WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2022 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 97

By Senators Hamilton, Jeffries, Lindsay, Beach, Baldwin, and Stollings

[Introduced January 12,2022; referred
to the Committee on the Judiciary]

A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section, designated §47-11A-15, relating to unfair trade practices; prohibiting pricing goods and services on the basis of gender; authorizing the Attorney General to seek injunctions against offenders; and imposing civil penalties.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 11A. UNFAIR TRADE PRACTICES.

§47-11A-15. Pricing goods and services on the basis of gender prohibited.

(a) For the purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

“Business” means any business acting within the State of West Virginia that sells goods to any individual or entity including, but not limited to, retailers, suppliers, manufacturers, or distributors;

“Goods” means any consumer product used, bought, or rendered primarily for personal, family, or household purposes;

“Services” means any consumer services used, bought, or rendered primarily for personal, family, or household purposes;

“Substantially similar” means:

(1) Two goods that exhibit no substantial differences in: (A) The materials used in production; (B) the intended use of the good; (C) the functional design and features of the good; and (D) the brand of the good; or

(2) Two services that exhibit no substantial difference in: (A) The amount of time to provide the services; (B) the difficulty in providing the services; and (C) the cost of providing the services. A difference in coloring among any good may not be construed as a substantial difference for the purposes of this section.

(b) No person, firm, partnership, company, corporation, or business may charge a price for any two goods that are substantially similar if such goods are priced differently based on the gender of the individuals for whom the goods are marketed and intended.

(c) No person, firm, partnership, company, corporation, or business may charge a price for any services that are substantially similar if such services are priced differently based upon the gender of the individuals for whom the services are performed, offered, or marketed.

(d) Nothing in this section prohibits price differences in goods or services based specifically upon the following:

(1) The amount of time it took to manufacture such goods or provide such services;

(2) The difficulty in manufacturing such goods or offering such services;

(3) The cost incurred in manufacturing such goods or offering such services;

(4) The labor used in manufacturing such goods or providing such services;

(5) The materials used in manufacturing such goods or providing such services; or

(6) Any other gender-neutral reason for having increased the cost of such goods or services.

(e) Any person, firm, partnership, company, corporation, or business that provides services, as defined by this section, shall provide the customer with a complete written price list upon request.

(f) When there is a violation of this section, an application may be made by the Attorney General in the name of the people of this state to a court having jurisdiction to issue an injunction, and upon notice to the defendant of not less than five days, to enjoin and restrain the continuance of such violations. If it appears, to the satisfaction of the court, that the defendant has, in fact, violated this section, an injunction may be issued by that court enjoining or restraining any violation, without requiring proof that any person has, in fact, been injured or damaged thereby. In any such proceeding the court may make allowances for fees and costs to the attorney general as may be appropriate subject to §5-3-5 of this code, and may make direct restitution. In connection with any such proposed application, the attorney general may take proof and make a determination of the relevant facts and issue subpoenas in accordance with the West Virginia Rules of Civil Procedure. If the court determines that a violation of this section has occurred, the court may impose a civil penalty not to exceed $250 for a first violation, and a civil penalty not to exceed $500 for each subsequent violation. For the purposes of this section, all identical items priced on the basis of gender shall be considered a single violation.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to prohibit pricing goods and services on the basis of gender.

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