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HOUSE BILL NO. 1310

Offered January 16, 2026

A BILL to require the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to evaluate the impact of recent federal changes to graduate and professional student loan programs on in-state students; report.

Patron—Anthony

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (the Council) shall evaluate the impact of recent federal changes to graduate and professional student loan programs on in-state students enrolled at public institutions of higher education and private nonprofit institutions eligible to participate in the Tuition Assistance Grant Program (§ 23.1-628 et seq. of the Code of Virginia). Such evaluation shall be limited to the effects of revised federal borrowing limits, the elimination of federal Grad PLUS loans, and any related federal definitions that alter the classification of graduate and professional programs for student financial aid purposes.

§ 2. In conducting such evaluation, the Council shall:

1. Identify all graduate and professional programs offered in the Commonwealth that are expected to be affected by federal loan changes described in § 1;

2. Determine the number of in-state students enrolled in such programs, disaggregated by discipline, level of study, demographic group, and geographic region;

3. Estimate typical program costs, projected federal borrowing shortfalls, and expected out-of-pocket costs for students beginning programs on or after July 1, 2026;

4. Assess the potential impact of such federal changes on the Commonwealth's workforce pipeline in fields that rely on graduate or professional education for licensure or employment, including nursing, other health professions, education, behavioral health, social work, public health, engineering, and related high-need sectors;

5. Inventory existing state programs, including scholarships, loan repayment initiatives, and tuition assistance programs, and evaluate the extent to which such programs may mitigate identified financing gaps; and

6. Develop recommendations for state-level options to support continued access to graduate and professional education in critical workforce fields. Such recommendations may include targeted forgivable loan programs, state-supported financing mechanisms, employer partnerships, institutional transparency requirements, or any other strategies that the Council deems appropriate.

§ 3. The Council shall convene an advisory group to inform such evaluation. The advisory group shall include representatives from (i) public institutions of higher education; (ii) at least one historically black college or university located in the Commonwealth; (iii) the Department of Health Professions or relevant health licensing boards; (iv) the Department of Education, for matters relating to educator preparation and school-based mental health; (v) the Virginia Health Workforce Development Authority; (vi) graduate program directors from affected fields; and (vii) at least one current graduate student enrolled in an affected program. Members may be drawn from existing councils or committees.

§ 4. The Council shall submit a report containing its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly no later than November 1, 2026. The report shall be submitted to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for distribution to the Chairs of the House Committee on Appropriations, the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations, the House Committee on Education, and the Senate Committee on Education and Health.

2. That an emergency exists and this act is in force from its passage.

INTRODUCED

HB1310