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SENATE BILL NO. 1248**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations
on January 22, 2025)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Hackworth)

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 27-98 of the Code of Virginia, relating to enforcement of Fire Prevention Code; prohibition on permit fees for fire departments and emergency medical services agencies in certain localities.*

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 27-98 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 27-98. Enforcement of Fire Prevention Code; appeals from decisions of local enforcing agencies; inspection of buildings.**

Any local government may enforce the Fire Prevention Code in its entirety or with respect only to those provisions of the Fire Prevention Code relating to open burning, fire lanes, fireworks, and hazardous materials. If a local governing body elects to enforce only those provisions of the Fire Prevention Code relating to open burning, it may do so in all or in any designated geographic areas of its jurisdiction. The State Fire Marshal shall also have the authority, in cooperation with any local governing body, to enforce the Code. The State Fire Marshal shall also have authority to enforce the Code in those jurisdictions in which the local governments do not enforce the Code and may establish such procedures or requirements as may be necessary for the administration and enforcement of the Code in such jurisdictions. In addition, subject to the approval of the Board of Housing and Community Development, the State Fire Marshal may charge a fee to recover the actual cost of administering and enforcing the Code in jurisdictions for which he serves as the enforcement authority. No fee may be charged for the inspection of any school. *The State Fire Marshal shall not charge a fee for the approval and administration of a permit issued pursuant to regulation L.107.11 of 13VAC5-52-70, for explosives, blasting agents, theatrical flame effects, and fireworks to fire departments as defined in § 27-6.1 and emergency medical services agencies as defined in 12VAC5-31-10 in localities with a total population of less than 10,000 as determined by the most recent federal decennial census by the United States Census Bureau. Any such fire departments or emergency medical services agencies shall still fully comply with the provisions of this chapter.* The local governing body of any jurisdiction that enforces the Code may establish such procedures or requirements as may be necessary for the administration and enforcement of the Code. Appeals concerning the application of the Code by the local enforcing agency shall first lie to a local board of appeals and then to the State Building Code Technical Review Board. Appeals from the application of the Code by the State Fire Marshal shall be made directly to the State Building Code Technical Review Board as provided in Article 2 (§ 36-108 et seq.) of Chapter 6 of Title 36. Fees may be levied by the local governing body in order to defray the cost of such enforcement and appeals; however, for the City of Chesapeake no fee charged for the inspection of any place of religious worship designated as Assembly Group A-3 under the Fire Prevention Code shall exceed \$50. For purposes of this section, "defray the cost" may include the fair and reasonable costs incurred for such enforcement during normal business hours, but shall not include overtime costs, unless conducted outside of the normal working hours established by the locality. A schedule of such costs shall be adopted by the local governing body in a local ordinance. A locality shall not charge an overtime rate for inspections conducted during the normal business hours established by the locality. Nothing herein shall be construed to prohibit a private entity from conducting such inspections, provided the private entity has been approved to perform such inspections in accordance with the written policy of the fire official for the locality. Any local fire code may provide for an appeal to a local board of appeals. If no local board of appeals exists, the State Building Code Technical Review Board shall hear appeals of any local fire code violation.