

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2017 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 312

FISCAL
NOTE

BY SENATOR SMITH

[Introduced February 14, 2017; Referred
to the Committee on Education; and then to the
Committee on Finance]

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

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

1 That the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended by adding thereto a new
 2 section, designated §18-5-18f, to read as follows:

ARTICLE 5. COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION.

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

1 (a) County boards shall, by July 1, 2017, establish four-year social worker pilot programs
 2 for all children in prekindergarten though elementary school.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 (d) Pilot programs implemented by the county boards shall provide for a minimum of one
26 social worker for one Title 1, prekindergarten through elementary school, in each county. If more
27 than one Title 1 elementary school exists in the county that qualifies, the Title 1 school with the
28 lowest test scores should be given preference. This will ensure the social worker is placed in a
29 high poverty school where students are most in need. Addressing issues of concern in a child's
30 early educational experience can prevent future problems from occurring.

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

34 (f) Each county board shall submit an annual report on the effectiveness of the social
35 worker pilot programs to the state board no later than June 15, of each year, beginning in 2018.
36 The state board shall compile these individual reports and submit its own annual report to the
37 Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability before September 1, of each year,
38 beginning in 2018.

39 (g) The state board shall submit a final report on the social worker pilot program, including
40 findings, conclusions and recommendations, together with drafts of any legislation or rule changes
41 necessary to effectuate the recommendations, to the Legislative Oversight Commission on

42 Education Accountability no later than September 1, 2021.

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 requires guidelines and criteria relating to the pilot programs be prescribed. The bill defines "social worker." The bill requires annual and final reports.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.