WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2023 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 2036

By Delegates Kimble, Phillips, McGeehan,
Mazzocchi, Fast, Horst, C. Pritt, Ridenour, Jeffries,
Worrell and Steele

[Introduced January 11, 2023; Referred to the Committee
on Health and Human Resources then the Judiciary]
A BILL to amend and reenact §5A-1-3 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended; to amend and reenact §16-3-4 of said code; and to amend said code by adding thereto a new section, designated §18B-1-12, all relating to exemptions from mandated immunizations for religious reasons.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

CHAPTER 5A. DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION.

ARTICLE 1. DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION.


(a) The secretary shall have control and supervision of the Department of Administration and shall be responsible for the work of each of its employees. The secretary shall have such power and authority as specified in §5F-2-2 of this code. The secretary shall also have the authority to employ such assistants and attorneys as may be necessary for the efficient operation of the department. The secretary, the division heads and the employees of the department shall perform the duties herein specified and shall also perform such other duties as the Governor may prescribe.

(b) Employees of the agencies and boards included in §5F-2-1 of this code shall be exempt from mandated immunizations of his or her employer upon the presentation to his or her employer of any one of the certifications required by this section. The request shall be accompanied by a notarized certification by the employee that he or she has religious beliefs contrary to the mandated immunization or a conscientious or personal objection to the mandated immunization. Employers may not penalize or discriminate against employees for exercising this exemption right by practices including, but not limited to, withholding bonuses, pay raises, and promotion.

CHAPTER 16. PUBLIC HEALTH.

ARTICLE 3. PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF COMMUNICABLE AND OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.
§16-3-4. Compulsory immunization of school children; information disseminated; offenses; penalties; exemptions.

(a) Whenever a resident birth occurs, the commissioner shall promptly provide parents of the newborn child with information on immunizations mandated by this state or required for admission to a public, private, and parochial school in this state or a state-regulated child care center.

(b) Except as hereinafter provided, a child entering school or a state-regulated child care center in this state must be immunized against chickenpox, hepatitis-b, measles, meningitis, mumps, diphtheria, polio, rubella, tetanus, and whooping cough.

(c) No child or person may be admitted or received in any of the schools of the state or a state-regulated child care center until he or she has been immunized against chickenpox, hepatitis-b, measles, meningitis, mumps, diphtheria, polio, rubella, tetanus, and whooping cough or produces a certificate from the commissioner granting the child or person an exemption from the compulsory immunization requirements of this section.

(d) Any school or state-regulated child care center personnel having information concerning any person who attempts to be enrolled in a school or state-regulated child care center without having been immunized against chickenpox, hepatitis-b, measles, meningitis, mumps, diphtheria, polio, rubella, tetanus, and whooping cough shall report the names of all such persons to the commissioner.

(e) Persons may be provisionally enrolled under minimum criteria established by the commissioner so that the person's immunization may be completed while missing a minimum amount of school. No person shall be allowed to enter school without at least one dose of each required vaccine.

(f) County health departments shall furnish the biologicals for this immunization for children of parents or guardians who attest that they cannot afford or otherwise access vaccines elsewhere.
(g) Health officers and physicians who provide vaccinations must present the person vaccinated with a certificate free of charge showing that they have been immunized against chickenpox, hepatitis-b, measles, meningitis, mumps, diphtheria, polio, rubella, tetanus, and whooping cough, or he or she may give the certificate to any person or child whom he or she knows to have been immunized against chickenpox, hepatitis-b, measles, meningitis, mumps, diphtheria, polio, rubella, tetanus, and whooping cough.

(h) The commissioner is authorized to grant, renew, or condition, deny, suspend or revoke exemptions to the compulsory immunization requirements of this section, on a statewide basis, upon sufficient medical evidence that immunization is contraindicated or there exists a specific precaution to a particular vaccine.

(1) A request for an exemption to the compulsory immunization requirements of this section must be accompanied by the certification of a licensed physician stating that the physical condition of the child is such that immunization is contraindicated or there exists a specific precaution to a particular vaccine.

(2) The commissioner is authorized to appoint and employ an Immunization Officer to make determinations on request for an exemption to the compulsory immunization requirements of this section, on a statewide basis, and delegate to the Immunization Officer the authority granted to the commissioner by this subsection.

(3) A person appointed and employed as the Immunization Officer must be a physician licensed under the laws of this state to practice medicine.

(4) The Immunization Officer’s decision on a request for an exemption to the compulsory immunization requirements of this section may be appealed to the state Health Officer.

(5) The final determination of the state Health Officer is subject to a right of appeal pursuant to the provisions of article five, chapter twenty-nine a of this code.

(i) A physician who provides any person with a false certificate of immunization against chickenpox, hepatitis-b, measles, meningitis, mumps, diphtheria, polio, rubella, tetanus, and
whooping cough is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, thereof, shall be fined not less
than $25 nor more than $100.

(j) Notwithstanding any of the foregoing provisions of this section, a child shall be exempt
from compulsory immunizations upon the presentation to the child's school a notarized
certification signed by any parent or legal guardian of the child indicating that the signator has
either a conscientious or personal objection to the immunization of the child.

CHAPTER 18B. HIGHER EDUCATION.

ARTICLE 1. GOVERNANCE.

§18B-1-12. Rights of students to exemptions from compulsory immunizations.

An applicant or a student shall be exempt from a public college, university, or vocational
technical school's compulsory immunizations upon the presentation to the school a request for an
exemption to the compulsory immunizations of the school. The request shall be accompanied by a
notarized certification signed by the applicant or the student if he or she is 18 years of age or older
or a parent or legal guardian of the applicant or student under the age of 18 years stating that the
signator has either a conscientious or personal objection to the immunization of the applicant or
student.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to provide exemptions from mandatory immunizations
based on religious reasons.

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