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HOUSE BILL NO. 231

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Rules)

on January 27, 2026)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Cohen)

A **BILL** to amend and reenact §§ 30-329.1 and 30-329.2 of the Code of Virginia, to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 50.1 of Title 30 a section numbered 30-329.5, and to repeal § 30-329.4 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Autism Advisory Council; name change; membership; staffing; powers and duties.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 30-329.1 and 30-329.2 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 50.1 of Title 30 a section numbered 30-329.5 as follows:

CHAPTER 50.1.

~~THE AUTISM~~ AUTISM ADVISORY COUNCIL COMMISSION.

§ 30-329.1. (Expires July 1, 2027) Autism Commission: purpose; membership; staff.

A. The **Autism Advisory Council (the Council)** *Commission (the Commission)* is established as an **advisory council** in the legislative branch of state government. *The purpose of the Commission is to promote coordination of services and resources among agencies involved in the delivery of services to Virginians with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities, to improve the quality of and access to such services and resources, to address gaps in services and resources needed, and to increase public awareness of such services and resources.*

B. The ~~Council~~ *Commission* shall have a total membership of 25. 12 members that shall consist of six include nine legislative members; 12 and three nonlegislative citizen members; and seven ~~ex officio~~ members. Members shall be appointed as follows: two four members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; four five members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; and 12 three nonlegislative citizen members, of whom (i) two shall be representatives of autism advocacy organizations, (ii) two shall be parents of children with autism, (iii) two shall be persons with an autism spectrum disorder, (iv) one shall be a clinician in the autism field, (v) one shall be a licensed behavior analyst, (vi) one shall be a private day school director, (vii) one shall be a public school special education director, and (viii) two shall be representatives from autism programs at an institution of higher education, to be appointed by the Governor. The Commissioner of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the Commissioner for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, the Commissioner of Health, the Commissioner of Social Services, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Executive Director of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, and the Director of the Department of Medical Assistance Services, or their designees, shall serve ~~ex officio~~ with voting privileges appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates and one shall be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules. In making such appointments, the Speaker of the House of Delegates shall select one individual with an autism spectrum disorder or a parent of an individual with autism spectrum disorder and one clinician in the field of autism, and the Senate Committee on Rules shall select a representative of an autism advocacy organization. Nonlegislative citizen members of the ~~Council~~ *Commission* shall be citizens of the Commonwealth. Unless otherwise approved in writing by the chairman chair of the ~~Council~~ *Commission* and the respective Office of the Clerk of the chair of the *Commission*, nonlegislative citizen members shall only be reimbursed for travel originating and ending within the Commonwealth for the purpose of attending meetings.

C. Legislative and ~~ex officio~~ members shall serve terms coincident with their terms of office. All appointments of nonlegislative citizen members shall be for four-year terms. Appointments to fill vacancies, other than by expiration of a term, shall be for the unexpired terms. All members may be reappointed; however, no citizen member shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms. The remainder of any term to which a member is appointed to fill a vacancy shall not constitute a term in determining the member's term limit. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments.

Legislative members of the *Council Commission* shall receive such compensation as provided in § 30-19.12 and nonlegislative citizen members shall receive such compensation as provided in § 2.2-2813 for their services. All members shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as provided in §§ 2.2-2813 and 2.2-2825. However, all such compensation and expense payments shall be paid from existing appropriations to the *Council Commission* or, if unfunded, shall be approved by the Joint Rules Committee.

D. The ~~Council~~ Commission shall elect a *chairman* *chair* and *vice-chairman* *vice-chair* annually, who shall be members of the General Assembly. A majority of the members of the ~~Council~~ Commission shall constitute a quorum. The ~~Council~~ Commission shall meet no less than five times a year, upon the call of the

60 chairman chair or a majority of the members.

61 E. Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the Senate or the Clerk of
62 the House of Delegates, as may be appropriate for the house in which the chairman serves. The Division of
63 Legislative Services shall provide legal, research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the
64 Council. The Commission may appoint and employ and, at its pleasure, remove an executive director and
65 such other persons as it deems necessary to assist it in carrying out its duties as set forth in this chapter. The
66 Commission may determine the duties of such staff and fix their salaries or compensation within the amounts
67 appropriated therefor in the general appropriation act. If funds are not appropriated for staffing, the Joint
68 Rules Committee shall determine the staffing support for the Commission.

69 F. No recommendation of the Council Commission shall be adopted if a majority of the legislative House
70 members or a majority of the Senate members appointed to the Council Commission (i) vote against the
71 recommendation and (ii) vote for the recommendation to fail notwithstanding the majority vote of the
72 Council Commission.

73 **§ 30-329.2. (Expires July 1, 2027) Powers and duties of the Commission; report.**

74 A. The Council Commission shall have the power following powers and duty to duties:

75 1. Facilitate the coordination of services and resources among agencies involved in the delivery of
76 services to Virginians with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities;

77 2. Monitor the implementation of action plans developed by agencies in response to the report of the Joint
78 Legislative Audit and Review Commission entitled "Assessment of Services for Virginians with Autism
79 Spectrum Disorders," House Document No. 8 (2009);

80 3. Recommend policies, legislation, and funding needed to implement the action plans developed in
81 response to the report of the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission entitled "Assessment of
82 Services for Virginians with Autism Spectrum Disorders," House Document No. 8 (2009) and address other
83 emerging issues; and

84 4. Examine the delivery of services and resources to individuals with autism spectrum disorders in other
85 states and exchange information on issues of mutual concern;

86 3. Recommend policies, legislation, and funding needed to improve the quality and availability of existing
87 services and resources; and

88 4. Determine services, resources, and policies that may further address the needs of individuals with
89 autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities.

90 B. By December 1 of each year, the Council Commission shall submit to the Governor and the General
91 Assembly and to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for publication as a House or Senate
92 document an annual report containing progress updates and recommended next steps to be taken by agencies
93 in the following year policies, legislation, and funding supports so identified.

94 **§ 30-329.5. Cooperation of other state agencies and political subdivisions.**

95 The Commission may request records, including data and information, that it may require for the
96 performance of its duties, and every department, division, board, bureau, commission, authority, or other
97 agency created by the Commonwealth or to which the Commonwealth is a party or any political subdivision
98 of the Commonwealth shall provide such records, including data and information, to the fullest extent
99 possible and except as prohibited by law. The Commission shall receive cooperation and assistance in the
100 performance of its duties from every department, division, board, bureau, commission, authority, or other
101 agency created by the Commonwealth or to which the Commonwealth is a party or from any political
102 subdivision of the Commonwealth upon request.

103 Upon request and availability, the Commission shall receive access to the facilities of and ample
104 opportunity to observe the operations of every department, division, board, bureau, commission, authority, or
105 other agency created by the Commonwealth or to which the Commonwealth is a party or of any political
106 subdivision of the Commonwealth.

107 2. That § 30-329.4 of the Code of Virginia is repealed.

108 3. That the terms of office of any nonlegislative citizen member serving on the Autism Advisory
109 Council as of June 30, 2026, shall expire on the effective date of this act, but such persons shall be
110 eligible in accordance with § 30-329.1 of the Code of Virginia, as amended by this act, to be appointed
111 to the Autism Commission and serve two consecutive four-year terms notwithstanding any prior
112 service on the Autism Advisory Council.