

SUBCOMMITTEE: CRIMINAL

SENATE BILL NO. 818

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee for Courts of Justice

on \_\_\_\_\_)

(Patron Prior to Substitute--Senator Morrissey)

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 18.2-254.3, relating to the Behavioral Health Docket Act.

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 18.2-254.3 as follows:**

**§ 18.2-254.3. Behavioral Health Docket Act.**

A. This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Behavioral Health Docket Act."

B. The General Assembly recognizes the critical need to promote public safety and reduce recidivism by addressing co-occurring behavioral health issues, such as mental illness and substance abuse, related to persons in the criminal justice system. It is the intention of the General Assembly to enhance public safety by facilitating the creation of behavioral health dockets to accomplish this purpose.

C. The goals of behavioral health dockets shall include (i) reducing recidivism; (ii) increasing personal, familial, and societal accountability among offenders through ongoing judicial intervention; (iii) addressing mental illness, substance abuse, and other conditions that contribute to criminal behavior and recidivism; (iv) promoting law-abiding behavior and successful reentry of offenders following incarceration; and (v) promoting effective planning and use of resources within the criminal justice system and community agencies. Behavioral health dockets promote outcomes that will benefit not only the offender but society as well.

D. Behavioral health dockets are specialized criminal court dockets within the existing structure of Virginia's court system that enable the judiciary to manage its workload more efficiently. Under the leadership and regular interaction of presiding judges, and through voluntary offender participation, behavioral health dockets shall address offenders with mental health conditions and drug addictions that

27 contribute to criminal behavior. Behavioral health dockets shall employ evidence-based practices to  
28 diagnose behavioral health illness and provide treatment, enhance public safety, reduce recidivism, ensure  
29 offender accountability, and promote offender rehabilitation in the community. Local officials shall  
30 complete a planning process recognized by the state behavioral health docket advisory committee before  
31 establishing a behavioral health docket program.

32 E. Administrative oversight of implementation of the Behavioral Health Docket Act shall be  
33 conducted by the Supreme Court of Virginia. The Supreme Court of Virginia shall be responsible for (i)  
34 providing oversight of the distribution of funds for behavioral health dockets; (ii) providing technical  
35 assistance to behavioral health dockets; (iii) providing training to judges who preside over behavioral  
36 health dockets; (iv) providing training to the providers of administrative, case management, and treatment  
37 services to behavioral health dockets; and (v) monitoring the completion of evaluations of the  
38 effectiveness and efficiency of behavioral health dockets in the Commonwealth.

39 F. A state behavioral health docket advisory committee shall be established in the judicial branch.  
40 The committee shall be chaired by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia, who shall appoint  
41 a vice-chair to act in his absence. The membership of the committee shall include a behavioral health  
42 circuit court judge, a behavioral health general district court judge, a behavioral health juvenile and  
43 domestic relations district court judge, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court or his designee, the  
44 Governor or his designee, and a representative from each of the following entities: the Commonwealth's  
45 Attorneys' Services Council, the Virginia Court Clerks' Association, the Virginia Indigent Defense  
46 Commission, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, a community services  
47 board or behavioral health authority, and a local community-based probation and pretrial services agency.

48 G. Each jurisdiction or combination of jurisdictions that intend to establish a behavioral health  
49 docket or continue the operation of an existing behavioral health docket shall establish a local behavioral  
50 health docket advisory committee. Jurisdictions that establish separate adult and juvenile behavioral health  
51 dockets may establish an advisory committee for each such docket. Each local behavioral health docket  
52 advisory committee shall ensure quality, efficiency, and fairness in the planning, implementation, and  
53 operation of the behavioral health dockets that serve the jurisdiction or combination of jurisdictions.

54 Advisory committee membership may include, but shall not be limited to, the following persons or their  
55 designees: (i) the behavioral health docket judge; (ii) the attorney for the Commonwealth or, where  
56 applicable, the city or county attorney who has responsibility for the prosecution of misdemeanor offenses;  
57 (iii) the public defender or a member of the local criminal defense bar in jurisdictions in which there is no  
58 public defender; (iv) the clerk of the court in which the behavioral health docket is located; (v) a  
59 representative of the Virginia Department of Corrections or the Department of Juvenile Justice, or both,  
60 from the local office that serves the jurisdiction or combination of jurisdictions; (vi) a representative of a  
61 local community-based probation and pretrial services agency; (vii) a local law-enforcement officer; (viii)  
62 a representative of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services or a representative  
63 of local treatment providers, or both; (ix) a representative of the local community services board or  
64 behavioral health authority; (x) the behavioral health docket administrator; (xi) a public health official;  
65 (xii) the county administrator or city manager; and (xiii) any other persons selected by the local behavioral  
66 health docket advisory committee.

67 H. Each local behavioral health docket advisory committee shall establish criteria for the eligibility  
68 and participation of offenders who have been determined to have problems with drug addiction, mental  
69 illness, societal reentry difficulties, or related issues. The committee shall identify and use a  
70 comprehensive, valid, and reliable screening instrument to assess whether the individual is a candidate for  
71 a behavioral health docket. Once an individual is identified as a candidate appropriate for a behavioral  
72 health court docket, a full diagnosis and treatment plan shall be prepared by qualified professionals.

73 Subject to the provisions of this section, neither the establishment of a behavioral health docket  
74 nor anything in this section shall be construed as limiting the discretion of the attorney for the  
75 Commonwealth to prosecute any criminal case arising therein that he deems advisable to prosecute, except  
76 to the extent that the participating attorney for the Commonwealth agrees to do so. No adult offender who  
77 has been convicted of an act of violence, as defined in § 17.1-805 or 19.2-297.1, within the preceding 10  
78 years, and no juvenile offender who has previously been adjudicated not innocent of any such offense  
79 within the preceding 10 years, shall be eligible to participate in any behavioral health docket established  
80 or continued in operation pursuant to this section.

81 I. Each local behavioral health docket advisory committee shall establish policies and procedures  
82 for the operation of the docket to attain the following goals: (i) effective integration of appropriate  
83 treatment services with criminal justice system case processing; (ii) enhanced public safety through  
84 intensive offender supervision and treatment; (iii) prompt identification and placement of eligible  
85 participants; (iv) efficient access to a continuum of related treatment and rehabilitation services; (v)  
86 verified participant abstinence through frequent alcohol and other drug testing and mental health status  
87 assessments, where applicable; (vi) prompt response to participants' noncompliance with program  
88 requirements through a coordinated strategy; (vii) ongoing judicial interaction with each behavioral health  
89 docket participant; (viii) ongoing monitoring and evaluation of program effectiveness and efficiency; (ix)  
90 ongoing interdisciplinary education and training in support of program effectiveness and efficiency; and  
91 (x) ongoing collaboration among behavioral health dockets, public agencies, and community-based  
92 organizations to enhance program effectiveness and efficiency.

93 J. If there is cause for concern that a defendant was experiencing a crisis related to a mental health  
94 or substance abuse disorder then his case will be referred to a behavioral health docket to determine  
95 eligibility for participation. Participation by an offender in a behavioral health docket shall be voluntary  
96 and made pursuant only to a written agreement entered into by and between the offender and the  
97 Commonwealth with the concurrence of the court.

98 K. Each offender shall contribute to the cost of the treatment he receives while participating in a  
99 behavioral health docket pursuant to guidelines developed by the local behavioral health docket advisory  
100 committee.

101 L. Nothing contained in this section shall confer a right or an expectation of a right to treatment  
102 for an offender or be construed as requiring a local behavioral health docket advisory committee to accept  
103 for participation every offender.

104 M. The Office of the Executive Secretary shall, with the assistance of the state behavioral health  
105 docket advisory committee, develop a statewide evaluation model and conduct ongoing evaluations of the  
106 effectiveness and efficiency of all behavioral health dockets. The Executive Secretary shall submit an  
107 annual report of these evaluations to the General Assembly by December 1 of each year. The annual report

108 shall be submitted as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative  
109 Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the  
110 General Assembly's website. Each local behavioral health docket advisory committee shall submit  
111 evaluative reports to the Office of the Executive Secretary as requested.

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