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**HOUSE BILL NO. 404**

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 12, 2026

*A BILL to amend and reenact § 23.1-615.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program; parameters.*

Patron—Reid

Committee Referral Pending

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:****1. That § 23.1-615.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 23.1-615.1. Enslaved or Displaced Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program.**

A. The Enslaved or Displaced Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program (the Program) is established for the purpose of reckoning with the history of the Commonwealth, addressing the long legacy of slavery and residential displacement in the Commonwealth, and acknowledging that the foundational success of several public institutions of higher education was based on the labor of enslaved individuals or, in the case of Christopher Newport University and Old Dominion University, the displacement of residents of the Shoe Lane neighborhood in Newport News and residents of the Lambert's Point neighborhood in Norfolk, respectively.

B. Consistent with the purpose set forth in subsection A, Christopher Newport University, Longwood University, Old Dominion University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, the Virginia Military Institute, and The College of William and Mary in Virginia shall each implement and execute the Program, with any source of funds other than state funds or tuition or fee increases, by annually (i) identifying and memorializing, to the extent possible, all enslaved individuals who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property or, in the case of Christopher Newport University and Old Dominion University, all displaced residents of the Shoe Lane neighborhood in Newport News and all displaced residents of the Lambert's Point neighborhood in Norfolk, respectively and (ii) providing a tangible benefit such as that consists of (a) a college scholarship for individuals or specific communities with a demonstrated historic connection to residential displacement that will empower families to be lifted out of the cycle of poverty, in the case of Christopher Newport University and Old Dominion University, or (b) a college scholarship or community-based economic development program for individuals or specific communities with a demonstrated historic connection to slavery that will empower families to be lifted out of the cycle of poverty, in the case of each other institution that is required to implement and execute the Program. Each institution that is required to or chooses to provide a college scholarship program as such tangible benefit shall fund such program from the institution's endowment funds or through fundraising or philanthropic contributions and shall provide, on the basis of student merit and academic potential and other institution-specific criteria but without consideration of any other financial aid to which the recipient may be eligible, at least one scholarship to an undergraduate student in an amount equal to the full cost of tuition, mandatory fees, and room and board. No institution shall pass the cost of any such scholarship program to other enrolled students by increasing the rate of tuition or mandatory fees.

C. The Council shall (i) collaborate with the institutions set forth in subsection B to establish guidelines for the implementation of the Program, including guidelines for the identification of all enslaved individuals who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property or, in the case of Christopher Newport University and Old Dominion University, all displaced residents of the Shoe Lane neighborhood in Newport News and all displaced residents of the Lambert's Point neighborhood in Norfolk, respectively, the development of appropriate means to memorialize these individuals, the development of programs for individuals and communities still experiencing the legacy of slavery or residential displacement to empower them to break the cycle of poverty, eligibility criteria for participation in such programs, and the duration of such programs; (ii) establish a work group that consists of a representative of each institution set forth in subsection B that meets at least semiannually to discuss Program administration, including sharing best practices on administration and research, coordinating funding and fundraising strategies, developing outreach and marketing plans, collaborating on historical and genealogical research efforts, and aligning government and community engagement initiatives; and (iii) develop and maintain a single statewide online portal that describes each institution's program, criteria, and investments in scholarship students or the community, lists designated points of contact at each institution, shares application timelines and processes, and offers historical context and ongoing memorial updates.

D. Each institution set forth in subsection B shall continue the activities set forth in subsection B pursuant to the Program (i) for a period equal in length to the period during which the institution used enslaved

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59 individuals to support the institution *or, in the case of Christopher Newport University and Old Dominion*  
60 *University, engaged in the displacement of residents of the Shoe Lane neighborhood in Newport News or of*  
61 *residents of the Lambert's Point neighborhood in Norfolk, respectively* or (ii) until scholarships have been  
62 awarded to a number of recipients equal to 100 percent of the population of enslaved individuals identified  
63 pursuant to subsection B who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property  
64 *or, in the case of Christopher Newport University and Old Dominion University, displaced residents of the*  
65 *Shoe Lane neighborhood in Newport News or displaced residents of the Lambert's Point neighborhood in*  
66 *Norfolk, respectively, who were identified pursuant to subsection B, whichever occurs first.*

67 E. Each institution set forth in subsection B shall annually submit to the Council information on the  
68 implementation of the Program. The Council shall compile such information in a report and submit such  
69 report no later than November 1 of each year to the ~~Chairmen~~ *Chairs* of the House Committee on  
70 Appropriations, the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on Education and Health, the  
71 Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations, ~~and~~ the Virginia African American Advisory Board, *and*  
72 *the Commission to Study the History of the Uprooting of Black Communities by Public Institutions of Higher*  
73 *Education in the Commonwealth.*

74 F. Each private institution of higher education with a legacy of slavery *or residential displacement* that is  
75 similar to that of any institution set forth in subsection B is strongly encouraged to participate in the Program  
76 on a voluntary basis.