WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2025 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 3257

By Delegates Hornbuckle, Pushkin, Hansen, Lewis,

and Hamilton

[Introduced March 07, 2025; referred to the

Committee on the Judiciary then Finance]

1   A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,

2   designated §30-29-15, relating to the establishment of the Police Partnering With

3   Communities Act; providing for a short title; providing for legislative findings; defining a

4   "distressed area;" providing for the establishment of the Police Partnering With

5   Communities Fund; and providing for an effective date.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 29. LAW-ENFORCEMENT TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION.

§30-29-15.   Police   Partnering   With   Communities   Act.

1   (a) *Short title*. – This section shall be referred to as the "Police Partnering With

2   Communities Act."

3   (b) *Legislative findings*. — The Legislature finds that to understand the causes of, and

4   potential solutions to, violence in the United States, one must pay attention to the long-standing

5   relationship between violence and place. Within cities, gun violence is concentrated in a small set

6   of disinvested or distressed neighborhoods, and within these neighborhoods, such violence is

7   even more concentrated within a small set of "micro-geographic places," like particular streets.

8   This is a well-established trend that holds in every city or nonurban setting in which it has been

9   studied. When it comes to solutions, a growing body of evidence also demonstrates the promise

10   of micro-level place-based interventions, such as rehabilitating vacant lots or increasing the

11   number of community organizations in significantly decreasing violence within these

12   neighborhoods. In order to address spatial violence in distressed areas, the Legislature finds the

13   critical need to support and invest in those communities most at risk to it. This task inherently

14   requires those outside of the criminal legal system to take on violence mitigation as an integral

15   component of their work. By encouraging more police officers to live in the community they work

16   in, particularly distressed areas, this will help increase their positive relation with that community.

17   (c) *Distressed areas*. – A distressed area is defined as an economically disadvantaged,

18   low-income area within West Virginia, particularly those areas of West Virginia with a higher-than-

19   average rate of crime. Low-income census tracts within West Virginia are places where the

20   individual poverty rate is at least 20 percent or median family income is no greater than 80 percent

21   of the area median.

22   (d) *Establishment of fund*. — There is established a fund within the West Virginia State

23   Treasurer's office to be entitled the "Police Partnering With Communities Fund." The fund shall be

24   used to reimburse the full amount of housing costs of police officers who choose to live in

25   distressed areas, as defined in subsection (c) of this section. The source of the funding shall be

26   provided in a separate appropriations bill. Police officers shall provide the West Virginia State

27   Treasurer's Office with documentation of their physical address of living in a distressed area, as

28   well as documentation of their employment with a city, municipal, or county police department to

29   qualify for the housing cost reimbursement. The West Virginia State Treasurer's Office shall assign

30   professional and clerical staff to assist in the oversight of the fund.

31   (e) *Effective date*. – This section shall become effective July 1, 2025.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to establish the Police Partnering With Communities Act. The bill provides for legislative findings. The bill defines "distressed areas." The bill establishes the fund within the West Virginia State Treasurer's Office. Finally, the bill provides for an effective date.

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