Recognize Associate Degrees Earned in High School

Current Reality: Virginia law directs school divisions to provide students with a defined pathway to earn an associate degree alongside a high school diploma and directs public colleges and universities to accept dual-enrollment coursework for credit.

In practice, colleges and universities do not uniformly treat a student who earns an associate degree while still in high school the same way they treat a student who earns that same degree after high school. The high school graduate is routinely classified and evaluated as a first-year student rather than as a transfer student, even though the credentials on paper are identical.

Legislative Recommendation: Amend Va. Code § 23.1-907, or add a companion provision, to require that a student who earns an associate degree concurrently with a high school diploma be admitted and credited on the same terms as a student who earns that degree post-high school, including guaranteed admission eligibility and junior-status credit recognition, rather than leaving that treatment optional or dependent on institution-by-institution agreements.