

Senate Bill No. 202

(By Senators Kessler(Acting President), Hall, Unger, Wells,
Stollings Plymale, Prezioso, Wills and Klempa)

[Introduced January 19, 2011; referred to the Committee on Health
and Human Resources; and then to the Committee on Finance.]

A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by
adding thereto a new article, designated §18-21-1, §18-21-2,
§18-21-3 and §18-21-4, all relating to creating a commission
to develop a pilot program to help at-risk youth in West
Virginia; creation of commission; composition of the
commission; powers and duties of the commission; outcome
recommendations for pilot program; goals of the pilot program;
and operation of the pilot program.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

That the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended
by adding thereto a new article, designated §18-21-1, §18-21-2,
§18-21-3 and §18-21-4, all to read as follows:

**ARTICLE 21. THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR
AT-RISK YOUTH.**

§18-21-1. Legislative findings and definitions.

(a) The Legislature finds and declares:

1 (1) That fourteen percent of pregnant women do receive
2 adequate prenatal care;

3 (2) That nearly twenty percent of pregnant women abuse
4 alcohol, prescription or illegal drugs;

5 (3) That West Virginia has the highest rate of women who smoke
6 during pregnancy;

7 (4) West Virginia has one of the nation's highest rates of
8 child abuse and neglect;

9 (5) Over one thousand children are in-state or home placement;

10 (6) Nearly four hundred children are in out-of-state
11 placement;

12 (7) Over two thousand children are in Department of Health and
13 Human Resources custody;

14 (8) Over three thousand children are in the West Virginia
15 foster care system;

16 (9) Over four hundred minority youth are in Division of
17 Juvenile Services custody;

18 (10) Almost seven thousand children drop-out of school each
19 year;

20 (11) Almost seven thousand children appear before the Juvenile
21 Court each year;

22 (12) West Virginia has been cited by the United States Justice
23 Department for having the highest over-representation of minority
24 youth in its juvenile justice system;

25 (A) These negative outcomes for many of West Virginia's youth

1 drains financial resources, depletes the workforce and lowers the
2 tax base; and

3 (B) The cost of housing a youth in the Division of Juvenile
4 Services in West Virginia is over \$90,000 a year;

5 (13) West Virginia has the lowest workforce participation rate
6 in the country at fifty-five percent and the workforce
7 participation rate for young adults age sixteen to twenty-four has
8 dropped significantly over the last few years;

9 (14) According to the West Virginia Picture Funding Report for
10 Children and Families there are more than two hundred fifty
11 different state and federal funding streams that provide over \$5.2
12 billion for services that benefit children, directly support
13 families or strengthen communities;

14 (A) These services lack coordination and there is no
15 comprehensive planning process that would provide adequate and
16 appropriate resources when they are most needed;

17 (B) There is not an effective delivery system at the local
18 community level to deliver these services.

19 (15) Many youth aging out of the juvenile justice and
20 foster-care system graduate into the adult criminal justice system
21 and therefore contributes to and exacerbates the overcrowded prison
22 population and costs the state money; and

23 (16) There is a growing need to help at-risk youth, that have
24 entered the juvenile justice system, reform their lifestyle through
25 educational tutoring and mentoring, to help them on a path where

1 crime is no longer necessary in their life and therefore avoid the
2 adult criminal justice system.

3 (b) As used in this article:

4 (1) "At-risk youth" means all children between birth and
5 seventeen and young adults between the ages of eighteen and
6 twenty-one who are low income still receiving benefits from the
7 West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, legally
8 under the jurisdiction of the Department of Health and Human
9 Resources in custody of the West Virginia Division of Juvenile
10 Services or the selected counties Juvenile Court/Probation
11 Department, or the selected counties school system;

12 (2) "Commission" means The Governor's Commission on Improving
13 Outcomes for At-Risk Youth; and

14 (3) "Status offenders" means youth guilty of behavior that
15 would not be a crime if they were an adult.

16 **§18-21-2. Creation and composition of the commission.**

17 (a) Effective July 1, 2010, there is created the Governor's
18 Commission on Improving Outcomes for At-Risk Youth.

19 (b) The commission is composed of fourteen members: Governor
20 of the State of West Virginia, or his or her designee; Secretary of
21 the Department of Health and Human Resources, or his or her
22 designee; two members from the West Virginia Division of Juvenile
23 Services, appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of
24 the Senate; one member from the West Virginia board of education,
25 appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the

1 Senate; the West Virginia State School Superintendent's Director of
2 Institutional Education; one representative from the Governor's
3 Workforce Investment Division, appointed by the Governor, with the
4 advice and consent of the Senate; three community representatives
5 from the county that houses the state's largest juvenile
6 delinquency population, one of which will be from the local
7 Workforce Investment Board Youth Council, appointed by the
8 Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate; the Chief
9 Juvenile Probation Officer, from the county with the most court
10 involved youth; a member from the private mental health profession,
11 appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the
12 Senate; a member of local law enforcement whose county has the
13 highest number of juvenile arrests, appointed by the Governor, with
14 the advice and consent of the Senate; and the county school
15 superintendent or his or her designee whose county has the highest
16 number of students drop out of school.

17 (c) The Governor shall appoint a chairperson for the
18 commission that will determine meeting agendas and preside over
19 those meetings.

20 (d) The Speaker of the House of Delegates shall appoint a
21 member of the House of Delegates and the President of the Senate
22 shall appoint a member of the Senate to serve as advisors to the
23 commission.

24 (e) Members of the commission are not entitled to compensation
25 for services performed as members but may be reimbursed for actual

1 and necessary expenses incurred for each day engaged in the
2 performance of their official commission duties in a manner
3 consistent with the guidelines of the Travel Management Office of
4 the Department of Administration.

5 **§18-21-3. Commission powers and duties.**

6 The commission shall:

7 (1) Identify a county with the most at-risk youth, that also
8 has adequate facilities and community leadership, to run a
9 community based pilot program that brings together both state and
10 local organizations, to work collaboratively to provide
11 comprehensive, intense wrap around services to at-risk youth and
12 their families in a seamless coordinated system; and

13 (2) Identify the challenges confronting the most at-risk youth
14 and their families and make specific recommendations to the pilot
15 program administrators to improve the outcomes for these youths;
16 specifically, to reduce the number of abuse and neglect cases, to
17 reduce high school drop-out rates, to reduce substance abuse among
18 youth including smoking, to reduce teen pregnancies, to reduce
19 juvenile delinquency and to reduce the number of juvenile
20 delinquents and youth aging out of foster-care that eventually
21 enter into the adult criminal justice system.

22 **§18-21-4. Organization and goals of the pilot program.**

23 (a) The pilot program shall be operated by a local
24 community-based organization in partnership with the West Virginia
25 Department of Health and Human Resources, West Virginia Division of

1 Juvenile Services, Prestera Center for Mental Health Services, West
2 Virginia State School Superintendent, county superintendent's
3 office, local juvenile probation department and with other partner
4 agencies to serve as a clearing house to coordinate comprehensive
5 youth and family services. The pilot program shall be housed
6 within the community and will be directed by a local
7 community-based nonprofit organization.

8 (b) The pilot program shall operate out of a centrally located
9 building to coordinate service to youth and their families in the
10 selected county from birth to twenty-one years of age who are
11 referred by Department of Health and Human Resources, the counties
12 juvenile court and probation department, West Virginia Division of
13 Juvenile Services, the selected counties school system, social
14 service agencies, churches, community based organizations and
15 parents.

16 (c) The goal of the pilot program is to improve outcomes for
17 at-risk youth as measured by the following objectives:

18 (1) Coordinate services for at-risk youth and their families
19 in the county chosen for the pilot program;

20 (2) Reduce the number of youth in out-of-home placement;

21 (3) Reduce the number of youth in out-of-state placement;

22 (4) Reduce the number of status offenders referred to
23 Department of Health and Human Resources;

24 (5) Reduce the number of status offenders that progress to
25 being adjudicated delinquent;

1 (6) To reduce the number of youth that appear before the
2 courts within the selected county;

3 (7) Enroll, at least, one hundred of the most at-risk youth in
4 a program where they receive intensive tutoring and mentoring;

5 (8) Increase the academic performance of youth enrolled in the
6 tutoring and mentoring program; and

7 (9) Reduce the dropout rate for youth enrolled in the program.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create a commission that will develop a pilot program to help at-risk youth in a selected county in West Virginia by introducing prevention strategies for children through early intervention and diversion strategies.

This article is new; therefore, strike-throughs and underscoring have been omitted.