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HOUSE BILL NO. 231**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rules
on February 27, 2026)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Cohen)

A *BILL* to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 24 of Title 2.2 an article numbered 31, consisting of sections numbered 2.2-2499.9 through 2.2-2499.13, and to repeal Chapter 50.1 (§§ 30-329.1 through 30-329.4) of Title 30 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Autism Advisory Council repealed; Autism Advisory Board established.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 24 of Title 2.2 an article numbered 31, consisting of sections numbered 2.2-2499.9 through 2.2-2499.13, as follows:

*Article 31.**Autism Advisory Board.***§ 2.2-2499.9. Autism Advisory Board; purpose.**

The Autism Advisory Board (the Board) is established as an advisory board, within the meaning of § 2.2-2100, in the executive branch of state government. The purpose of the Board is to advise the Governor, cabinet members, and the General Assembly on strategies to promote coordination of services and resources among agencies involved in the delivery of services to Virginians with autism spectrum disorders and to increase public awareness of such services and resources.

§ 2.2-2499.10. Membership; terms; quorum; meetings; compensation and expenses.

A. The Board shall have a total membership of 12 members that shall consist of six legislative members and six nonlegislative citizen members. Members shall be appointed as follows: three members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; three members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; and six nonlegislative citizen members to be appointed by the Governor who represent or have experience with persons with autism spectrum disorders, autism advocacy organizations, parents of children with autism, clinicians in the autism field, or representatives from autism programs at public schools or institutions of higher education. Nonlegislative citizen members of the Board shall be citizens of the Commonwealth.

Legislative members shall serve terms coincident with their terms of office.

B. Appointments to fill vacancies, other than by expiration of a term, shall be for the unexpired terms. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments. All members may be reappointed. After the initial staggering of terms, nonlegislative citizen members shall be appointed for a term of four years. No nonlegislative citizen member shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms; however, the remainder of any term to which a member is appointed to fill a vacancy shall not constitute a term in determining the member's eligibility for reappointment.

C. The Board shall elect from its membership a chair and vice-chair. A majority of the members of the Board shall constitute a quorum. Meetings of the Board shall be limited to four per year and shall be held upon the call of the chair or whenever the majority of the members so request.

D. Legislative members of the Board shall receive such compensation as provided in § 30-19.12. Nonlegislative citizen members shall receive no compensation for their services but all members shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as provided in §§ 2.2-2813 and 2.2-2825.

§ 2.2-2499.11. Powers and duties; report; acceptance of gifts and grants.

A. The Board shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Advise the Governor on ways to improve the coordination of services and resources among agencies involved in the delivery of services to Virginians with autism spectrum disorders;

2. Undertake studies, symposiums, research, and factual reports to gather information to formulate and present recommendations to the Governor related to issues of concern and importance to individuals with autism spectrum disorders in the Commonwealth;

3. Advise the Governor as needed regarding any statutory, regulatory, or other issues of importance to individuals with autism spectrum disorders in the Commonwealth;

4. Determine services, resources, and policies that may further address the needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorders; and

5. Report annually by December 1 to the Governor and the General Assembly on the activities of the Board and provide recommendations for improving state policies and programs related to the coordination of services and resources among agencies involved in the delivery of services to Virginians with autism spectrum disorders and to increase public awareness of such services and resources. The chair of the Board

60 shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an annual executive summary of the interim activity
61 and work of the Board no later than the first day of each regular session of the General Assembly. The
62 executive summary shall be submitted as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of
63 Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted to
64 the General Assembly's website.

65 B. The Board may apply for, accept, and expend gifts, grants, or donations from public or private sources
66 to enable it to carry out its objectives.

67 **§ 2.2-2499.12. Staff; cooperation from other state agencies.**

68 The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services shall provide staff support to the
69 Board. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Board, upon request.

70 **§ 2.2-2499.13. Sunset.**

71 This article shall expire on July 1, 2029.

72 **2. That Chapter 50.1 (§§ 30-329.1 through 30-329.4) of Title 30 of the Code of Virginia is repealed.**

73 **3. That the terms of persons currently serving as members of the Autism Advisory Council pursuant to**
74 **Chapter 50.1 (§ 30-329.1 et seq.) of Title 30 of the Code of Virginia, as repealed by this act, shall expire**
75 **on July 1, 2026.**

76 **4. That the initial appointments of nonlegislative citizen members of the Autism Advisory Board, as**
77 **created by this act, shall be staggered as follows: one member for a term of one year, two members for**
78 **a term of two years, two members for a term of three years, and one member for a term of four years.**