WEST virginia legislature

2024 regular session

Introduced

House Bill 4561

By Delegate C. Pritt

[Introduced January 10, 2024; Referred   
to the Committee on the Judiciary]

A BILL to amend and reenact §48-18-205 of the Code of West Virginia, as amended, relating to expressly allowing for child support arrears agreements that a family court must accept.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 18. Bureau for child support enforcement.

§48-18-205. Bureau action on request of recalculation and presentation of proposed order.

(a) If the bureau determines that no credible information exists to establish finding of a substantial change in circumstances as required by §48-11-105 or §48-14-106 of this code, the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement shall notify the parties of that fact and notify the parties that the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement will not be preparing a petition of proposed order seeking modification of the parties child support obligation. Under those circumstances, if the parties disagree with the Bureau for Child Support Enforcements assessment and wish to independently file a petition for modification, the parties may still seek modification of child support by filing a petition for modification of an order for support with the family court under the provisions of §48-11-105 or §48-11-106 of this code, or under the provisions of §48-14-106 of this code.

(b) If the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement determines that there has been a substantial change of circumstances as required by §48-11-105 of this code, or by §48-14-106 of this code, then the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement shall prepare a petition and proposed order modifying the child support order to be filed with the clerk of the family court.

(c) Any such petition filed by the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement filed pursuant to this article shall include the following:

(1) A copy of the proposed order;

(2) A print-out of the child support guidelines calculations;

(3) A notice of the bureaus action;

(4) The documents and statements relied upon;

(5) Any statement of findings or justification the bureau is required or determines to include; and

(6) A form and instructions for filing an objection to the proposed order, should a party wish to do so, which form shall require a statement of the ground or grounds for filing the objection.

(d) The Bureau for Child Support Enforcements proposed order shall be based on the child support guidelines: *Provided,* That the bureau may disregard the child support guidelines or adjust the amount as allowed by §48-13-702 of this code in the following instances:

(1) When the previous child support order disregarded the child support guidelines, the grounds for the disregarding or adjusting the guidelines are stated in the worksheet or previous order or are agreed upon by the parties, or are otherwise clear, and those grounds continue to exist and can be applied to the current circumstances; or

(2) If new grounds for the disregard or adjustment are fully explained in the proposed order.

(e) Within six months of the time that a child support obligation becomes $1,000 in arrears the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement shall notify the obligor that he or she may be in violation of §61-5-29 of this code, felony nonsupport, should the arrearage increase to $8,000. The notice shall also advise the obligor of the availability of child support modification, the amnesty program established in §48-1-302 of this code and the possibility of establishing a payment plan with the bureau: *Provided,* That where the monthly child support obligation is greater than $1,000, the notice shall be sent when the arrearage equals to or greater than three months child support obligation.

(1) If the obligor fails to respond within 30 days, the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement shall file a petition for contempt pursuant to §48-14-503 of this code.

(2) If the obligor responds within 30 days, the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement shall review the response and file appropriate pleadings which may include a motion for modification of child support.

(3) The Bureau for Child Support Enforcement will have one year from the amendment and reenactment of this section during the 2008 legislative session to notify obligors who currently owe $1,000 or more in child support arrearages or, where the monthly child support obligation is greater than $1,000, the arrearage is equal to or greater than three months child support obligation, of the child support modification options available to them.

(4) Family courts in West Virginia must accept any valid child support arrears agreements that are entered into by the respective parties.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to require that family courts in West Virginia accept child support arrears agreements.

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