

Department of Planning and Budget
2026 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement

PUBLISHED: 1/13/2026 10:10 AM

ORIGINAL

Bill Number: HB231

Patron: Cohen

Bill Title: Autism Advisory Council; name change; membership; staffing; powers and duties.

Bill Summary: Provides for the Autism Advisory Council to be reconstituted as a permanent, independently staffed agency in the legislative branch of state government. Currently, the Autism Advisory Council is set to expire on July 1, 2027. The bill repeals the expiration date and renames the Council as the Autism Commission. The bill also modifies the membership of the Commission to more closely align with the membership makeup of other independently staffed legislative agencies and directs the Commission to appoint and employ an executive director and other staff to assist in carrying out the duties of the Commission.

Budget Amendment Necessary: Yes

Items Impacted: Items 1 and 6

Explanation: The Virginia House of Delegates (House) and the Senate of Virginia (Senate) will require appropriation to pay for member compensation. The Autism Commission will require appropriation to pay for nonlegislative member compensation, member travel, and staffing.

Fiscal Summary: Preliminary – The fiscal impact of this bill to the Autism Commission (Commission) is indeterminate. This bill provides for additional legislative members and staffing for the Commission. It is unknown how many staff the Commission may hire and the anticipated salaries.

General Fund Expenditure Impact:

| Agency | FY2026 | FY2027 | FY2028 | FY2029 | FY2030 | FY2031 |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| House of Delegates | \$0 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 |
| Senate of Virginia | \$0 | \$3,000 | \$3,000 | \$3,000 | \$3,000 | \$3,000 |
| Autism Commission | \$0 | \$ 20,997- 520,997 |
| TOTAL | \$0 | \$25,497 - 525,497 |

Fiscal Analysis: This fiscal impact of this bill primarily involves the costs associated with meetings and staffing. The Autism Advisory Council was reestablished in Chapter 389 during the 2024 Session and the \$6,330 provided for member compensation in Item 1 was retained. This bill renames the Autism Advisory Council to the Autism Commission and increases the number of members of the Commission by one for the House of Delegates and two for the Senate of Virginia. It is estimated member compensation will be approximately \$1,500 for one additional member for the House and \$3,000 for two additional members of the Senate attending five meetings per year, and will be paid by the offices of the Clerk of the House of Delegates or Clerk

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of the Senate. The bill provides for compensation for three nonlegislative citizen members, estimated to be approximately \$750 per year for five meetings, to be paid from existing appropriations to the Commission.

The travel expenses are expected to be approximately \$14,292 for the nine legislative members attending five meetings per year, and \$5,955 for three nonlegislative members attending five meetings per year, to be paid from existing appropriations to the Commission.

The Commission may appoint an executive director and staff. It is unknown how many staff the Commission may hire and the anticipated salaries. The current average salary of Legislative executive directors is \$160,000 with total compensation, including fringes, around \$220,000. Staffing compensation depends on the position with pay ranging from \$56,000 for a coordinator and up to \$180,000 for a deputy director. On average, the salary and fringes is approximately \$140,000. For estimation purposes, the high range in the table above is for one director and two staff members at average salaries and fringes.

If the Commission hires staff and no appropriation is provided for the Commission, the Commission may be funded from the operating budgets of the Clerk of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Delegates upon the approval of the Joint Rules Committee.

Other: None.