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**HOUSE BILL NO. 2736**

Offered January 17, 2025

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 2.2-2001.2 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Virginia Values Veterans Program; military spouse eligibility.*

Patrons—Reaser, Thomas, Anthony, Askew, Bennett-Parker, Bulova, Callsen, Carr, Clark, Cohen, Cole, Convirs-Fowler, Cousins, Delaney, Feggans, Gardner, Glass, Hayes, Helmer, Henson, Hernandez, Herring, Hope, Jones, Keys-Gamarra, Krizek, Laufer, LeVere Bolling, Lopez, Maldonado, Martinez, McClure, McQuinn, Mundon King, Price, Rasoul, Reid, Seibold, Sewell, Shin, Sickles, Simon, Simonds, Singh, Sullivan, Tata, Torian, Tran, Ward, Watts and Willett

Referred to Committee on General Laws

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That § 2.2-2001.2 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

**§ 2.2-2001.2. Initiatives to reduce unemployment among veterans and military spouses; comprehensive transition program.**

A. The Department shall develop a comprehensive program to reduce unemployment among veterans *and military spouses* by assisting businesses to attract, hire, train, and retain veterans *and military spouses*. Such program shall promote strategies for connecting employers to qualified veterans *and military spouses* and include (i) a workforce assessment and training program for participating employers and (ii) a certification process for participating employers with the objective of setting measurable goals for hiring and retaining veterans *and military spouses*.

B. All agencies in the executive branch of state government and all public institutions of higher education shall, to the maximum extent possible, be certified in accordance with this section. Such agencies and institutions may request a certification waiver from the Governor if they can demonstrate that (i) the certification is in conflict with the organization's operating directives or (ii) they have in place an alternative program that meets the requirements of this section.

C. The Department shall take steps to promote awareness among veterans of the acceptance by the regulatory boards within the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation, the Department of Health Professions, or any board named in Title 54.1 pursuant to § 54.1-118 of the military training, education, or experience of a service member honorably discharged from active military service in the Armed Forces of the United States, to the extent that such training, education, or experience is substantially equivalent to the requirements established by law and regulations of the respective board for the issuance of any license, permit, certificate, or other document, however styled or denominated, required for the practice of any business, profession, or occupation in the Commonwealth.

D. The Department shall develop a comprehensive program to assist military service members, veterans, and their spouses in making a successful transition from military to civilian life in Virginia. The program shall promote strategies and services for connecting transitioning service members, veterans, and *their* spouses to local, regional, state, and federal employment resources in Virginia, including (i) skills and workforce assessments and (ii) internship and apprenticeship programs. Such program shall prioritize assistance to military service members, veterans, and their spouses who (a) have not sought services under any program authorized under the federal Wagner-Peyser Act, 29 U.S.C. § 49 et seq., and available through the Virginia Employment Commission and (b) are not eligible for job counseling, training, and placement services for veterans and spouses under 38 U.S.C. § 4101 et seq.

INTRODUCED

HB2736