

2026 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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1 **HOUSE BILL NO. 231**

2 Offered January 14, 2026

3 Prefiled January 8, 2026

4 A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 30-329.1 and 30-329.2 of the Code of Virginia, to amend the Code of
5 Virginia by adding in Chapter 50.1 of Title 30 a section numbered 30-329.5, and to repeal § 30-329.4 of
6 the Code of Virginia, relating to Autism Advisory Council; name change; membership; staffing; powers
7 and duties.

8 Patron—Cohen

9 Committee Referral Pending

10 Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

11 1. That §§ 30-329.1 and 30-329.2 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code
12 of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 50.1 of Title 30 a section numbered 30-329.5 as follows:

13 CHAPTER 50.1.

14 **AUTISM ADVISORY COUNCIL COMMISSION.**

15 § 30-329.1. (Expires July 1, 2027) **Autism Commission; purpose; membership; terms;**
16 **compensation; quorum; staffing.**

17 A. The Autism Advisory Council (the Council) Commission (the Commission) is established as an
18 advisory council in the legislative branch of state government. The purpose of the Commission is to promote
19 coordination of services and resources among agencies involved in the delivery of services to Virginians with
20 autism spectrum disorders, to improve the quality and access to such services and resources, to address gaps
21 in services and resources needed, and to increase public awareness of such services and resources.

22 B. The Council Commission shall have a total membership of 12 members that shall consist of six
23 include nine legislative members; four and three nonlegislative citizen members; and seven ex officio
24 members. Members shall be appointed as follows: two members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate
25 Committee on Rules; four members of the House of Delegates; to be appointed by the Speaker of the
26 House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of
27 the House of Delegates; and four, four members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on
28 Rules, two nonlegislative citizen members, of whom (i) two shall be representatives of autism advocacy
29 organizations, (ii) two shall be parents of children with autism, (iii) two shall be persons with an autism
30 spectrum disorder, (iv) one shall be a clinician in the autism field, (v) one shall be a licensed behavior
31 analyst, (vi) one shall be a private day school director, (vii) one shall be a public school special education
32 director, and (viii) two shall be representatives from autism programs at an institution of higher education, to
33 be appointed by the Governor. The Commissioner of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the
34 Commissioner for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, the Commissioner of Health, the Commissioner of
35 Social Services, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Executive Director of the Virginia Board for
36 People with Disabilities, and the Director of the Department of Medical Assistance Services, or their
37 designees, shall serve ex officio with voting privileges to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of
38 Delegates, and one nonlegislative citizen member to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules. In
39 making such appointments, the Speaker of the House of Delegates shall select one individual with an autism
40 spectrum disorder and one clinician in the field of autism and the Senate Committee on Rules shall select a
41 representative of an autism advocacy organization. Nonlegislative citizen members of the Council
42 Commission shall be citizens of the Commonwealth. Unless otherwise approved in writing by the chairman
43 chair of the Council Commission and the respective Clerk, nonlegislative citizen members shall only be
44 reimbursed for travel originating and ending within the Commonwealth for the purpose of attending
45 meetings.

46 C. Legislative and ex officio members shall serve terms coincident with their terms of office. All
47 appointments of nonlegislative citizen members shall be for four-year terms. Appointments to fill vacancies,
48 other than by expiration of a term, shall be for the unexpired terms. All members may be reappointed;
49 however, no nonlegislative citizen member shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms. The
50 remainder of any term to which a member is appointed to fill a vacancy shall not constitute a term in
51 determining the member's term limit. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original
52 appointments.

53 Legislative members of the Council Commission shall receive such compensation as provided in
54 § 30-19.12 and nonlegislative citizen members shall receive such compensation as provided in § 2.2-2813 for
55 their services. All members shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the
56 performance of their duties as provided in §§ 2.2-2813 and 2.2-2825. However, all such compensation and

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59 expense payments shall be paid from existing appropriations to the ~~Council~~ Commission or, if unfunded, shall
60 be approved by the Joint Rules Committee.

61 D. The ~~Council~~ Commission shall elect a ~~chairman~~ chair and ~~vice-chairman~~ vice-chair annually, who
62 shall be members of the General Assembly. A majority of the members of the ~~Council~~ Commission shall
63 constitute a quorum. The ~~Council~~ Commission shall meet no less than five times a year, upon the call of the
64 ~~chairman~~ chair or a majority of the members.

65 E. Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the Senate or the Clerk of
66 the House of Delegates, as may be appropriate for the house in which the chairman serves. The Division of
67 Legislative Services shall provide legal, research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the
68 ~~Council~~. The Commission shall appoint and employ and, at its pleasure, remove an executive director and
69 such other persons as it deems necessary to assist it in carrying out its duties as set forth in this chapter. The
70 Commission shall determine the duties of the executive director and other staff and fix their salaries or
71 compensation within the amounts appropriated in the general appropriation act. If funds are not
72 appropriated for staffing, the Joint Rules Committee shall determine the staffing support for the Commission.

73 F. No recommendation of the ~~Council~~ Commission shall be adopted if a majority of the legislative
74 members appointed to the ~~Council~~ Commission (i) vote against the recommendation and (ii) vote for the
75 recommendation to fail notwithstanding the majority vote of the ~~Council~~ Commission.

76 **§ 30-329.2. (Expires July 1, 2027) Powers and duties of the Commission; report.**

77 A. The ~~Council~~ Commission shall have the power and duty to following powers and duties:

78 1. Facilitate the coordination of services and resources among agencies involved in the delivery of
79 services to Virginians with autism spectrum disorders;

80 2. Monitor the implementation of action plans developed by agencies in response to the report of the Joint
81 Legislative Audit and Review Commission entitled "Assessment of Services for Virginians with Autism
82 Spectrum Disorders," House Document No. 8 (2009);

83 3. Recommend policies, legislation, and funding needed to implement the action plans developed in
84 response to the report of the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission entitled "Assessment of
85 Services for Virginians with Autism Spectrum Disorders," House Document No. 8 (2009) and address other
86 emerging issues; and

87 4. Examine the delivery of services and resources to individuals with autism spectrum disorders in other
88 states and exchange information on issues of mutual concern;

89 3. Recommend policies, legislation, and funding needed to improve the quality and availability of existing
90 services and resources; and

91 4. Determine services, resources, and policies that may further address the needs of individuals with
92 autism spectrum disorders.

93 B. By December 1 of each year, the ~~Council~~ Commission shall submit to the Governor and the General
94 Assembly and to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for publication as a House or Senate
95 document an annual report containing progress updates and recommended next steps to be taken by agencies
96 in the following year policies, legislation, and funding supports so identified.

97 **§ 30-329.5. Cooperation of other state agencies.**

98 The Commission may request records, including data and information, that it may require for the
99 performance of its duties, and every department, division, board, bureau, commission, authority, or other
100 agency created by the Commonwealth or to which the Commonwealth is a party or any political subdivision
101 of the Commonwealth shall provide such records, including data and information, to the fullest extent
102 possible and except as prohibited by law. The Commission shall receive cooperation and assistance in the
103 performance of its duties from every department, division, board, bureau, commission, authority, or other
104 agency created by the Commonwealth or to which the Commonwealth is a party or from any political
105 subdivision of the Commonwealth upon request.

106 Upon request and availability, the Commission shall receive access to the facilities of and ample
107 opportunity to observe the operations of every department, division, board, bureau, commission, authority, or
108 other agency created by the Commonwealth or to which the Commonwealth is a party or of any political
109 subdivision of the Commonwealth.

110 2. That § 30-329.4 of the Code of Virginia is repealed.

111 3. That the terms of office of any nonlegislative citizen member serving on the Autism Advisory
112 Council as of June 30, 2026, shall expire on the effective date of this act, but such persons shall be
113 eligible in accordance with § 30-329.1 of the Code of Virginia, as amended by this act, to be appointed
114 to the Autism Commission and serve two consecutive four-year terms notwithstanding any prior
115 service on the Autism Advisory Council.