D. Such evaluation process shall use the following performance metrics developed based on the purpose of the Program and the outcomes that such evidence-based restorative practices are designed to achieve: (i) school suspension and expulsion rates and any other data collected on student disciplinary actions or practices, (ii) absenteeism and truancy rates, (iii) academic performance indicators, (iv) relevant indicators of the mental health of the student population, (v) teacher retention rates, and (vi) such other school climate indicators deemed appropriate by the Department. To the extent possible, such evaluation process shall collect and disaggregate the data collected on such performance metrics by student (a) race, ethnicity, or nationality; (b) gender; (c) disability status; (d)

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59 *eligibility for free or reduced price lunch; and (e) English language proficiency.*

60 *D. Any eligible school awarded funds pursuant to the Program, in collaboration with the applicable*
61 *school board, shall:*

62 *1. Establish a learning collaborative for the purpose of developing (i) criteria for the designation of an*
63 *evidence-based restorative practice school and (ii) a comprehensive plan for meeting the criteria described*
64 *in clause (i). In developing such criteria and comprehensive plan, each learning collaborative shall engage*
65 *in resource mapping in cooperation with (a) educators and administrators who have effectively established*
66 *and operated schools that integrate evidence-based restorative practices into the daily and disciplinary*
67 *practices of such schools and (b) local, state, and national organizations, including community-based*
68 *organizations, that have studied or implemented the effective use of evidence-based restorative practices in*
69 *schools and have identified best practices for integrating evidence-based restorative practices in the school*
70 *setting. The comprehensive plan shall:*

71 *a. Promote whole-school evidence-based restorative practice models;*

72 *b. Integrate the use of culturally responsive, trauma-informed practices;*

73 *c. Outline protocols to provide incentives or preferences for the utilization of evidence-based restorative*
74 *practices training;*

75 *d. Provide a framework to identify and establish training material for school personnel that are qualified*
76 *to provide the training set forth in subdivision c;*

77 *e. Establish standards for the designation of an evidence-based restorative practices school;*

78 *f. Develop integrated plans for multi-tiered systems of support and positive behavioral interventions; and*

79 *g. Outline a plan for sustaining such evidence-based restorative practices in the school, including a plan*
80 *to increase, leverage, or maximize any available funding for the purpose of sustaining or expanding such*
81 *evidence-based restorative practices; and*

82 *2. Submit to the Department by July 1 of each year a report based on the evaluation process and*
83 *performance metrics established by the Department pursuant to subdivision C 3 detailing the school's*
84 *progress in implementing the comprehensive plan established pursuant to subdivision 1 and the impact of*
85 *implementing evidence-based restorative practices in such school during the preceding school year.*

86 **2. That the provisions of this act shall expire on July 1, 2027.**