

# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Commission on Youth

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### Commission on Youth Announces Passage of Legislation

**RICHMOND** – Delegate Christopher K. Peace, Chairman of the Virginia Commission on Youth, is pleased to announce the initial passage of legislation that originated from two Commission studies: *Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Schools* and the *Study on Unlawful Adoption*. The bills seek to protect Virginia’s students in the classroom from physical discipline, and strengthen prevention services to adoptive children and their families.

Speaking about the Commission’s recommendations, Delegate Peace stated, “Over the course of the past year, Commission members have worked closely with families and stakeholders to develop legislation that will increase protections to Virginia’s school children and also acknowledge the challenges associated with building a family through adoption. I congratulate our members and the bills’ patrons for tackling these very important subjects.”

#### *Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Virginia’s Schools*

Senate Bill 782, patroned by Senator Barbara Favola and co-patroned by Delegate Bell, requires the Virginia Board of Education to promulgate regulations for the use of seclusion and restraint in public schools. This legislation has passed the Senate by a vote of 35 to 4. The bill addresses concerns raised by family members that schools reliance on guidelines allows for broad discretion for the use of seclusion and restraint. The legislation strives to address concerns while acknowledging the distinct emotional and physical developmental difference of students. The Commission’s Vice-Chair, Senator Favola stated, “I am thrilled that the Senate addressed the concerns voiced by families and children and understands the need to regulate seclusion and restraint in our public schools.” A companion bill, House Bill 1443, patroned by Delegate Richard P. Bell, will be heard next week by the full House Education Committee. Delegate Bell stated, “This legislation is a common sense approach that protects our students from totally unacceptable practices. There is no excuse for parents not being informed when their child is restrained or placed in seclusion.”

#### *Study on Unlawful Adoption*

House Bill 1821, patroned by Delegate Peter Farrell and co-patroned by Delegate Peace, supports efforts to provide services to adoptive parents who may be struggling to meet the needs of their child. This legislation passed the House of Delegates unanimously on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Many adoptive parents are not fully aware of their child’s special needs at the time of the adoption. Providing these services may also prevent “re-homing,” which occurs when a child is removed from one adoptive family and placed in another home without following established adoption procedures. Children who are “re-homed” are extremely vulnerable and are at great risk for human trafficking and abuse. Delegate Farrell stated, “Adoptive families may confront a variety

of challenges because their children may have been abused, neglected, and have ongoing emotional or developmental difficulties. Post-adoption services can help these families because they are designed to respond to the needs of adopted children and their families.” A companion bill, Senate Bill 834, patroned by Senator Stephen Martin, also passed the Senate. Senator Martin stated, "Many adoptive families may need unique assistance and support as their children grow. It is not always easy to know where to go, to find the necessary resources. Getting the right support in a time of need makes it more likely that these adoptive families will remain together, and succeed as families."

The Virginia Commission on Youth is a bipartisan, standing legislative commission of the General Assembly comprised of 12 members (six Delegates, three Senators, and three citizens) that provides a legislative forum addressing the needs of and services to the Commonwealth's youth and their families. The Commission contributes to the General Assembly's ability to make sound policy decisions based on well-studied and reasoned recommendations. Additional information about the Commission on Youth and the Commission's initiatives can be obtained on the Commission's website at <http://vcoy.virginia.gov>.

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