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INTRODUCED

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7**HOUSE BILL NO. 427**

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 12, 2026

A BILL to amend and reenact § 23.1-203 of the Code of Virginia, relating to State Council of Higher Education for Virginia; uniform, comprehensive data information system; information on self-identified students who are parents.

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Patron—LeVere Bolling

Committee Referral Pending

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 23.1-203 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 23.1-203. Duties of Council.

The Council shall:

1. Develop a statewide strategic plan that (i) reflects the goals set forth in subsection A of § 23.1-1002 or (ii) once adopted, reflects the goals and objectives developed pursuant to subdivision B 5 of § 23.1-309 for higher education in the Commonwealth, identifies a coordinated approach to such state and regional goals, and emphasizes the future needs for higher education in the Commonwealth at both the undergraduate and the graduate levels and the mission, programs, facilities, and location of each of the existing institutions of higher education, each public institution's six-year plan, and such other matters as the Council deems appropriate. The Council shall revise such plan at least once every six years and shall submit such recommendations as are necessary for the implementation of the plan to the Governor and the General Assembly.

2. Review and approve or disapprove any proposed change in the statement of mission of any public institution of higher education and define the mission of all newly created public institutions of higher education. The Council shall report such approvals, disapprovals, and definitions to the Governor and the General Assembly at least once every six years. No such actions shall become effective until 30 days after adjournment of the session of the General Assembly next following the filing of such a report. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to authorize the Council to modify any mission statement adopted by the General Assembly or empower the Council to affect, either directly or indirectly, the selection of faculty or the standards and criteria for admission of any public institution of higher education, whether relating to academic standards, residence, or other criteria. Faculty selection and student admission policies shall remain a function of the individual public institutions of higher education.

3. Study any proposed escalation of any public institution of higher education to a degree-granting level higher than that level to which it is presently restricted and submit a report and recommendation to the Governor and the General Assembly relating to the proposal. The study shall include the need for and benefits or detriments to be derived from the escalation. No such institution shall implement any such proposed escalation until the Council's report and recommendation have been submitted to the General Assembly and the General Assembly approves the institution's proposal.

4. Review and approve or disapprove all enrollment projections proposed by each public institution of higher education. The Council's projections shall be organized numerically by level of enrollment and shall be used solely for budgetary, fiscal, and strategic planning purposes. The Council shall develop estimates of the number of degrees to be awarded by each public institution of higher education and include those estimates in its reports of enrollment projections. The student admissions policies for such institutions and their specific programs shall remain the sole responsibility of the individual governing boards but all baccalaureate public institutions of higher education shall adopt dual admissions policies with comprehensive community colleges as required by § 23.1-907.

5. Review and approve or disapprove all new undergraduate or graduate academic programs that any public institution of higher education proposes.

6. Review and require the discontinuance of any undergraduate or graduate academic program that is presently offered by any public institution of higher education when the Council determines that such academic program is (i) nonproductive in terms of the number of degrees granted, the number of students served by the program, the program's effectiveness, and budgetary considerations or (ii) supported by state funds and unnecessarily duplicative of academic programs offered at other public institutions of higher education. The Council shall make a report to the Governor and the General Assembly with respect to the discontinuance of any such academic program. No such discontinuance shall become effective until 30 days after the adjournment of the session of the General Assembly next following the filing of such report.

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7. Review and approve or disapprove the establishment of any department, school, college, branch,

59 division, or extension of any public institution of higher education that such institution proposes to establish,
60 whether located on or off the main campus of such institution. If any organizational change is determined by
61 the Council to be proposed solely for the purpose of internal management and the institution's curricular
62 offerings remain constant, the Council shall approve the proposed change. Nothing in this subdivision shall
63 be construed to authorize the Council to disapprove the establishment of any such department, school,
64 college, branch, division, or extension established by the General Assembly.

65 8. Review the proposed closure of any academic program in a high demand or critical shortage area, as
66 defined by the Council, by any public institution of higher education and assist in the development of an
67 orderly closure plan, when needed.

68 9. Develop a uniform, comprehensive data information system designed to gather all information
69 necessary to the performance of the Council's duties. The system shall include information on admissions,
70 enrollment, self-identified students with documented disabilities, *self-identified students who are parents as*
71 *defined in § 22.1-1*, personnel, programs, financing, space inventory, facilities, and such other areas as the
72 Council deems appropriate. When consistent with the Government Data Collection and Dissemination
73 Practices Act (§ 2.2-3800 et seq.), the Virginia Unemployment Compensation Act (§ 60.2-100 et seq.), and
74 applicable federal law, the Council, acting solely or in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education
75 or the Virginia Employment Commission, may contract with private entities to create de-identified student
76 records in which all personally identifiable information has been removed for the purpose of assessing the
77 performance of institutions and specific programs relative to the workforce needs of the Commonwealth.

78 10. In cooperation with public institutions of higher education, develop guidelines for the assessment of
79 student achievement. Each such institution shall use an approved program that complies with the guidelines
80 of the Council and is consistent with the institution's mission and educational objectives in the development
81 of such assessment. The Council shall report each institution's assessment of student achievement in the
82 revisions to the Commonwealth's statewide strategic plan for higher education.

83 11. In cooperation with the appropriate state financial and accounting officials, develop and establish
84 uniform standards and systems of accounting, recordkeeping, and statistical reporting for public institutions
85 of higher education.

86 12. Review biennially and approve or disapprove all changes in the inventory of educational and general
87 space that any public institution of higher education proposes and report such approvals and disapprovals to
88 the Governor and the General Assembly. No such change shall become effective until 30 days after the
89 adjournment of the session of the General Assembly next following the filing of such report.

90 13. Visit and study the operations of each public institution of higher education at such times as the
91 Council deems appropriate and conduct such other studies in the field of higher education as the Council
92 deems appropriate or as may be requested by the Governor or the General Assembly.

93 14. Provide advisory services to each accredited nonprofit private institution of higher education whose
94 primary purpose is to provide collegiate or graduate education and not to provide religious training or
95 theological education on academic, administrative, financial, and space utilization matters. The Council may
96 review and advise on joint activities, including contracts for services between public institutions of higher
97 education and such private institutions of higher education or between such private institutions of higher
98 education and any agency or political subdivision of the Commonwealth.

99 15. Adopt such policies and regulations as the Council deems necessary to implement its duties
100 established by state law. Each public institution of higher education shall comply with such policies and
101 regulations.

102 16. Issue guidelines consistent with the provisions of the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy
103 Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232g), requiring public institutions of higher education to release a student's academic and
104 disciplinary record to a student's parent.

105 17. Require each institution of higher education formed, chartered, or established in the Commonwealth
106 after July 1, 1980, to ensure the preservation of student transcripts in the event of institutional closure or
107 revocation of approval to operate in the Commonwealth. An institution may ensure the preservation of
108 student transcripts by binding agreement with another institution of higher education with which it is not
109 corporately connected or in such other way as the Council may authorize by regulation. In the event that an
110 institution closes or has its approval to operate in the Commonwealth revoked, the Council, through its
111 Executive Director, may take such action as is necessary to secure and preserve the student transcripts until
112 such time as an appropriate institution accepts all or some of the transcripts. Nothing in this subdivision shall
113 be deemed to interfere with the right of a student to his own transcripts or authorize disclosure of student
114 records except as may otherwise be authorized by law.

115 18. Require the development and submission of articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions
116 agreements between associate-degree-granting and baccalaureate public institutions of higher education.

117 19. Provide periodic updates of base adequacy funding guidelines adopted by the Joint Subcommittee
118 Studying Higher Education Funding Policies for each public institution of higher education.

119 20. Develop, pursuant to the provisions of § 23.1-907, guidelines for articulation, dual admissions, and
120 guaranteed admissions agreements, including guidelines related to a one-year Uniform Certificate of General

121 Studies Program and a one-semester Passport Program to be offered at each comprehensive community
122 college. The guidelines developed pursuant to this subdivision shall be developed in consultation with all
123 public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, the Department of Education, and the Virginia
124 Association of School Superintendents and shall ensure standardization, quality, and transparency in the
125 implementation of the programs and agreements. At the discretion of the Council, private institutions of
126 higher education eligible for tuition assistance grants may also be consulted.

127 21. Cooperate with the Board of Education in matters of interest to both public elementary and secondary
128 schools and public institutions of higher education, particularly in connection with coordination of the college
129 admission requirements, coordination of teacher training programs with the public school programs, and the
130 Board of Education's Six-Year Educational Technology Plan for Virginia. The Council shall encourage
131 public institutions of higher education to design programs that include the skills necessary for the successful
132 implementation of such Plan.

133 22. Advise and provide technical assistance to the Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Committee
134 in the implementation and administration of the Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Program pursuant
135 to Chapter 34.1 (§ 30-231.01 et seq.) of Title 30.

136 23. Insofar as possible, seek the cooperation and utilize the facilities of existing state departments,
137 institutions, and agencies in carrying out its duties.

138 24. Serve as the coordinating council for public institutions of higher education.

139 25. Serve as the planning and coordinating agency for all postsecondary educational programs for all
140 health professions and occupations and make recommendations, including those relating to financing, for
141 providing adequate and coordinated educational programs to produce an appropriate supply of properly
142 trained personnel. The Council may conduct such studies as it deems appropriate in furtherance of the
143 requirements of this subdivision. All state departments and agencies shall cooperate with the Council in the
144 execution of its responsibilities under this subdivision.

145 26. Carry out such duties as the Governor may assign to it in response to agency designations requested
146 by the federal government.

147 27. Insofar as practicable, preserve the individuality, traditions, and sense of responsibility of each public
148 institution of higher education in carrying out its duties.

149 28. Insofar as practicable, seek the assistance and advice of each public institution of higher education in
150 fulfilling its duties and responsibilities.

151 29. Administer the Virginia Longitudinal Data System as a multiagency partnership for the purposes of
152 developing educational, health, social service, and employment outcome data; improving the efficacy of state
153 services; and aiding decision making.

154 30. Assist the Department of Education with collecting and compiling information for distribution to high
155 school students that assist such students in making more informed decisions about post-high-school
156 educational and training opportunities pursuant to § 22.1-206.2.