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SENATE BILL NO. 739

Offered January 19, 2026

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Title 9.1 a chapter numbered 16, consisting of a section numbered 9.1-1600, relating to the Virginia Youth Empowerment and Mentoring Grant Fund and Program; established.

Patron—Jones

Unanimous consent to introduce

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Title 9.1 a chapter numbered 16, consisting of a section numbered 9.1-1600 as follows:

CHAPTER 16.

VIRGINIA YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND MENTORING GRANT FUND AND PROGRAM.

§ 9.1-1600. Virginia Youth Empowerment and Mentoring Grant Fund and Program.

A. As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Department" means the Department of Criminal Justice Services.

"Fund" means the Virginia Youth Empowerment and Mentoring Grant Fund.

"Program" means the Virginia Youth Empowerment and Mentoring Grant Program.

B. There is hereby created in the state treasury a special nonreverting fund to be known as the Virginia Youth Empowerment and Mentoring Grant Fund. The Fund shall be established on the books of the Comptroller. All funds appropriated for such purpose and any gifts, donations, grants, bequests, and other funds received on its behalf shall be paid into the state treasury and credited to the Fund. Interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it. Any moneys remaining in the Fund, including interest thereon, at the end of each fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely for the purposes of (i) awarding grants on a competitive basis through the Virginia Youth Empowerment and Mentoring Grant Program established pursuant to subsection C and (ii) implementing and administering the Program. Expenditures and disbursements from the Fund shall be made by the State Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written request signed by the Director of the Department.

C. The Virginia Youth Empowerment and Mentoring Grant Program is hereby established for the purpose of awarding grants on a competitive basis from such funds as may be available from the Fund to community-based organizations for the purpose of placing mentors with high-risk youth in an effort to transition such youth into careers in certified high-wage trades. The program shall be administered by the Department. In administering the program, the Department shall establish and publish guidelines and criteria governing agreements between the Department and grant recipients relating to youth empowerment and mentoring. The Department shall oversee each grant awarded through the program and ensure thorough reporting on such grant. The Department shall maintain data-driven reporting that tracks measurable outcomes, including (i) reductions in homicides and shootings in targeted communities and (ii) successful youth placement in the workforce, which includes (a) apprenticeship enrollment and (b) job retention rates.