

26108459D

HOUSE BILL NO. 969

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee for Courts of Justice
on February 23, 2026)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Price)

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 1 of Title 9.1 an article numbered 17, consisting of a section numbered 9.1-194, relating to the Department of Criminal Justice Services; safer communities; firearm violence intervention and prevention initiatives.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 1 of Title 9.1 an article numbered 17, consisting of a section numbered 9.1-194, as follows:

Article 17.

Safer Communities Through Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention.

§ 9.1-194. Safer communities through firearm violence intervention and prevention initiatives.

A. From such funds as may be appropriated, the Office of Safer Communities (the Office), a part of the Office of Safer Communities and Youth Services within the Division of Programs and Services at the Department shall:

1. Serve as the Commonwealth's primary resource for research, best practices, and strategies for the implementation of firearm violence intervention, community-based intervention, and group violence intervention programs designed to reduce violence in communities;

2. Support statewide firearm violence intervention and prevention research. The Office shall serve as the Commonwealth's clearinghouse for data regarding firearm violence and firearm violence intervention and prevention programs collected by state and local agencies and shall maintain an integrated information system containing data, research, and statistical information regarding firearm violence in the Commonwealth;

3. Facilitate sharing of data regarding firearm violence and firearm violence intervention and prevention programs among state and local agencies, including local health departments, institutions of higher education, research institutions, hospitals and other medical care facilities, community-based organizations, and law-enforcement agencies;

4. In conjunction with the Department of Health, Department of Social Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Department of Education, and Department of Veterans Services, work to enhance programs and strategies designed to address firearm violence, including programs that focus on the prevention of suicide or domestic violence in the populations served by such departments;

5. Facilitate coordination between state agencies, localities, and community-based organizations to develop comprehensive practices for addressing firearm violence and implementing firearm violence intervention and prevention programs;

6. Develop and publish best practices for establishing firearm violence intervention and prevention programs, including street outreach, hospital-based violence intervention, community-based violence intervention, and group violence intervention programs;

7. Provide technical assistance to localities and community-based organizations to support the establishment of firearm violence intervention and prevention programs, including technical assistance on capacity building, obtaining grant funding, and collecting data;

8. From such funds as may be appropriated, provide grants to agencies of local government, community-based organizations, and hospitals for the purpose of supporting implementation of evidence-informed firearm violence intervention and prevention efforts, including street outreach, hospital-based violence intervention, community-based violence intervention, and group violence intervention programs;

9. Evaluate state and community-based violence intervention programs and policies that receive funding through the Office;

10. Produce reports and provide analysis and interpretation of statistical information regarding firearm violence, including information on firearm trafficking, crimes involving firearms, mass shootings, suicides, and fatal and nonfatal firearm injuries;

11. Establish training standards and publish and periodically update model policies for law-enforcement personnel containing best practices for (i) the service and execution of substantial risk orders and protective orders; (ii) the processes for obtaining a firearm from an individual prohibited from possessing a firearm; and (iii) addressing the different types of firearm violence, including unintentional injuries, mass shootings, domestic violence, suicides, homicides, and community violence; and

12. Apply for and accept grants from the United States government or any other source in carrying out the purposes of this article and accept any and all donations, both real and personal, and grants of money from any governmental unit or public agency, or from any institution, person, firm, or corporation, and may

SENATE SUBSTITUTE

HB969SI

2/23/26 17:49

60 *receive, utilize, and dispose of the same. Any moneys received pursuant to this section shall be deposited in*
61 *the state treasury to the account of the Department.*

62 *B. The Office may require and shall receive from every department, division, board, bureau, commission,*
63 *authority, or other agency created by the Commonwealth, or to which the Commonwealth is a party, or any*
64 *political subdivision thereof, cooperation and assistance in the performance of its duties. The Office may also*
65 *consult and exchange information with local government agencies and interested stakeholders, institutions of*
66 *higher education, research institutions, hospitals and other medical care facilities, and community-based*
67 *organizations.*

68 *C. The Office shall report annually on or before October 1 to the Governor and the General Assembly.*
69 *The report shall include a summary of activities for the year and any recommendations to address firearm*
70 *violence within the Commonwealth. The Department shall ensure that such report is available to the public.*

71 **2. That the provisions of this act shall become effective on July 1, 2027.**

72 **3. That the Department of Criminal Justice Services (the Department) shall develop a plan, including**
73 **any additional staffing needs and cost estimates, to restructure or augment the Office of Safer**
74 **Communities to perform the duties described in the first enactment of this act. In developing such**
75 **plan, the Department shall coordinate with other state agencies to ensure that existing efforts and**
76 **practices are leveraged, especially as they relate to data collection and reporting. The Department shall**
77 **provide such plan to the Chairs of the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations and the**
78 **House Committee on Appropriations by November 1, 2026.**