

25104052D

HOUSE BILL NO. 2726

Offered January 17, 2025

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 19.2-71 and 19.2-72 of the Code of Virginia, relating to power of magistrates to issue arrest warrants.

Patron—Zehr

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That §§ 19.2-71 and 19.2-72 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 19.2-71. Who may issue process of arrest.**

A. Process for the arrest of a person charged with a criminal offense may be issued by the judge, or clerk of any circuit court, any general district court, any juvenile and domestic relations district court, or any magistrate as provided for in Chapter 3 (§ 19.2-26 et seq.). However, no magistrate may issue an arrest warrant for a ~~felony~~ *an* offense upon the basis of a complaint by a person other than a law-enforcement officer or an animal control officer without prior authorization by the attorney for the Commonwealth or by a law-enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the alleged offense.

B. No law-enforcement officer shall seek issuance of process by any judicial officer, for the arrest of a person for an offense of aggravated murder as defined in § 18.2-31, without prior authorization by the attorney for the Commonwealth. Failure to comply with the provisions of this subsection shall not be (i) a basis upon which a warrant may be quashed or deemed invalid, (ii) deemed error upon which a conviction or sentence may be reversed or vacated, or (iii) a basis upon which a court may prevent or delay execution of sentence.

§ 19.2-72. When it may issue; what to recite and require.

On complaint of a criminal offense to any officer authorized to issue criminal warrants he shall examine on oath the complainant and any other witnesses, or when such officer shall suspect that an offense punishable otherwise than by a fine has been committed he may, without formal complaint, issue a summons for witnesses and shall examine such witnesses. A written complaint shall be required if the complainant is not a law-enforcement officer; however a written complaint is required for a felony offense, regardless of whether the complainant is a law-enforcement officer. If no arrest warrant is issued in response to a written complaint made by such complainant, the written complaint shall be returned to the complainant. If upon such examination such officer finds that there is probable cause to believe the accused has committed an offense, such officer shall issue a warrant for his arrest, except that no magistrate may issue an arrest warrant for a ~~felony~~ *an* offense upon the basis of a complaint by a person other than a law-enforcement officer or an animal control officer without prior authorization by the attorney for the Commonwealth or by a law-enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the alleged offense. The warrant shall (i) be directed to an appropriate officer or officers, (ii) name the accused or, if his name is unknown, set forth a description by which he can be identified with reasonable certainty, (iii) describe the offense charged with reasonable certainty, (iv) command that the accused be arrested and brought before a court of appropriate jurisdiction in the county, city or town in which the offense was allegedly committed, and (v) be signed by the issuing officer. If a warrant is issued for an offense in violation of any county, city, or town ordinance that is similar to any provision of this Code, the warrant shall reference the offense using both the citation corresponding to the county, city, or town ordinance and the specific provision of this Code. The warrant shall require the officer to whom it is directed to summon such witnesses as shall be therein named to appear and give evidence on the examination. But in a city or town having a police force, the warrant shall be directed "To any policeman, sheriff or his deputy sheriff of such city (or town)," and shall be executed by the policeman, sheriff or his deputy sheriff into whose hands it shall come or be delivered. A sheriff or his deputy may execute an arrest warrant throughout the county in which he serves and in any city or town surrounded thereby and effect an arrest in any city or town surrounded thereby as a result of a criminal act committed during the execution of such warrant. A jail officer as defined in § 53.1-1 employed at a regional jail or jail farm is authorized to execute a warrant of arrest upon an accused in his jail. The venue for the prosecution of such criminal act shall be the jurisdiction in which the offense occurred.

INTRODUCED

HB2726