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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.

SENATE SUBSTITUTE

HB705S1