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VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 53.1-134, 53.1-136, 53.1-154, and 53.1-165.1 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 53.1-154.2, relating to Virginia Parole Board; powers and duties; juvenile offenders; parole procedures and considerations.

[H 318]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:
1. That §§ 53.1-134, 53.1-136, 53.1-154, and 53.1-165.1 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 53.1-154.2 as follows:

§ 53.1-134. Virginia Parole Board; appointment of members.

A. There shall be a Virginia Parole Board (the Board) that shall consist of ~~up to~~ five members appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the General Assembly, if in session when such appointment is made, and if not in session, then at its next succeeding session. At least one member of the Board shall be a representative of a crime victims' organization or a victim of crime as defined in subsection B of § 19.2-11.01. All members of the Board shall have significant professional experience working in criminal law, corrections, mental health and adolescent development, reentry and community services, or victim services.

B. The term of each member of the Board shall be four years. When a vacancy on the Board occurs, the Governor shall appoint a member to fill such vacancy within 60 days.

The members of the Board shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

§ 53.1-136. Powers and duties of Board; notice of release of certain inmates; report.

In addition to the other powers and duties imposed upon the Board by this article, the Board shall:

1. Adopt, subject to approval by the Governor, general rules governing the granting of parole and eligibility requirements, which shall be published and posted for public review. Such eligibility rules shall require consideration of the prisoner's demonstrated rehabilitation, economic and educational development, commitment to prosocial behavior, and community and family supports;

2. Adopt, subject to approval by the Governor, rules providing for the granting of parole to those prisoners who are eligible for parole pursuant to subsection E of § 53.1-165.1. The Board shall ensure that such prisoners have a meaningful opportunity for release on the basis of demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation and the lesser culpability of juvenile offenders;

3. a. Release on parole for such time and upon such terms and conditions as the Board shall prescribe, persons convicted of felonies and confined under the laws of the Commonwealth in any correctional facility in Virginia when those persons become eligible and are found suitable for parole, according to those rules adopted pursuant to subdivisions 1 and 2;

b. Notify the Department of Corrections of its decision to grant discretionary parole or conditional release to an inmate. The Department of Corrections shall set the release date for such inmate no sooner than 30 business days from the date that the Department of Corrections receives such notification from the Chairman of the Board, except that the Department of Corrections may set an earlier release date in the case of an inmate granted conditional release pursuant to § 53.1-40.02. In the case of an inmate granted parole who was convicted of a felony and sentenced to a term of 10 or more years, or an inmate granted conditional release, the Board shall notify the attorney for the Commonwealth in the jurisdiction where the inmate was sentenced (i) by electronic means at least 21 business days prior to such inmate's release that such inmate has been granted discretionary parole or conditional release pursuant to § 53.1-40.01 or 53.1-40.02 or (ii) by telephone or other electronic means prior to such inmate's release that such inmate has been granted conditional release pursuant to § 53.1-40.02 where death is imminent. Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter the obligations of the Board under § 53.1-155 for investigation prior to release on discretionary parole;

c. Provide that in any case where a person who is released on parole has been committed to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services under the provisions of Chapter 9 (§ 37.2-900 et seq.) of Title 37.2 the conditions of his parole shall include the requirement that the person comply with all conditions given him by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and that he follow all of the terms of his treatment plan;

4. Revoke parole and order the reincarceration of any parolee or impose a condition of participation in any component of the Statewide Community-Based Corrections System for State-Responsible Offenders (§ 53.1-67.2 et seq.) on any eligible parolee, when, in the judgment of the Board, he has violated the conditions of his parole or is otherwise unfit to be on parole;

57 5. Issue final discharges to persons released by the Board on parole when the Board is of the opinion that
 58 the discharge of the parolee will not be incompatible with the welfare of such person or of society. Final
 59 discharges granted prior to the expiration of a period of parole shall be granted only upon approval by a
 60 majority of Board members. The Board shall publish an annual report regarding final discharges issued by the
 61 Board during the previous 12 months. The report shall include (i) the name of each prisoner granted final
 62 discharge, (ii) the offense of which the prisoner was convicted, (iii) the jurisdiction in which such offense was
 63 committed, (iv) the length of the prisoner's sentence and the date such sentence was imposed, (v) the amount
 64 of time the prisoner has been on parole in the community, (vi) the basis for the final discharge, and (vii) the
 65 vote of each Board member;

66 6. Make investigations and reports with respect to any commutation of sentence, pardon, reprieve or
 67 remission of fine, or penalty when requested by the Governor;

68 7. Publish a statement by the fifteenth day of each month regarding the actions taken by the Board on the
 69 parole of prisoners during the prior month. The statement shall list (i) the name of each prisoner considered
 70 for parole, (ii) the offense of which the prisoner was convicted, (iii) the jurisdiction in which such offense
 71 was committed, (iv) the length of the prisoner's sentence and the date such sentence was imposed, (v) the
 72 amount of time the prisoner has served, (vi) whether the prisoner was granted or denied parole, (vii)
 73 individualized reasons for the grant or denial of parole, and (viii) the final vote and the names of the Board
 74 members who voted in favor of granting parole and those who voted against. However, in the case of a
 75 prisoner granted parole, the information set forth in clauses (i) through (viii) regarding such prisoner shall be
 76 included in the statement published in the month immediately succeeding the month in which notification of
 77 the decision to grant parole was given to the attorney for the Commonwealth and any victims;

78 8. Publish an annual report regarding actions taken by the Board on the parole of prisoners during the
 79 prior year. Such report shall contain each monthly statement published by the Board pursuant to subdivision 7
 80 and a summary that identifies (i) the total number of prisoners considered for parole, (ii) the number of
 81 persons granted parole, (iii) the number of persons denied parole, and (iv) the most common reasons for
 82 which parole was granted or denied;

83 9. a. Ensure that each person eligible for parole receives a timely and thorough review of his suitability for
 84 release on parole, including a review of any relevant post-sentencing information. If parole is denied, *the*
 85 *Board shall provide (i) the basis for the denial of parole shall be in writing and shall give include specific,*
 86 *individualized reasons for such denial to such inmate and (ii) recommendations such inmate may take to*
 87 *demonstrate commitment to rehabilitation; and*

88 b. *In the case of any prisoner eligible for parole pursuant to subsection E of § 53.1-165.1, if parole is*
 89 *denied, each Board member shall identify the reasoning for such decision at the time such member's vote is*
 90 *cast, including any youth-related factor and evidence of maturity and rehabilitation that was considered. The*
 91 *Board shall provide to such prisoner for whom parole is denied recommendations to demonstrate*
 92 *commitment to rehabilitation and at the next hearing, the Board shall consider whether the prisoner has*
 93 *followed such recommendations; and*

94 10. Convene a public meeting, either in person or via video conference, when conducting the final
 95 deliberation and vote regarding whether the Board will grant parole to a prisoner. The prisoner being
 96 considered for parole or his attorney shall be permitted to attend such meeting either, in the Board's
 97 discretion, in person or via video conference. The victim shall be permitted to attend and participate in such
 98 meeting either, in the Board's discretion, in person or via video or phone conference or to provide written or
 99 recorded testimony. No decision to grant discretionary parole shall be made by the Board unless such
 100 decision was discussed and debated at a meeting at which no fewer than three of the Board members were
 101 present. Whether the Board grants or denies discretionary parole to an inmate, each Board member shall
 102 identify his reasoning for such decision at the time such member's vote is cast.

103 **§ 53.1-154. Times at which Virginia Parole Board to review cases.**

104 The Virginia Parole Board shall by regulation divide each calendar year into such equal parts as it may
 105 deem appropriate to the efficient administration of the parole system. Unless there be reasonable cause for
 106 extension of the time within which to review and decide a case, the Board shall review and decide the case of
 107 each prisoner no later than that part of the calendar year in which he becomes eligible for parole, and at least
 108 annually thereafter, until he is released on parole or discharged, except that upon any such review the Board
 109 may schedule the next review as much as three years thereafter, provided there are ~~ten~~ 10 years or more or
 110 life imprisonment remaining on the sentence in such case; *however, in the case of those prisoners eligible for*
 111 *parole pursuant to subsection E of § 53.1-165.1, such review shall be conducted annually.* Such reviews shall
 112 include a live interview of the prisoner by a Board member or a staff member designated by the Board. Such
 113 interviews may be conducted in person or by videoconference or telephone at the discretion of the Board.
 114 Absent imminent death of the prisoner or other extraordinary circumstances, which shall be documented by
 115 the Board in the prisoner's file, the Board shall not grant parole to any prisoner who has not received a live
 116 interview within the prior calendar year. Notwithstanding any other provision of this article, in the case of a
 117 parole revocation, if such person is otherwise eligible for parole, the Board shall review and decide his case
 118 no later than that part of the calendar year one year subsequent to the part of the calendar year in which he

119 was returned to a facility as provided in § 53.1-161. Thereafter, his case shall be reviewed as specified in this
 120 section. The Board, in addition, may review the case of any prisoner eligible for parole at any other time and
 121 may review the case of any prisoner prior to that part of the year otherwise specified. In the discretion of the
 122 Board, interviews may be conducted by the Board or its representatives and may be either public or private.

123 **§ 53.1-154.2. Parole procedures and considerations for certain juvenile offenders; appeal.**

124 A. For the purpose of this section, "juvenile offender" means a prisoner eligible for parole pursuant to
 125 subsection E of § 53.1-165.1.

126 B. The Board shall provide a meaningful opportunity to obtain release for juvenile offenders on the basis
 127 of demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation and the lesser culpability of juvenile offenders.

128 C. In providing such meaningful opportunity to obtain release, the Board shall give substantial weight to
 129 the following when making a determination on whether to grant parole to any juvenile offender: (i) such
 130 juvenile offender's demonstrated emotional maturity and reflection, including reflection on his past conduct;
 131 (ii) such juvenile offender's maturity of judgment, including improved impulse control, development of
 132 prosocial relationships, and independence from negative influences; (iii) such juvenile offender's
 133 participation in rehabilitative, treatment, and educational programs while incarcerated, if such programs
 134 were available to him; (iv) such juvenile offender's employment history while incarcerated, if employment
 135 opportunities were available to him; (v) any obstacles such juvenile offender may have faced as a juvenile
 136 entering an adult correctional facility; (vi) such juvenile offender's institutional conduct while incarcerated,
 137 with greater weight given to more recent conduct occurring after he has had time to mature and adjust to
 138 prison; (vii) such juvenile offender's occupational skills and employment potential, including his ability and
 139 readiness to assume employment-related obligations and responsibilities; (viii) such juvenile offender's
 140 reentry plan; and (ix) any other information relevant to such juvenile offender's maturity and rehabilitation.

141 D. The Board shall give substantial mitigating weight to the following factors when making a
 142 determination on whether to grant parole to any juvenile offender: (i) the diminished culpability and
 143 heightened capacity for change for juveniles as compared to adults; (ii) the hallmark features of juveniles,
 144 including immaturity, impetuosity, and limited ability to assess or appreciate risks and consequences; (iii) the
 145 age of such juvenile offender at the time of the offense; (iv) whether and to what extent peer or adult pressure
 146 influenced such juvenile offender to commit the offense; (v) such juvenile offender's family and community
 147 circumstances at the time of the offense, including any history of abuse, trauma, poverty, and involvement in
 148 the child welfare system; and (vi) the lack of ability of such juvenile offender to extricate himself from
 149 criminogenic circumstances.

150 E. Under no circumstance shall the Board consider a juvenile offender's age at the time of the offense as
 151 an aggravating factor to deny parole. The Board shall give significant consideration to the juvenile offender's
 152 ability to change when making a parole consideration.

153 F. A juvenile offender may request for reconsideration or appeal of a decision by the Board not to grant
 154 parole based on (i) the Board's failure to give substantial weight to such juvenile offender's age and its
 155 related mitigating circumstances as required by this section or (ii) the Board's overreliance on static factors
 156 such as the nature and circumstances of the offense and failure to ground its decision in evidence of maturity,
 157 rehabilitation, and a lack of present danger to public safety. The Board shall provide individualized reasons
 158 for the grant or denial of parole upon reconsideration or appeal.

159 **§ 53.1-165.1. Limitation on the application of parole statutes.**

160 A. The provisions of this article, except §§ 53.1-160 and 53.1-160.1, shall not apply to any sentence
 161 imposed or to any prisoner incarcerated upon a conviction for a felony offense committed on or after January
 162 1, 1995. Any person sentenced to a term of incarceration for a felony offense committed on or after January
 163 1, 1995, shall not be eligible for parole upon that offense.

164 B. The provisions of this article shall apply to any person who was sentenced by a jury prior to June 9,
 165 2000, for any felony offense committed on or after January 1, 1995, and who remained incarcerated for such
 166 offense on July 1, 2020, other than (i) a Class 1 felony or (ii) any of the following felony offenses where the
 167 victim was a minor: (a) rape in violation of § 18.2-61; (b) forcible sodomy in violation of § 18.2-67.1; (c)
 168 object sexual penetration in violation of § 18.2-67.2; (d) aggravated sexual battery in violation of § 18.2-67.3;
 169 (e) an attempt to commit a violation of clause (a), (b), (c), or (d); or (f) carnal knowledge in violation of
 170 § 18.2-63, 18.2-64.1, or 18.2-64.2.

171 C. The Parole Board shall establish procedures for consideration of parole of persons entitled under
 172 subsection B consistent with the provisions of § 53.1-154.

173 D. Any person who meets eligibility criteria for parole under subsection B and pursuant to § 53.1-151 as
 174 of July 1, 2020, shall be scheduled for a parole interview no later than July 1, 2021, allowing for extension of
 175 time for reasonable cause.

176 E. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection A or any other provision of this article to the contrary,
 177 any person sentenced to a term of life imprisonment for a single felony or multiple felonies committed while
 178 the person was a juvenile and who has served at least 20 years of such sentence shall be eligible for parole
 179 and any person who has active sentences that total more than 20 years for a single felony or multiple felonies
 180 committed while the person was a juvenile and who has served at least 20 years of such sentences shall be

181 eligible for parole. The Board shall review and decide the case of each prisoner who is eligible for parole in
182 accordance with § §§ 53.1-154 *and* 53.1-154.2 and rules adopted pursuant to subdivision 2 of § 53.1-136.
183 **2. That the provisions of § 53.1-134 of the Code of Virginia, as amended by this act, shall become**
184 **effective on July 1, 2028.**