



## Fiscal Impact Statement for Proposed Legislation

*Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission*

### House Bill 251 (Patron—Watts)

**LD #:** 26102460

**Date:** 12/01/2025

**Topic:** Assault and battery; serious bodily injury

#### Fiscal Impact Summary:

- **State Adult Correctional Facilities:**  
\$50,000 \*
- **Local Adult Correctional Facilities:**  
Cannot be determined
- **Adult Community Corrections Programs:**  
Cannot be determined

- **Juvenile Direct Care:**  
Cannot be determined\*\*
- **Juvenile Detention Facilities:**  
Cannot be determined\*\*

\*\*Provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice

\* The estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 725 of the Acts of Assembly of 2025, requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, fiscal impact statements prepared by the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission only include the estimated increase in operating costs associated with additional state-responsible prison beds and do not reflect any other costs or savings that may be associated with the proposed legislation.

#### Summary of Proposed Legislation:

The proposal amends § 18.2-57 to increase the penalty for assault and battery from a Class 1 misdemeanor to a Class 6 felony when the act results in serious bodily injury, as defined in § 18.2-51.4 (bodily injury that involves substantial risk of death, extreme physical pain, protracted and obvious disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty), but that does not rise to the level of unlawful or malicious wounding in violation of § 18.2-51.<sup>1</sup> The proposal also adds the new offense to the list of violent felony offenses for the purposes of the Sentencing Guidelines (§ 17.1-805).

#### Analysis:

Existing data sources do not contain sufficient detail to identify the number of individuals who would be affected by the proposal. However, individuals convicted of the proposed felony may be sentenced similarly to offenders convicted under existing provisions.

According to the Circuit Court Case Management System (CMS) for fiscal year (FY) 2020 through FY2025, 2,408 offenders were convicted of a Class 6 felony under § 18.2-51 (unlawful wounding) during

<sup>1</sup> The proposed felony would be eligible for the enhanced sentence credits specified in § 53.1-202.3, whereby offenders will serve a minimum of 67% of the sentence ordered by the court.

the six-year period. This was the primary, or most serious, offense in 1,981 (82.3%) of the cases. Of these defendants, 504 (25.5%) did not receive any active term of incarceration, 599 (30.2%) received a local-responsible (jail) sentence with a median sentence of 6.0 months, and 878 (44.3%) received a state-responsible (prison) sentence with a median sentence of 2.0 years.

During the same six-year period, General District Court CMS data revealed that there were 15,617 offenders convicted of a Class 1 misdemeanor under § 18.2-57(A) for a simple assault and battery. Of these offenders, 50.2% did not receive any active term of incarceration while 49.8% received a local-responsible (jail) sentence with a median sentence of 1.5 months.

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### **Impact of Proposed Legislation:**

**State adult correctional facilities.** By creating a new felony offense, the proposal may increase the state-responsible (prison) bed space needs of the Commonwealth. Available data are insufficient, however, to identify the number of defendants who may be convicted of the proposed felony or to estimate the number of new state-responsible sentences that may result from enactment of the proposal. Thus, the magnitude of the impact on prison bed space needs cannot be determined.

**Local adult correctional facilities.** Similarly, the proposal may increase local-responsible (jail) bed space needs, but the magnitude of the impact cannot be quantified.

**Adult community corrections programs.** Because the proposal could result in felony convictions and subsequent supervision requirements for an additional number of offenders, the proposal may increase the need for adult community corrections resources. Since the number of cases that may be affected cannot be determined, the potential impact on community corrections resources cannot be estimated.

**Virginia's Sentencing Guidelines.** As a new felony, convictions for the proposed offense initially would not be covered by the Sentencing Guidelines as the primary (or most serious) offense. Such convictions, however, could augment the Guidelines recommendation as additional offenses if the most serious offense at sentencing is covered by the Guidelines. The proposed felony would be defined as violent under § 17.1-805(C) for Guidelines purposes. No immediate adjustment to the Guidelines would be necessary under the proposal. If the proposal is enacted, the Sentencing Commission in the future would conduct analyses to determine the feasibility of adding the new felony to the Guidelines system.

**Juvenile direct care.** According to the Department of Juvenile Justice, the impact of the proposal on direct care (juvenile correctional center or alternative commitment placement) bed space needs cannot be determined.

**Juvenile detention facilities.** The Department of Juvenile Justice reports that the proposal's impact on the bed space needs of juvenile detention facilities cannot be determined.

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**Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 725 of the Acts of Assembly of 2025, requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.**

**Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.**