

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2017 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 569

BY SENATORS PREZIOSO, HALL, STOLLINGS AND TAKUBO

[Introduced March 9, 2017; Referred
to the Committee on Health and Human Resources;
and then to the Committee on Government
Organization]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new article,
 2 designated §16-52-1, §16-52-2 and §16-52-3, all relating to the creation of the Office of
 3 Rural Health within the Center for Rural Health Development, Inc.; and creating a steering
 4 committee and establishing structure and responsibilities.

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 article, designated §16-52-1, §16-52-2 and §16-52-3, all to read as follows:

ARTICLE 52. OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH POLICY.

§16-52-1. Legislative Findings.

1 The Legislature finds as follows:

2 (1) The majority of West Virginia citizens live in rural West Virginia;

3 (2) A viable rural health care delivery system is an integral part of the economic
 4 infrastructure, like water, sewer, roads, schools and broadband needed in rural communities to
 5 attract and retain businesses and jobs;

6 (3) A healthy workforce is also needed to attract jobs and business development
 7 throughout West Virginia;

8 (4) Rural West Virginia typically experiences higher rates of poverty, an older population,
 9 a higher number of people who do not complete high school and a more challenged health care
 10 system;

11 (5) These findings indicate that rural West Virginia has some unique factors that are
 12 important to policymakers as they make decisions that impact health and health care in rural West
 13 Virginia; and

14 (6) The health and economic well-being of West Virginia and its citizens requires the
 15 development of a comprehensive rural health plan focused on the quality of care, economic
 16 viability of health care delivery systems, access to health and dental care services and workforce
 17 development with the goal of strengthening rural health systems and improving the health of the

18 citizens of West Virginia.

§16-52-2. Establishment of the Office of Rural Health Policy.

1 (a) The Office of Rural Health Policy is hereby created and shall be managed and operated
2 in the private sector within the Center for Rural Health Development, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization
3 whose primary purpose is to strengthen West Virginia’s rural health care delivery systems and
4 improve the health of our citizens. The Center for Rural Health Development, Inc. is able to
5 annually provide \$3 in matching funds using private funds to every \$1 of federal funds provided
6 through the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy’s funding to establish a state office of rural health
7 policy in each state. The funds are to be used to carry out the goals of the Office of Rural Health
8 Policy as stated in this article. The \$3 in matching funds is not required of other federal funding
9 managed by the Office of Rural Health Policy.

10 (b) The Office of Rural Health Policy shall:

11 (1) Provide advice on rural health issues to the Department of Health and Human
12 Resources, the Governor, the Legislature and other state government agencies;

13 (2) Administer grant programs designed to build health care capacity, improve access to
14 care, promote the use of tele-health technologies, develop rural health leaders and improve the
15 health of West Virginians; including, but not limited to, the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility
16 Grant, Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program Grant and other grants offered through the
17 Federal Office of Rural Health Policy or other federal agencies;

18 (3) Coordinate provider and allied health recruitment and retention efforts in West Virginia;

19 (4) Partner with statewide quality improvement initiatives;

20 (5) Engage stakeholders, especially the Department of Health and Human Resources, to
21 develop and implement the rural health plan to provide policymakers, funders and stakeholder
22 organizations with a common vision and steps to improve rural health in West Virginia;

23 (6) Coordinate and provide technical assistance to strengthen the rural health
24 infrastructure in West Virginia;

25 (7) Engage stakeholders, including those in other sectors, to develop and implement
26 evidence-based strategies to build healthy communities throughout rural communities in West
27 Virginia;

28 (8) Establish relationships with federal policymakers and agencies and rural health
29 organizations and agencies in the United States to serve as an advocate for West Virginia;

30 (9) Employ staff and develop policies as necessary to perform the duties of the Office of
31 Rural Health Policy; and

32 (10) Prepare a budget using available resources from the Federal Office of Rural Health
33 Policy, funds from other available resources and any other public and private sources to carry out
34 these stated duties.

§16-52-3. Creation of a steering committee.

1 (a) The board of the Center for Rural Health Development, Inc., designated as the Office
2 of Rural Health Policy, shall establish a steering committee responsible for advising the
3 development of the rural health plan and implementation of all activities established in this article.

4 (b) The members of the steering committee shall reflect balanced geographical
5 representation and diverse backgrounds.

6 (c) The steering committee shall consist of between nine and fifteen voting members,
7 including:

8 (1) One representative chosen by the West Virginia Rural Health Association;

9 (2) One representative chosen by the West Virginia Hospital Association;

10 (3) One representative chosen by each of West Virginia's two United States Senators;

11 (4) One representative of the Department of Health and Human Resources chosen by the
12 secretary;

13 (5) One representative chosen by the board of the Center for Rural Health Development,
14 Inc.; and

15 (6) The remaining members selected by the above designated steering committee

16 members to bring expertise, skills and experience to the steering committee's deliberations.

17 (d) All steering committee members shall serve for a three-year term, except that a
18 member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring prior to the expiration of the term for which a
19 predecessor was appointed shall serve the remainder of the unexpired term. A member may not
20 serve more than two consecutive three-year terms.

21 (e) Any vacancy occurring in the membership of the steering committee shall be filled in
22 the same manner as the initial membership provided in subsection (c). A vacancy does not affect
23 the ability of the remaining members to carry out the duties of the steering committee.

24 (f) The Office of Rural Health Policy may reimburse members of the steering committee
25 for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties, including
26 attending steering committee meetings.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to establish the Office of Rural Health Policy.

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