

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2025 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 2720

**FISCAL
NOTE**

By Delegates Vance, Brooks, Toney, Green,
Rohrbach, Holstein, Hornby, Bridges, Dean, Jeffries,
and Mazzocchi

[Introduced February 21, 2025; referred to the
Committee on Government Organization]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,
2 designated §5B-2-22, relating to creating the Southern Coalfield Resiliency and
3 Revitalization Program for a period of five years; finding that there are challenges facing
4 the counties in which the southern coalfields are located; establishing revitalization council
5 to organize and prioritize state resources and technical assistance for these counties;
6 directing revitalization council to develop strategies to stimulate economic activity in and
7 around the municipalities in Boone, Logan, McDowell, Mingo, and Wyoming counties in
8 coordination with certain contributing partners to the extent possible; directing
9 revitalization council to annually report to the Governor and the Legislature; directing
10 Development Office and revitalization council to facilitate economic development
11 incentives for the counties in which the southern coalfields are located; and authorizing
12 Development Office or other state body to provide state property and equipment to
13 businesses investing in the counties of the southern coalfield area of the state at a reduced
14 cost.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 2. WEST VIRGINIA DEVELOPMENT OFFICE.

§5B-2-22. Southern Coalfield Resiliency and Revitalization Program.

(a) Definitions. —

2 (1) General. — Terms defined in this section have the meanings ascribed to them by this
3 section, unless a different meaning is clearly required by either the context in which the term is
4 used, or by specific definition in this section.

(2) Terms Defined. —

6 (A) "Contributing partners" means those entities or their representatives described in
7 subsection (f) of this section.

8 (B) "Program" means the Southern Coalfield Resiliency and Revitalization Program
9 established in this section.

(C) "Revitalization council" means those entities or their representatives described in subsection (d) of this section.

(D) "Technical assistance" means resources provided by the state, revitalization council, contributing partners or any other individuals or entities providing programming, funding, or other support to benefit the counties in the Southern Coal field area of West Virginia under the program.

(E) "Southern Coalfield" means an area defined by the Development Office that encompasses Boone, Logan, McDowell, Mingo, and Wyoming counties.

(F) "Southern Coalfield and Resiliency and Revitalization Program" means the entire process undertaken to further the goals of this section, including collaboration development and implementation between the members, contributors, and technical assistance resource providers.

(b) Legislative purpose, findings, and intent. —

(1) The impact of the diminishing coal industry on Boone, Logan, McDowell, Mingo, and Wyoming counties has had a dramatic economic impact on the Southern Coalfield area of West Virginia.

(2) The purpose of this section is to establish the Southern Coalfield Resiliency and Revitalization Program. To further this purpose, this program creates a collaboration among state government, higher education, and private and nonprofit sectors to streamline and increase technical, agricultural, and economic assistance capacity, continue and increase existing services and other resources to facilitate community revitalization in the southern coalfield area.

(3) It is the intent of the Legislature to identify existing state resources that can be prioritized to support the counties of the southern coalfield area, generate thoughtful and responsible ideas to mitigate the negative effects of the diminished coal industry, and help chart a new course and prosperous future for the Southern Coalfield.

(c) Southern Coalfield Resiliency and Revitalization Program established; duration of program. —

(1) The Development Office shall establish the Southern Coalfield Resiliency and

Revitalization Program in accordance with the provisions of this section, subject to the availability of funding necessary to support the program: *Provided*, That the department may not create any new positions or hire any additional employees to implement the provisions of this article. The program shall inventory existing assets and resources, prioritize planning and technical assistance, and determine such other assistance as might be available to revitalize communities in the counties in the southern coalfield area.

(2) The program shall be established for an initial period of five years from the effective date of this legislation.

(d) *Revitalization council created.* — There is hereby created a revitalization council to fulfill the purposes of this section. The revitalization council shall be coordinated by the Development Office in the Department of Commerce and be subject to oversight by the secretary of the department. The following entities shall serve as members of the revitalization council:

(1) The Executive Director of the Development Office or their designee, who shall serve as chairperson of the council;

(2) The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources or their designee;

(3) The Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture or their designee;

(4) The Executive Director of the West Virginia Housing Development Fund or their designee;

(5) A representative from the Boone County commission;

(6) A representative from the Logan County commission;

(7) A representative from the McDowell County commission;

(8) A representative from the Mingo County commission;

(9) A representative from the Wyoming County commission;

(10) A representative from Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College;

(11) A representative from West Virginia University;

(12) A representative from Marshall University;

(13) The County Directors of Economic Development from Boone County, Logan County, McDowell County, Mingo County, and Wyoming County; and

(14) A representative from the Regional Planning and Development Councils encompassing the five participating counties.

(e) Duties of the revitalization council. —

(1) The council shall identify existing state resources that can be prioritized to support economic development efforts in the Southern Coalfield counties.

(2) The council shall direct existing resources in a unified effort and in conjunction with contributing partners, as applicable, to support the Southern Coalfield counties.

(3) The council shall develop a rapid response strategy to attract or develop new enterprises and job creating opportunities in the Southern Coalfield counties.

(4) The council shall conduct or commission a comprehensive assessment of assets available at the reclaimed mine sites and abandoned industrial complexes and closed businesses and determine how those assets will be preserved and repurposed.

(5) The council shall assist communities in the Southern Coalfield counties by developing an economic plan to diversify and advance the communities.

(6) Members of the council shall support both the planning and implementation for the program and shall give priority wherever possible to programmatic activity and discretionary, noncompetitive funding during the period the program remains in effect.

(7) Members of the council shall work together to leverage funding or other agency resources to benefit efforts to revitalize the Southern Coalfield counties.

(f) Contributing partners. — To the extent possible, the revitalization council shall incorporate the resources and expertise of additional providers of technical assistance to support the program, which shall include but not be limited to:

(1) The West Virginia Small Business Development Center;

(2) The Center for Rural Health Development;

88 (3) The West Virginia University Brickstreet Center for Entrepreneurship;

89 (4) The West Virginia University Land Use and Sustainability Law Clinic;

90 (5) The West Virginia University Center for Big Ideas;

91 (6) The WVU County Extension services;

92 (7) The Rahall Transportation Institute;

93 (8) The Marshall University Center for Business and Economic Research;

94 (9) West Virginia Small Business Association;

95 (10) The West Virginia Community Development Hub;

96 (11) The West Virginia University Northern Brownfields Assistance Center;

97 (12) West Virginia State University Extension Service;

98 (13) West Virginia University Extension Service, Community, Economic and Workforce
99 Development; and

100 (14) The President of West Virginia University Technical College.

101 (g) *Reporting and agency accountability.* — The revitalization council, in coordination with
102 its contributing partners, as applicable, shall report annually to the Governor and the Legislature
103 detailing the progress of the technical assistance support provided by the program, the strategic
104 plan for the Southern Coalfields counties and the results of these efforts.

105 (h) *Economic Incentives for businesses investing in the Southern Coalfield counties.* —
106 The Development Office and the revitalization council, as applicable, will work to educate
107 businesses investing, or interested in investing, in the Southern Coalfields, about the availability
108 of, and access to, economic development assistance, including but not limited to, the economic
109 opportunity tax credit provided in section nineteen, article thirteen-q, chapter eleven of this code;
110 the manufacturing investment tax credit provided under article thirteen-s, chapter eleven of this
111 code; and any other applicable tax credit or development assistance.

112 (i) *Use of state property and equipment; faculty.* — The Development Office or other owner
113 of state property and equipment in the Southern Coalfield counties is authorized to provide for the

- 114 low cost and economical use and sharing of state property and equipment, including computers,
115 research labs and other scientific and necessary equipment to assist any business within the
116 Southern Coalfields at a nominal or reduced-cost reimbursements to the state for such use.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create the Southern Coalfield Resiliency and Revitalization program to identify and prioritize existing resources that can be directed to support economic development efforts in the Boone, Logan, McDowell, Mingo, and Wyoming counties; establish a revitalization council to manage these activities; and provide technical assistance support, services, and resources to support community revitalization of the Southern Coalfield counties.

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