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SENATE BILL NO. 399

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 13, 2026

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 46.2-1702 and 46.2-1705 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 17 of Title 46.2 a section numbered 46.2-1707.1, relating to driver training school and driver training instructors; standards; discipline; report.

Patron—Diggs

Referred to Committee on Transportation

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 46.2-1702 and 46.2-1705 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 17 of Title 46.2 a section numbered 46.2-1707.1 as follows:

§ 46.2-1702. Certification of driver education courses by Commissioner.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Commissioner shall have the authority to approve as a driver education course satisfying the requirements of § 46.2-334 any course that is offered by any driver training school licensed under the provisions of this chapter if he finds that the course is of comparable content and quality to that offered in the Commonwealth's public schools. In making such finding, the Commissioner shall not require that the instructors of any driver training school meet the certification requirements of teachers in the Commonwealth's public schools. *However, the Commissioner shall prohibit the employment of any instructor for a driver education course satisfying the requirements of § 46.2-334 if such instructor has been convicted of a felony in violation of § 18.2-48, 18.2-61, 18.2-63, 18.2-64.1, 18.2-67.1, 18.2-67.2, 18.2-67.3, 18.2-67.5, 18.2-355, 18.2-361, 18.2-366, 18.2-370, 18.2-370.1, 18.2-371.1, or 18.2-374.1 or has been convicted of any offense that requires registration on the Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry pursuant to § 9.1-902.*

Any comprehensive community college within the Virginia Community College System shall have the authority to offer the courses required by the Virginia Board of Education to become a certified driver education instructor in Virginia on a not-for-credit basis so long as the courses include the same content and curriculum required by the Department of Education, enabling individuals who complete those courses to then teach driver's education in Virginia driver education training schools upon official certification by the Department of Motor Vehicles. The Virginia Department of Education shall provide the curriculum, content, and other information regarding the courses required to become certified driver education instructors in Virginia to any comprehensive community college within the Virginia Community College System. The content of each course must be accurate and rigorous and must meet the requirements for the Department of Education's Curriculum and Administrative Guide for Driver's Education, which includes the Board of Education's standards of learning.

Except for schools in the Commonwealth's public school system and providers of correspondence courses approved by the Board of Education pursuant to subsection F of § 22.1-205, only those driver training schools that are licensed as computer-based driver education providers shall be authorized to administer computer-based driver education courses, including the parent/student driver education component of the driver education curriculum as established in § 22.1-205. The content and quality of such computer-based driver education courses shall be comparable to that of courses offered in the Commonwealth's public schools. The Commissioner may establish minimum standards for testing students who have enrolled in computer-based driver education courses. Such standards may include (i) requirements for the test site; (ii) verification that the person taking the test is the person enrolled in the course; (iii) verification of the identity of the student using photo identification approved by the Commissioner; and (iv) maintenance of a log containing the name and title of the licensed instructor monitoring the test, the test date, the name of the student taking the test, and the student's time-in and time-out of the test site. Computer-based driver education providers shall not issue a certificate of completion to a student prior to receiving proof of completion of the additional minimum 90-minute parent/student driver education component pursuant to § 22.1-205.

Any driver training school licensed under the provisions of this chapter shall be authorized to provide the 90-minute parent/student driver education component of the driver education curriculum pursuant to § 22.1-205. Only public schools and those driver training schools that are licensed as computer-based driver education providers shall be authorized to administer the parent/student driver education component of the driver education curriculum through a virtual, computer-based program. Completion of such education component shall satisfy the requirement for the additional 90-minute parent/student driver education

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component so long as there is participation of the student's parent or guardian and the content provided is comparable to that which is offered in the Commonwealth's public schools and emphasizes (a) parental responsibilities regarding juvenile driver behavior, (b) juvenile driving restrictions pursuant to this Code, (c) the dangers of driving while intoxicated and underage consumption of alcohol, and (d) the dangers of distracted driving.

The Commissioner shall have authority to approve any driver education course offered by any Class A licensee if he finds the course meets the requirements for such courses as set forth in this chapter and as otherwise established by the Department. Class A licensees shall not be permitted to administer behind-the-wheel examinations unless authorized pursuant to § 46.2-326.1. Driver education courses offered by any Class B licensee shall be based on the driver education curriculum currently approved by the Department of Education and the Department.

In addition to programs authorized pursuant to this chapter, the Commissioner may authorize driver training schools to administer programs pursuant to § 46.2-324.1 and subsection B of § 46.2-325.

The Commissioner may accept, in lieu of requirements established by the Department of Education for instructor qualification, (1) 20 years' service with the Virginia Department of State Police by a law-enforcement officer who retired or resigned while in good standing from such Department or (2) (i) 20 years' service as a traffic enforcement officer with patrol experience with any local police department by a law-enforcement officer who has been certified by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services pursuant to § 15.2-1706, (ii) who retired or resigned while in good standing from such department, and (iii) who has been certified to teach driver training by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

§ 46.2-1705. Suspension, revocation, cancellation, or refusal to renew license; limitations on operations; imposition of monetary penalties.

A. Except as otherwise provided in this section, (i) no license issued under this chapter shall be suspended, revoked, or cancelled or renewal thereof denied; (ii) no limitation on operations shall be imposed pursuant to subsection F; and (iii) no monetary penalty shall be imposed pursuant to § 46.2-1706, unless the licensee has been furnished a written copy of the complaint against him with the grounds upon which the action is taken and has been offered an opportunity for an administrative hearing to show cause why such action should not be taken.

B. The order suspending, revoking, cancelling, or denying renewal of a license, imposing a limitation on operation, or imposing a monetary penalty, except as otherwise provided in subsection E, shall not become effective until the licensee has had 30 days after notice of the opportunity for a hearing to make a written request for such a hearing. If no hearing has been requested within such 30-day period, the order shall become effective and no hearing shall thereafter be held. A timely request for a hearing shall automatically stay operation of the order until after the hearing.

C. Notice of an order suspending, revoking, cancelling or denying renewal of a license, imposing a limitation on operation, or imposing a monetary penalty and advising the licensee of the opportunity for a hearing shall be mailed to the licensee by registered mail to the school address as shown on the licensee's most recent application for license and shall be considered served when mailed.

D. A licensee whose license has been revoked may reapply for a license after a period to be determined by the Commissioner, ~~not to exceed five years,~~ after considering (i) the number and severity of current violations, (ii) the number and severity of past violations, (iii) any past revocations or suspensions, (iv) highway safety concerns, and (v) public safety concerns. *If an instructor license has been revoked due to a conviction of (i) driving under the influence, (ii) reckless driving, (iii) refusal to submit to alcohol or drug testing, or (iv) vehicular manslaughter, such period shall be no less than 10 years.* No licensee who has been denied renewal shall apply for a new license within 180 days of such action.

E. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, an order suspending, revoking, cancelling, or denying renewal of an instructor license shall be effective immediately if the order is based upon a finding by the Commissioner (i) that the instructor's driving record is such that he is not presently qualified to act as an instructor or (ii) that he is otherwise a danger to the safety of his students or the public. Such finding by the Commissioner shall be based on records of driver's license suspension or revocation, upon records of conviction of serious motor vehicle related offenses punishable as a misdemeanor or felony including driving under the influence or reckless driving, and upon such other criteria as the Commissioner may establish by regulation.

Notice of the order of suspension, revocation, cancellation, or denial shall be in writing and mailed in accordance with subsection C. Upon receipt of a request for a hearing appealing the suspension, revocation, cancellation, or denial, the licensee shall be afforded the opportunity for a hearing as soon as practicable, but in no case later than 30 days from receipt of the hearing request. The order shall remain in effect pending the outcome of the hearing.

F. If the Commissioner makes a finding that the conduct of a licensee is in violation of this chapter or regulations adopted pursuant to this chapter, he may suspend, revoke, cancel, or refuse to renew the license of such licensee or may order the licensee, in accordance with subsections A, B, and C, to limit the types of driver education training provided, restrict the use of the licensee's training vehicles, or both. Whenever the

Commissioner takes action limiting operations under this subsection, the Commissioner shall require the licensee to post conspicuous notice of the Commissioner's action under this subsection at the same location as the licensee's license was issued under this chapter, as soon as the Commissioner's order becomes effective. Orders of the Commissioner limiting operations and requiring posting of notices shall remain in effect until (i) the time period for the limitations or restriction has expired and the Commissioner makes a finding that the violations causing the imposition of such limitations or restrictions have been remedied by the licensee or (ii) the Commissioner's order is lifted as the result of an appeal under § 46.2-1704 or by a court of competent jurisdiction.

No investigation of a licensee, driver training school owner, or employee of a driver training school shall terminate or abate upon the surrender of a license required pursuant to § 46.2-1701, nor shall any such surrender impair the Commissioner's ability to impose any sanction or remedy authorized pursuant to this chapter.

G. If the Commissioner makes a finding, after conducting a preliminary investigation, that the conduct of a licensee (i) is in violation of this chapter or regulations adopted pursuant to this chapter and (ii) such violation constitutes a danger to public safety, the Commissioner may issue an order suspending the licensee's license to operate a driver training school. Notice of the suspension shall be in writing and mailed in accordance with subsection C. Upon receipt of a request for a hearing appealing the suspension, the licensee shall be afforded the opportunity for a hearing as soon as practicable, but in no case later than 30 days from receipt of the hearing request. The suspension shall remain in effect pending the outcome of the hearing.

H. The Commissioner may suspend, revoke, or refuse to renew any license issued pursuant to this chapter for any conduct prohibited pursuant to § 46.2-1707.

§ 46.2-1707.1. Notification of offenses by licensees; report.

A. For purposes of this section, "penalty" means any disciplinary action taken by the Department against an instructor or driver training school, including civil or monetary penalties and license suspensions, revocations, cancellations, or refusals to renew.

B. The Department shall establish and maintain a public, searchable database containing any penalty that occurred on or after January 1, 2022. Such database shall be searchable by the name of any instructor or driver training school licensed by the Department. The database shall include in any results related to a driver training school any penalties assessed against such driver training school and any instructors employed by such driver training school at the time of the offense.

C. Driver training schools shall notify, in writing, students and prospective students, and, if such student or prospective student is a minor, the parent or legal guardian of such student or prospective student, of any penalty that involves such driver training school or an instructor employed by such driver training school at the time of the offense. Such notification shall include any penalties assessed within the preceding 24 months. The driver training school shall notify existing students, and if such student is a minor, the parent or legal guardian of such student, of any penalties assessed against such driver training school or an instructor employed by such driver training school at the time of the offense within 24 hours of the determination of the Department.

D. The Department shall annually by November 1 submit a report to the Chairs of the House and Senate Committees on Transportation detailing penalties assessed by the Department in the preceding year.