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HOUSE BILL NO. 705  
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE  
(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Education and Health  
on February 19, 2026)  
(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Hayes)

*A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 22.1-204.4, relating to Board of Education; programs and courses of instruction; water safety instruction for elementary school students required; guidelines.*

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 22.1-204.4 as follows:**

**§ 22.1-204.4. Public elementary schools; water safety instruction required; guidelines.**

*A. The Board shall develop and make available to each school board guidelines for a program of instruction on water safety to be provided as a part of any physical or health education instruction provided to elementary school students and that shall include instruction on:*

- 1. Awareness of water conditions;*
- 2. Safe behaviors in and around the water; and*
- 3. Preventing and reducing the risk of drowning and the risk of injury, including instruction on the proper use of flotation devices and the importance of swimming in areas monitored by a lifeguard.*

*B. Each school board shall provide as a part of any physical or health education instruction provided to students in the elementary school grades a program of instruction on water safety, in accordance with the guidelines developed by the Board pursuant to subsection A.*

**2. That the Board of Education shall develop and make available to each school board by September 1, 2026, the guidelines for a program of instruction on water safety required pursuant to subsection A of § 22.1-204.4 of the Code of Virginia, as created by this act.**

**3. That each school board shall begin providing a program of instruction on water safety to students in the elementary school grades in accordance with subsection B of § 22.1-204.4 of the Code of Virginia, as created by this act, no later than the 2027–2028 school year.**