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HOUSE BILL NO. 56

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Education

on February 11, 2026)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Feggans)

A *BILL* to direct the Department of Veterans Services and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to study the fiscal and administrative impact of expanding eligibility for the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program to include line of duty deaths; report.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. The Department of Veterans Services (DVS), in coordination with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and each public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth, shall conduct a study to evaluate the fiscal and administrative impact of expanding eligibility for tuition and mandatory fee waivers under the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (the Program) established pursuant to § 23.1-608 of the Code of Virginia to survivors and dependents of military service members who died in the line of duty. In conducting such study, DVS and SCHEV shall:

1. Estimate the number of additional survivors and dependents who would become eligible if line of duty deaths were expressly included as a qualifying category under § 23.1-608 of the Code of Virginia;

2. Estimate the additional cost to public institutions of higher education associated with tuition and mandatory fee waivers for such individuals, including a breakdown by institution where practicable;

3. Assess whether such additional cost would be absorbed by institutions or require additional state support;

4. Review eligibility verification standards and the role of federal certification in determining line of duty deaths; and

5. Make recommendations regarding statutory changes, implementation timelines, or fiscal safeguards should the General Assembly choose to expand eligibility to such survivors and dependents in a future session.

DVS and SCHEV shall report their findings and recommendations to the Chairs of the House Committee on Appropriations, the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on Education and Health, and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations no later than December 1, 2026.

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