2023 Special Session I

Budget Bill - HB6001 (Chapter 1)

Item 4-6.03

§ 4-6.03 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

a. Any medical/hospitalization benefit program provided for state employees shall include the following provision: any state employee, as defined in § 2.2-2818, Code of Virginia, shall have the option to accept or reject coverage.

b. Except as provided for sworn personnel of the Department of State Police, no payment of, or reimbursement for, the employer paid contribution to the State Police Officers' Retirement System, or any system offering like benefits, shall be made by the Compensation Board of the Commonwealth at a rate greater than the employer rate established for the general classified workforce of the Commonwealth covered under the Virginia Retirement System. Any cost for benefits exceeding such general rate shall be borne by the employee or, in the case of a political subdivision, by the employer.

c. Each agency may, within the funds appropriated by this act, implement a transit and ridesharing incentive program for its employees. With such programs, agencies may reimburse employees for all or a portion of the costs incurred from using public transit, car pools, or van pools. The Secretary of Transportation shall develop guidelines for the implementation of such programs and any agency program must be developed in accordance with such guidelines. The guidelines shall be in accordance with the federal National Energy Policy Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-486), and no program shall provide an incentive that exceeds the actual costs incurred by the employee.

d. Any hospital that serves as the primary medical facility for state employees may be allowed to participate in the State Employee Health Insurance Program pursuant to § 2.2-2818, Code of Virginia, provided that (1) such hospital is not a participating provider in the network, contracted by the Department of Human Resource Management, that serves state employees and (2) such hospital enters into a written agreement with the Department of Human Resource Management as to the rates of reimbursement. The department shall accept the lowest rates offered by the hospital from among the rates charged by the hospital to (1) its largest purchaser of care, (2) any state or federal public program, or (3) any special rate developed by the hospital for the state employee health benefits program which is lower than either of the rates above. If the department and the hospital cannot come to an agreement, the department shall reimburse the hospital at the rates contained in its final offer to the hospital until the dispute is resolved. Any dispute shall be resolved through arbitration or through the procedures established by the Administrative Process Act, as the hospital may decide, without impairment of any residual right to judicial review.

e. Any classified employee of the Commonwealth and any person similarly employed in the legislative, judicial and independent agencies who (i) is compensated on a salaried basis and (ii) works at least twenty hours per week shall be considered a full-time employee for the purposes of participation in the Virginia Retirement System's group life insurance and retirement programs. Any part-time magistrate hired prior to July 1, 1999, shall have the option of participating in the programs under this provision.

f.1. Any member of the Virginia Retirement System who is retired under the provisions of § 51.1-155.1, Code of Virginia who: 1) returns to work in a position that is covered by the provisions of § 51.1-155.1, Code of Virginia

after a break of not less than four years, 2) receives no other compensation for service to a public employer than that provided for the position covered by § 51.1-155.1, Code of Virginia during such period of reemployment, 3) retires within one year of commencing such period of reemployment, and 4) retires directly from service at the end of such period of reemployment may either:

a) Revert to the previous retirement benefit received under the provisions of § 51.1-155.1, Code of Virginia, including any annual cost of living adjustments granted thereon. This benefit may be adjusted upward to reflect the effect of such additional months of service and compensation received during the period of reemployment, or

b) Retire under the provisions of Title 51.1 in effect at the termination of his or her period of reemployment, including any purchase of service that may be eligible for purchase under the provisions of § 51.1-142.2, Code of Virginia.

2. The Virginia Retirement System shall establish procedures for verification by the employer of eligibility for the benefits provided for in this paragraph.

g. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no agency head compensated by funds appropriated in this act may be a member of the Virginia Law Officers' Retirement System created under Title 51.1, Chapter 2.1, Code of Virginia. The provisions of this paragraph are effective on July 1, 2002, and shall not apply to the Chief of the Capitol Police.

h. Full-time employees appointed by the Governor who, except for meeting the minimum service requirements, would be eligible for the provisions of § 51.1-155.1, Code of Virginia, may, upon termination of service, use any severance allowance payment to purchase service to meet, but not exceed, the minimum service requirements of § 51.1-155.1, Code of Virginia. Such service purchase shall be at the rate of 15 percent of the employee's final creditable compensation or average final compensation, whichever is greater, and shall be completed within 90 days of separation of service.

i. When calculating the retirement benefits payable under the Virginia Retirement System (VRS), the State Police Officers' Retirement System (SPORS), the Virginia Law-enforcement Officers' Retirement System (VaLORS), or the Judicial Retirement System (JRS) to any employee of the Commonwealth or its political subdivisions who is called to active duty with the armed forces of the United States, including the United States Coast Guard, the Virginia Retirement System shall:

1) utilize the pre-deployment salary, or the actual salary paid by the Commonwealth or the political subdivision, whichever is higher, when calculating average compensation, and

2) include those months after September 1, 2001 during which the employee was serving on active duty with the armed forces of the United States in the calculation of creditable service.

j. The provisions in § 51.1-144, Code of Virginia, that require a member to contribute five percent of his creditable compensation for each pay period for which he receives compensation on a salary reduction basis, shall not apply to any (i) "state employee," as defined in § 51.1-124.3, Code of Virginia, who is an elected official, or (ii) member of the Judicial Retirement System under Chapter 3 of Title 51.1 (§ 51.1-300 et seq.), who is not a "person who becomes a member on or after July 1, 2010," as defined in § 51.1-124.3, Code of Virginia.

k. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection G of § 51.1-156, any employee of a school division who completed a period of 24 months of leave of absence without pay during October 2013 and who had previously submitted an application for disability retirement to VRS in 2011 may submit an application for disability retirement under the provisions of § 51.1-156. Such application shall be received by the Virginia Retirement System no later than October 1, 2014. This provision shall not be construed to grant relief in any case for which a court of competent jurisdiction has already rendered a decision, as contemplated by Article II, Section 14 of the Constitution of

Virginia.