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HOUSE BILL NO. 53

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled December 29, 2025

A BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-276.01 of the Code of Virginia, relating to student bullying; definition; characteristics of victim.

Patron—Cole, J.G.

Committee Referral Pending

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 22.1-276.01 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 22.1-276.01. Definitions.

A. For the purposes of this article, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Alternative education program" includes night school, adult education, or any other education program designed to offer instruction to students for whom the regular program of instruction may be inappropriate.

"Bullying" means any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim, including on the basis of the actual or perceived membership of the victim in a group that is protected from discrimination pursuant to the Virginia Human Rights Act (§ 2.2-3900 *et seq.*); and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. "Bullying" includes cyberbullying. "Bullying" does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict.

"Cyberbullying" means bullying that occurs through the use of technology, including through cell phones and other electronic devices or technology capable of accessing the Internet.

"Disruptive behavior" means a violation of school board regulations governing student conduct that interrupts or obstructs the learning environment.

"Dress or grooming code" means any practice, policy, or portion of a code of student conduct adopted by a school board that governs or restricts the attire, appearance, or grooming, including hairstyle, of any enrolled student.

"Exclusion" means a Virginia school board's denial of school admission to a student who has been expelled or has been placed on a long-term suspension of more than 30 calendar days by another school board or a private school, either in Virginia or another state, or for whom admission has been withdrawn by a private school in Virginia or another state.

"Expulsion" means any disciplinary action imposed by a school board or a committee thereof, as provided in school board policy, whereby a student is not permitted to attend school within the school division and is ineligible for readmission for 365 calendar days after the date of the expulsion.

"Long-term suspension" means any disciplinary action whereby a student is not permitted to attend school for 11 to 45 school days.

"Short-term suspension" means any disciplinary action whereby a student is not permitted to attend school for a period not to exceed 10 school days.

B. For the purposes of §§ 22.1-277.04, 22.1-277.05, 22.1-277.2, and 22.1-277.2:1, "superintendent's designee" means a (i) trained hearing officer or (ii) professional employee within the administrative offices of the school division who reports directly to the division superintendent and who is not a school-based instructional or administrative employee.