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SENATE BILL NO. 147

Offered January 14, 2026

A BILL to direct the Board of Education to develop, approve, and implement alternative graduation pathways to earn a standard diploma; report.

 Patron—Pekarsky

 Referred to Committee on Education and Health

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. The Board of Education shall develop, approve, and implement alternative graduation pathways to earn the Standard Diploma that expand opportunities to complete the verified credit requirements for the Standard Diploma that do not require achieving a passing score on applicable Standards of Learning assessments. In developing, approving, and implementing such alternative graduation pathways, the Board shall:

1. Consult with and integrate the perspectives of a broad range of relevant stakeholders, including public school educators, division superintendents, school boards, school principals, school counselors, parents of public school students, student representatives, major education association representatives, and such other stakeholders as the Board deems necessary;

2. Consider alignment of any alternative pathways with the competencies articulated in the Profile of a Virginia Graduate: critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and citizenship;

3. Consider the following elements for incorporation into any such alternatives pathways: (i) nonassessment demonstrations of competence that allow students to demonstrate mastery of academic and career skills without relying solely on standardized assessments, including capstone projects, portfolios, locally developed performance assessments, completion of work-based learning experiences, completion of dual-enrollment courses, service-learning opportunities, and attainment of industry-recognized credentials; (ii) alternative assessments that could be used in lieu of or alongside of Standards of Learning assessments to earn verified credits, such as nationally normed tests or other assessments as may be approved by the Board; and (iii) other pathway structures or elements designed to encourage hands-on learning and civic engagement, including career and technical education sequences, apprenticeships, early college experiences, or community service projects;

4. Ensure that no alternative pathway impacts or replaces the current requirements for earning a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma;

5. Ensure that at least one pathway is approved that includes a nonassessment demonstration of competence as a means to earn verified credit, in lieu of receiving a passing score on the applicable Standards of Learning Assessment. In doing so, the Board may expand the definition of verified credit as may be necessary to include completion of such Board-approved nonassessment demonstration, provided that such demonstration meets the rigorous standards established by the Board; and

6. Consider potential timelines for implementation, including the school year for which any such alternative graduation pathways shall first apply to students entering grade nine.

The Board shall submit to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health by January 1, 2027, a report (i) detailing the progress made toward developing and approving the alternative graduation pathways to earn a Standard Diploma, pursuant to this act, including a detailed description of the specific alternative graduation pathways developed and approved for implementation; (ii) summarizing the stakeholder engagement process and the perspectives received from stakeholders, in accordance with subdivision 1; and (iii) outlining a potential timeline for implementation of the alternative graduation pathways to earn a Standard Diploma developed and approved by the Board pursuant to this act.

INTRODUCED

SB147