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(By Delegates R. Smith, L. Phillips, Wagner, Eldridge, Ambler,  
D. Evans, Longstreth, Hornbuckle, Caputo, Upson and Pushkin)

[Introduced February 20, 2015; referred to the  
Committee on Education then Finance.]

**FISCAL  
NOTE**

A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,  
designated §18-5-18f, relating to establishing a four year pilot program to have social  
workers in public schools, from prekindergarten through the elementary school; requiring a  
minimum of one social worker per county; defining a term; requiring rule-making; and  
requiring annual and final reports.

*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  
section, designated §18-5-18f, to read as follows:

**ARTICLE 5. COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION.**

**§18-5-18f. Social worker pilot programs; reports.**

(a) County boards shall, by July 1, 2015, establish four year social worker pilot programs for  
all children in prekindergarten though elementary school.

(b) For purposes of this section, "social worker" means a nonteaching school employee who,  
at a minimum:

1 (1) Possesses a license in social work with the West Virginia Board of Social Work;

2 (2) Has a minimum of five years experience working with children and families; and

3 (3) Has experience conducting home visits, providing parent education, crisis intervention  
4 and advocacy and support services, with school based social work experience being preferred.

5 (c) Abuse and neglect, poor nutrition and health care, behavior problems, homelessness, poor  
6 academic performance, lack of parent involvement and substance abuse are areas of concern facing  
7 public education. Teachers and support staff are called upon to address these issues to the detriment  
8 of their educational responsibilities. Having a trained social worker available to students, staff and  
9 parents is beneficial in the following ways:

10 (1) Permit problems to be addressed by professionals trained to deal with those issues and  
11 guide teachers and staff on child protective laws;

12 (2) Unburden teachers and support staff so they can focus on performing their educational  
13 responsibilities to the students;

14 (3) The social worker's role will be to work with the guidance counselor with a team  
15 approach. The social worker would not only work with the child at the school but conduct home  
16 visits as necessary to address parent issues, provide parenting education, address social and  
17 emotional issues, address physical and mental health issues and advocate for the family linking them  
18 to necessary community resources; and

19 (4) Assist in ensuring an atmosphere in the classroom where learning can be achieved to  
20 ensure the child's success in school and life.

21 (d) Pilot programs implemented by the county boards shall provide for a minimum of one  
22 social worker for one Title 1, prekindergarten through elementary school, in each county. If more

1 than one Title 1 elementary school exists in the county that qualifies, the Title 1 school with the  
2 lowest test scores should be given preference. This will ensure the social worker is placed in a high  
3 poverty school where students are most in need. Addressing issues of concern in a child's early  
4 educational experience can prevent future problems from occurring.

5 (e) The state board with the advice of the state superintendent shall establish and prescribe  
6 guidelines and criteria relating to the establishment and operation of the social worker pilot  
7 programs.

8 (f) Each county board shall submit an annual report on the effectiveness of the social worker  
9 pilot programs to the state board no later than June 15 of each year, beginning in 2016. The state  
10 board shall compile these individual reports and submit its own annual report to the Legislative  
11 Oversight Commission on Education Accountability before September 1 of each year, beginning in  
12 2016.

13 (g) The state board shall submit a final report on the social worker pilot program, including  
14 findings, conclusions and recommendations, together with drafts of any legislation or rule changes  
15 necessary to effectuate the recommendations, to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education  
16 Accountability no later than September 1, 2019.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to establish a four year pilot program to have social workers in public schools, from prekindergarten through the elementary school. The bill requires a minimum of one social worker per county. The bill defines "social worker." The bill requires rule-making. The bill requires annual and final reports.

This section is new; therefore, it has been completely underscored.