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SENATE BILL NO. 538

Senate Amendments in [ ] - January 27, 2026

A BILL to amend and reenact § 53.1-155 of the Code of Virginia, relating to parole; investigation prior to release; input from the attorney for the Commonwealth.

Patron Prior to Engrossment—Senator Suetterlein

Referred to Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 53.1-155 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 53.1-155. Investigation prior to release; transition assistance.

A. No person shall be released on parole by the Parole Board (the Board) until a thorough investigation has been made into the prisoner's history, physical and mental condition and character, and his conduct, employment, and attitude while in prison. All information collected through such investigation shall be made available to the prisoner or his attorney, provided that (i) neither the prisoner nor his attorney shall further disclose, reproduce, copy, or disseminate such information in any way and (ii) the Board shall redact all personal information of the victim. The Board shall also determine that his release on parole will not be incompatible with the interests of society or of the prisoner. The provisions of this section shall not be applicable to persons released on parole pursuant to § 53.1-159.

B. An investigation conducted pursuant to this section shall include notification that a victim may submit to the Virginia Parole Board evidence concerning the impact that the release of the prisoner will have on such victim. This notification shall be sent to the last address provided to the Board by any victim of a crime for which the prisoner was incarcerated. If additional victim research is necessary, electronic notification shall be sent to the attorney for the Commonwealth and the director of the victim/witness program, if one exists, of the jurisdiction in which the offense occurred. The Board shall endeavor diligently to contact the victim prior to making any decision to release any inmate on discretionary parole. The victim of a crime for which the prisoner is incarcerated may present to the Board oral, including by virtual means, or written testimony concerning the impact that the release of the prisoner will have on the victim, and the Board shall consider such testimony in its review. Once testimony is submitted by a victim, such testimony shall remain in the prisoner's parole file and shall be considered by the Board at every parole review. The victim of a crime for which the prisoner is incarcerated may submit a request in writing or by electronic means to the Board to be notified of (i) the prisoner's parole eligibility date and mandatory release date as determined by the Department of Corrections, (ii) any parole-related interview dates, and (iii) the Board's decision regarding parole for the prisoner. The victim may request that the Board only notify the victim if, following its review, the Board is inclined to grant parole to the prisoner, in which case the victim shall have 45 days to present written or oral testimony for the Board's consideration. If the victim has requested to be notified only if the Board is inclined to grant parole and no testimony, either written or oral, is received from the victim within at least 45 days of the date of the Board's notification, the Board shall render its decision based on information available to it in accordance with subsection A. The definition of victim in § 19.2-11.01 shall apply to this section.

Although any information presented by the victim of a crime for which the prisoner is incarcerated shall be retained in the prisoner's parole file and considered by the Board, such information shall not infringe on the Board's authority to exercise its decision-making authority.

An investigation conducted pursuant to this section shall include notification to the attorney for the Commonwealth in each jurisdiction in which an offense occurred for which the prisoner is incarcerated. The attorney for the Commonwealth may submit input to the Board regarding the impact the release of the prisoner will have on the jurisdiction. Once input has been received from an attorney for the Commonwealth, such input [ shall remain in the prisoner's parole file and ] shall be considered by the Board [ at every parole review ]; however, such input shall not infringe on the Board's authority to exercise its decision-making authority.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection A, if a physical or mental examination of a prisoner eligible for parole has been conducted within the last 12 months, and the prisoner has not required medical or psychiatric treatment within a like period while incarcerated, the prisoner may be released on parole by the Parole Board directly from a local correctional facility.

The Department shall offer each prisoner to be released on parole or under mandatory release who has been sentenced to serve a term of imprisonment of at least three years the opportunity to participate in a transition program within six months of such prisoner's projected or mandatory release date. The program shall include advice for job training opportunities, recommendations for living a law-abiding life, and

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59 financial literacy information. The Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security shall prescribe  
60 guidelines to govern these programs.