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SENATE BILL NO. 260

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 12, 2026

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 14 of Title 51.5 a section numbered § 51.5-129.1, relating to Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services; Senior Isolation Prevention Advisory Task Force established; report.

Patron—Stanley

Referred to Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 14 of Title 51.5 a section numbered § 51.5-129.1 as follows:****§ 51.5-129.1. Senior Isolation Prevention Advisory Task Force; purpose; membership; duties; report.**

A. There is hereby established the Senior Isolation Prevention Advisory Task Force (the Task Force) for the purpose of advising the Commissioner on strategies for reducing social isolation and loneliness among seniors and promoting volunteer engagement.

B. The Task Force shall have a total membership of 15 members that shall include 12 nonlegislative citizen members and three ex officio members. Members shall be appointed as follows: six representatives of area agencies on aging, of whom each shall represent a different area agency on aging, appointed by the Commissioner and six nonlegislative citizen members, of whom at least two shall represent community services boards or behavioral health providers, at least two shall represent faith-based organizations or civic groups engaged in senior services, and at least one shall represent assisted living or nursing home providers, appointed by the Governor. The Commissioner for Aging and Rehabilitative Services or his designee, who shall serve as chair, the Commissioner of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services or his designee, and the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman or his designee shall serve ex officio with voting privileges.

C. The Task Force shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Develop and disseminate, in coordination with the area agencies on aging, educational materials that include (i) data on the growing senior population and rates of social isolation in the Commonwealth; (ii) information on the physical and mental health consequences of isolation and loneliness; (iii) information on food insecurity, housing insecurity, and inadequate behavioral health care access among seniors; (iv) guidance for churches, civic organizations, foundations, businesses, and individuals on establishing senior visitation and companionship programs; and (v) best practices and model programs for reducing senior isolation, including the "Adopt a Senior" campaign model that encourages regular visitation with isolated seniors living alone or in assisted living and nursing home facilities. Such materials shall be made available on the Department website and shall be distributed to area agencies on aging, local departments of social services, senior centers, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and upon request to any church, civic organization, foundation, or individual;

2. Review and evaluate existing programs and initiatives addressing social isolation among seniors in the Commonwealth;

3. Identify best practices and evidence-based interventions for reducing isolation and loneliness;

4. Develop recommendations for expanding volunteer visitation and companionship programs, including the "Adopt a Senior" model, statewide;

4. Identify opportunities to coordinate senior isolation prevention efforts with existing behavioral health services, food assistance programs, and housing support;

5. Recommend strategies for engaging churches, civic organizations, foundations, businesses, and individuals in senior companionship initiatives;

6. Assess strategies to reduce barriers related to technology access, broadband connectivity, and transportation that contribute to senior isolation;

7. Develop or recommend brief screening tools that community partners, senior centers, and service providers may use to identify seniors at risk for social isolation or loneliness; and

8. Provide an annual report by December 1 of each year to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Commissioner on its findings and recommendations. Such report shall be posted on the Department's website.

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