

# VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY - 2026 SESSION

## CHAPTER 606

*An Act to amend and reenact § 23.1-615.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program; scholarships; administration; online portal.*

[H 404]

Approved April 13, 2026

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

**1. That § 23.1-615.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

**§ 23.1-615.1. Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program.**

A. The Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program (the Program) is established for the purpose of reckoning with the history of the Commonwealth, addressing the long legacy of slavery in the Commonwealth, and acknowledging that the foundational success of several public institutions of higher education was based on the labor of enslaved individuals.

B. Consistent with the purpose set forth in subsection A, Longwood University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, the Virginia Military Institute, and The College of William and Mary in Virginia shall each implement and execute the Program, with any source of funds other than state funds or tuition or fee increases, by annually (i) identifying and memorializing, to the extent possible, all enslaved individuals who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property and (ii) providing a tangible benefit such as a college scholarship or community-based economic development program for individuals or specific communities with a demonstrated historic connection to slavery that will empower families to be lifted out of the cycle of poverty. *No institution shall pass the cost of any such scholarship program to other enrolled students by increasing the rate of tuition or mandatory fees.*

C. The Council shall (i) collaborate with the institutions set forth in subsection B to establish guidelines for the implementation of the Program, including guidelines for the identification of all enslaved individuals who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property, the development of appropriate means to memorialize these individuals, the development of programs for individuals and communities still experiencing the legacy of slavery to empower them to break the cycle of poverty, eligibility criteria for participation in such programs, and the duration of such programs; (ii) *establish a work group that consists of a representative of each institution set forth in subsection B that meets at least semiannually to discuss Program administration, including sharing best practices on administration and research, coordinating funding and fundraising strategies, developing outreach and marketing plans, collaborating on historical and genealogical research efforts, and aligning government and community engagement initiatives; and (iii) develop and maintain a single statewide online portal that describes each institution's program, criteria, and investments in scholarship students or the community, lists designated points of contact at each institution, shares application timelines and processes, and offers historical context and ongoing memorial updates.*

D. Each institution set forth in subsection B shall continue the activities set forth in subsection B pursuant to the Program for a period equal in length to the period during which the institution used enslaved individuals to support the institution or until scholarships have been awarded to a number of recipients equal to 100 percent of the population of enslaved individuals identified pursuant to subsection B who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property, whichever occurs first.

E. Each institution set forth in subsection B shall annually submit to the Council information on the implementation of the Program. The Council shall compile such information in a report and submit such report no later than November 1 of each year to the ~~Chairmen~~ *Chairs* of the House Committee on Appropriations, the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on Education and Health, the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations, and the Virginia African American Advisory Board.

F. Each private institution of higher education with a legacy of slavery that is similar to that of any institution set forth in subsection B is strongly encouraged to participate in the Program on a voluntary basis.