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HOUSE BILL NO. 1475

HOUSE BILL NO. 173
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources
on _____)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Schmidt)

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 10.1-211.1, relating to Virginia Fungi Task Force established; report.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 10.1-211.1 as follows:

§ 10.1-211.1. Virginia Fungi Task Force; report.

A. The Director shall establish the Virginia Fungi Task Force (the Task Force) to assess, categorize, and protect the Commonwealth's natural fungi species and explore the economic potential of fungi. The Task Force shall include the Director, the State Forester, the Director of the Department of Wildlife Resources, and the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services or their designees; representatives from the Department, the Department's Natural Heritage Division; and representatives of the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, the Virginia Agribusiness Council, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Virginia Soil Health Coalition, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, the Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Mycological Association of Washington D.C., the Blue Ridge Mycological Society, and any other stakeholders deemed appropriate by the Director. The Director or his designee shall serve as chair of the Task Force.

B. The Task Force shall meet at least four times annually to discuss and develop recommendations to (i) conduct a gap analysis and needs assessment on the Commonwealth's natural fungi species; (ii) identify economic development opportunities for fungi; (iii) build a Virginia database of native and invasive fungi species; (iv) conduct statewide fungal monitoring and research; (v) support forest health, agriculture, and water quality in the Commonwealth; (vi) provide guidance on toxic mushrooms and public safety; and (vii) build public education and identification resources on fungi in the Commonwealth.

C. The Task Force shall report its initial findings and recommendations to the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources and the Chairs of the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources and Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources by December 1, 2027, and shall update such report at least every five years.