

SENATE BILL NO. 147

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Education and Health

on February 5, 2026)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Pekarsky)

A BILL to direct the Board of Education to develop alternative graduation pathways to earn a standard diploma; report.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *The Board of Education (the Board) shall develop alternative graduation pathways to earn the Standard Diploma that expand opportunities to complete the verified credit requirements for the Standard Diploma that do not require achieving a passing score on applicable Standards of Learning assessments, including pathways responsive to the needs of English language learners and Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education. In developing such alternative graduation pathways, the Board shall:*

1. Consult with and integrate the perspectives of a broad range of relevant stakeholders, including public school educators, division superintendents, school boards, school principals, school counselors, parents of public school students, student representatives, major education association representatives, and such other stakeholders as the Board deems necessary;

2. Consider alignment of any alternative pathways with the competencies articulated in the Profile of a Virginia Graduate: critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and citizenship;

3. Consider the following elements for incorporation into any such alternative pathways: (i) nonassessment demonstrations of competence that allow students to demonstrate mastery of academic and career skills without relying solely on standardized assessments, including capstone projects, portfolios, locally developed performance assessments, completion of work-based learning experiences, completion of dual-enrollment courses, service-learning opportunities, and attainment of industry-recognized credentials; (ii) alternative assessments that could be used in lieu of or alongside Standards of Learning assessments to earn verified credits, such as nationally normed tests or other assessments as may be approved by the Board; and (iii) other pathway structures or elements designed to encourage hands-on learning and civic engagement, including career and technical education sequences, apprenticeships, early college experiences, or community service projects, with attention to accessibility for English language learners and Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education;

4. Ensure that no alternative pathway developed in accordance with this act would, if implemented, impact or replace the current requirements for earning a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies

33 *Diploma;*

34 *5. Ensure that at least one pathway is developed that includes a nonassessment demonstration of*
35 *competence as a means to earn verified credit, in lieu of receiving a passing score on the applicable*
36 *Standards of Learning Assessment. In doing so, the Board may expand the definition of verified credit as may*
37 *be necessary to include completion of such Board-approved nonassessment demonstration, provided that*
38 *such demonstration meets the rigorous standards established by the Board; and*

39 *6. Consider next steps for approval and implementation of the pathways developed pursuant to this act,*
40 *including potential timelines for implementation and the school year for which any such alternative*
41 *graduation pathways shall first apply to students entering grade nine.*

42 *The Board shall submit to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Committee on Education and the*
43 *Senate Committee on Education and Health by January 1, 2027, a report (i) detailing the progress made*
44 *toward developing the alternative graduation pathways to earn a Standard Diploma, pursuant to this act,*
45 *including a detailed description of the specific alternative graduation pathways developed; (ii) summarizing*
46 *the stakeholder engagement process and the perspectives received from stakeholders, in accordance with*
47 *subdivision 1; and (iii) outlining the next steps and potential timeline for approval and implementation of the*
48 *alternative graduation pathways to earn a Standard Diploma developed by the Board pursuant to this act,*
49 *considered by the Board in accordance with subdivision 6.*