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SENATE BILL NO. 264

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 Stanley)

A BILL to direct the Department of Education to develop and make available to school boards guidelines for including in individualized education programs strategies and supports to address and prevent bullying, harassment, and teasing and model instructional programs or materials for students on awareness, understanding, and acceptance of neurodivergence.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. That the Department of Education shall, for the purpose of addressing and preventing bullying, harassment, and teasing of children with disabilities and increasing awareness and acceptance of neurodivergence, including autism spectrum disorder, among students, develop, make available to each school board, and post on its website:

1. Guidelines for individualized education program (IEP) teams to use in developing IEPs for children with disabilities relating to addressing and preventing bullying, harassment, and teasing that shall (i) recommend that an IEP team consider whether the child has a disability that affects social skills development or is experiencing or has experienced bullying, harassment, or teasing in school and (ii) if either consideration in clause (i) is applicable, include guidance on certain strategies, services, and supports to consider including in the child's IEP to support the child in achieving objectives relating to addressing and preventing bullying, harassment, and teasing, including the development of appropriate social skills and self-advocacy and self-awareness skills; and

2. Model instructional programs or materials for students designed to increase awareness, understanding, and acceptance of neurodivergence and autism spectrum disorder.

In developing such guidelines and model instructional programs or materials, the Department shall consult with special education instructors, groups dedicated to disability and neurodivergence advocacy, and such other stakeholders as the Department deems appropriate.