

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2025 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 2574

By Delegates Coop-Gonzalez, Dillon, Funkhouser,

Ridenour, Sheedy, Hillenbrand, and Street

[Introduced February 18, 2025; referred to the

Committee on Education then the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended by adding thereto a new section,
2 designated §18B-4-11, relating to nondiscrimination at institutions of higher education.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 4. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

§18B-4-11. Nondiscrimination.

1 (a) Admissions and employment --

2 (1) For purposes of this section, "diversity statement" means any written or oral statement
3 discussing an applicant's or candidate's:

4 (A) Race, sex, color, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation;

5 (B) Views on, experience with, or contributions to: diversity, equity, and/or inclusion, other
6 than academic diversity and inclusion; marginalized groups; anti-racism; social justice;
7 intersectionality; or confessing or describing one's race-based or sex-based privilege;

8 (C) Views on or experience with the race, sex, color, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual
9 orientation of students and co-workers; or

10 (D) Level of support for any theory or practice supporting differential treatment of any
11 individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, gender, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual
12 orientation.

13 (2) No diversity statement shall ever be required or solicited as part of an admissions
14 process, employment application process, hiring process, contract renewal process, or promotion
15 process; or as a condition of participation in any administrative or decision-making function of any
16 public institution of higher education.

17 (3) No public institution of higher education shall give preferential consideration to an
18 applicant, student, staff member, or faculty member due to any opinion expressed or action taken
19 in support of another individual or a group of individuals on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity,
20 gender identity, or sexual orientation.

21 (4) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no public institution of higher education

22 shall grant preference to any applicant for admission or employment on the basis of race, sex,
23 color, ethnicity, or national origin. No such institution may use a race-neutral alternative to a racial
24 preference when any outcome on the basis of race is an intentional outcome of the race-neutral
25 alternative.

26 (5) For avoidance of doubt, nothing in this law shall be construed to:

27 (A) Prevent an applicant or candidate from providing, on his or her own initiative, any
28 diversity statement;

29 (B) Prevent an institution from requiring or soliciting from applicants and candidates any
30 information regarding:

31 (i) The self-described content or purpose of their academic research or creative works;

32 (ii) Their self-described pedagogical approaches or experience with students; or

33 (iii) Their compliance with any anti-discrimination or civil rights law, any other law, or the
34 State or U.S. Constitution; or

35 (C) Prohibit bona fide qualifications based on sex which are conducive to the normal
36 operation of an institution of higher education.

37 (6) Each public institution of higher education shall annually certify compliance with this
38 section to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability.

39 (b) Training --

40 (1) For purposes of this section:

41 (A) "Diversity training" means:

42 (i) Training toward any diversity, equity, and inclusion activity described in part (c) of this
43 section; or

44 (ii) Training from an administrative official or administrative unit of an institution that
45 involves one or more of the following interrelated concepts:

46 (I) The Nation, the State, American or State culture, or society in general is based on or
47 significantly influenced by present-day institutional structures or relations of power, privilege,

48 subordination, or oppression that operate on the basis of race, sex, color, gender, ethnicity, gender
49 identity, or sexual orientation, or any intersection of these classes;

50 (II) Such purported conditions should be identified, dismantled, or opposed;

51 (III) Differential treatment or special benefits should be conferred on the basis of race, sex,
52 color, gender, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation; or

53 (iii) Training from an administrative official or administrative unit of an institution to
54 recognize or understand unconscious or implicit bias, cultural appropriation, identity group
55 allyship, microaggressions, micro-invalidation, group marginalization, anti-racism, systemic
56 oppression, structural racism, structural inequity, transphobia, homophobia, heteronormativity,
57 racial or sexual privilege, social justice, intersectionality, neo-pronouns, inclusive language,
58 gender identity, gender theory, or related formulations of these concepts.

59 (B) "Mandatory" means the function of a requirement of any kind imposed on a student,
60 employee, applicant for employment, or student organization, including, but not limited to:

61 (i) Failing to fulfill the requirement would adversely affect an individual's or organization's
62 status, employment, salary, benefits, access to funding or any generally available benefit, access
63 to residential housing or office space, or ability to participate in any program, activity,
64 administrative process, or decision-making body of an institution;

65 (ii) Failing to fulfill the requirement would adversely affect an individual's application or
66 receipt of any scholarship, loan, grant, financial aid, or forgiveness program.

67 (C) "Training" means direct instruction, a seminar, discussion group, workshop, or other
68 instructional program, use of instructional materials, and guest speakers, whether provided in
69 person, online, or by any other means, but does not include:

70 (i) An academic course offered for credit;

71 (ii) A research study; or

72 (iii) Activities of a registered student organization, except for activities funded or supported
73 by the institution as a means of circumventing this section.

74 (2) A public institution of higher education must not make diversity training mandatory.

75 (3) This section shall not be construed to:

76 (A) Limit the academic freedom or free expression of any individual faculty member to
77 conduct or direct instruction within his or her own course or laboratory, to engage in research,
78 engage in any other traditional academic activity of a faculty member, advise a student
79 organization, or to act in a personal capacity with his or her own resources; or

80 (B) Prohibit any program or training, scripted or approved by licensed attorneys, that is
81 required to comply with any civil rights or other law or any court order: *Provided*, That the institution
82 makes all training materials publicly available on its website.

83 (c) Offices of diversity, equity, and inclusion --

84 (1) For purposes of this section:

85 (A) "Diversity, equity, and inclusion activity" means any effort to:

86 (i) Manipulate or otherwise influence the composition of the faculty or student body with
87 reference to race, sex, color, or ethnicity, apart from ensuring colorblind and sex-neutral
88 admissions and hiring in accordance with state and federal anti-discrimination laws;

89 (ii) Engage in, or promote or promulgate policies for, differential attention to, treatment of,
90 or provision of special benefits to, individuals or groups on the basis of race, color, or ethnicity, or of
91 sex except where permitted by law; or

92 (iii) Promote as the official position of the institution or component thereof, or of the
93 administration, or develop or engage in training, programming, or activities promoting, an opinion
94 in contravention of the neutral educational policy of this state as described in paragraph (2) of this
95 section.

96 (B) "Diversity, equity, and inclusion office" --

97 (i) Means any division, office, center, or other unit of an institution of higher education or
98 component thereof which is responsible for creating, developing, designing, implementing,
99 organizing, planning, or promoting policies, programming, training, practices, activities, and

100 procedures relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion activities;

101 (ii) Does not mean:

102 (I) An office staffed exclusively by licensed attorneys (except for paralegal and secretarial
103 support) and certified by the attorney general of the state as operating with the sole and exclusive
104 mission of ensuring legal compliance with the institution's obligations under Title IX of the
105 Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended,
106 the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, as amended, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,
107 applicable court order, or other applicable state and federal law;

108 (II) An academic department as traditionally understood, that is, a unit of the institution
109 generally run by teaching and research faculty;

110 (III) A registered student organization as traditionally understood, that is, an organization
111 run by students that is generally independent of the institution's management; or

112 (IV) An office solely engaged in new student recruitment.

113 (C) "Diversity, equity, and inclusion officer" --

114 (i) Means an individual who is a full-time or part-time employee of an institution of higher
115 education or component thereof, or an independent contractor of such an institution of higher
116 education, whose duties for the institution include coordinating, creating, developing, designing,
117 implementing, organizing, planning, or promoting policies, programming, training, practices,
118 activities, or procedures relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion activities;

119 (ii) Does not mean:

120 (I) Any full-time or part-time employee who is a licensed attorney and whose sole job duties
121 related to diversity, equity, and inclusion are to ensure compliance with the institution's obligations
122 under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, the Americans with Disabilities
123 Act, as amended, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, as amended, Title VI of the Civil
124 Rights Act of 1964, applicable court order, or other applicable state and federal law;

125 (II) Any faculty member while engaged in teaching, research, the production of creative

126 works, the dissemination of their research and creative works, other traditional academic duties, or
127 advising a registered student organization; or

128 (III) A guest speaker or performer with a short-term engagement.

129 (2) The Legislature finds and declares that:

130 (A) Diversity, equity, and inclusion offices and officers often engage in differential attention
131 to, treatment of, or provision of special benefits to individuals on the basis of race, color, or
132 ethnicity, or of sex, thereby violating civil rights laws and putting their institutions at risk of losing
133 federal funding; and

134 (B) It is the policy of the state that the administrations of public institutions of higher
135 education, and their administrative units, be officially neutral with regard to opinions in the state
136 regarding unconscious or implicit bias, cultural appropriation, identity group allyship, transgender
137 ideology, microaggressions, group marginalization, anti-racism, systemic oppression, social
138 justice, intersectionality, neo-pronouns, heteronormativity, gender theory, racial or sexual
139 privilege, critical race theory, and any related formulation of these concepts; and with regard to any
140 social or political issue not directly impacting the purposes of public institutions of higher education
141 in the state.

142 (3) Public institutions of higher education, the council, the commission, and the governing
143 boards of the exempted schools may not expend any appropriated funds or otherwise expend any
144 funds derived from bequests, charges, deposits, donations, endowments, fees, grants, gifts,
145 income, receipts, tuition, or any other source to:

146 (A) Engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion activities;

147 (B) Establish, sustain, support, or staff a diversity, equity, and inclusion office; or

148 (C) Contract, employ, engage, or hire an individual to serve as a diversity, equity, and
149 inclusion officer.

150 (4) Neither the council nor the commission may expend any funds for diversity, equity, and
151 inclusion activities at the council, the commission, or any institution of higher education.

152 (5) Any funds that otherwise would have been expended on diversity, equity, and inclusion
153 activities, offices, or officers in Fiscal Year 2024 may be reallocated, at the discretion of the
154 council, commission, or governing board of an institution of higher education, to merit scholarships
155 or to reduce tuition for in-state students entering a public institution of higher education in the state
156 in the fall term of 2024.

157 (6) For the avoidance of doubt, nothing in this section shall be construed to cover or affect
158 an institution of higher education's funding of:

159 (A) Research, producing creative works, teaching, other traditional academic activities of
160 faculty members and students;

161 (B) Student organizations, or advising of student organizations;

162 (C) Arrangements for guest speakers and performers with short-term engagements,
163 unless the engagement's primary purpose is for diversity, equity, and inclusion and the
164 engagement is mandatory for faculty, staff, or students; or

165 (D) Mental or physical health services provided by licensed professionals.

166 (7) Nothing in this section shall be interpreted as prohibiting bona fide qualifications based
167 on sex which are reasonably necessary for the normal operation of an institution of higher
168 education.

169 (8) None of the funds appropriated for Fiscal Year 2025 may be expended by an institution
170 of higher education until its governing board has filed a report with the Legislative Oversight
171 Commission on Education Accountability which certifies compliance with this section and further
172 discloses:

173 (A) The steps taken to comply with this section;

174 (B) The full number and job titles of the individuals whom the institution deems necessary
175 to comply with civil rights laws and any applicable court orders;

176 (C) *Provided*, That an institution does not violate this section if it takes up to 365 days to
177 bring its Title IX office into compliance with this section.

- 178 (d) Violations --
- 179 (1) Any person may notify the Attorney General of an alleged violation of any provision of
180 section (a), (b), or (c).
- 181 (2) The Attorney General may file suit for a writ of mandamus compelling an institution of
182 higher education to comply with any provision of section (a), (b), or (c).
- 183 (3) Any enrolled student, faculty member, staff member, student organization, alumnus, or
184 prospective student or employee of a public institution of higher education may bring a civil action
185 for injunctive relief against that institution for a violation of any provision of section (a), (b), or (c).
- 186 (4) Notwithstanding any other law, a civil action brought under this section may be brought
187 in:
- 188 (A) The county in which all or a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the
189 claim occurred;
- 190 (B) The county of residence in this state for any one of the natural person defendants at the
191 time the cause of action accrued;
- 192 (C) The county of the principal office in this state of any one of the defendants that is not a
193 natural person; or
- 194 (D) The county of residence for the claimant if the claimant is a natural person residing in
195 this state.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to prevent discrimination at institutions of higher education at West Virginia post-secondary institutions.

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