

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2025 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 873

By Senator Maynard

[Introduced March 21, 2025; referred
to the Committee on Health and Human Resources;
and then to the Committee on Finance]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding a new section,
2 designated §9-5-31a, relating to the creation of the West Virginia Homelessness
3 Rehabilitation and Public Safety Act.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 5. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS.

§9-5-31a. West Virginia Homelessness Rehabilitation and Public Safety Act.

1 (a) Purpose. – The purpose of this legislation is to address homelessness in West Virginia
2 by enforcing existing laws on loitering and vagrancy violations, assessing individuals for mental
3 health needs, and providing structured rehabilitation programs. The Department of Human
4 Services shall oversee the transition of individuals into independent living through skills training,
5 financial planning, and job placement assistance.

6 (b) Enforcement of Loitering and Vagrancy Laws. –

7 (1) Law enforcement officers shall enforce all existing statutes related to loitering and
8 vagrancy in public and private spaces.

9 (2) If an individual has been cited multiple times for such offenses, law enforcement shall
10 initiate an evaluation for mental health and substance abuse issues at a designated mental
11 hygiene facility.

12 (3) If the individual is deemed to have a mental illness or substance abuse disorder, the
13 Department of Health Services shall develop an appropriate treatment and rehabilitation plan.

14 (c) Structured Residence Halls for Rehabilitation. –

15 (1) The Department of Human Services shall make an effort to repurpose vacant public
16 buildings into structured residence halls to provide temporary housing for homeless individuals
17 who are found to be of sound mind.

18 (2) These residence halls shall operate as minimum-security facilities, emphasizing
19 structure, responsibility, and skill-building.

20 (3) Residents shall be required to:

21 (A) Participate in hygiene, cleanliness, and organizational training.

22 (B) Maintain their living spaces and contribute to facility upkeep.

23 (C) Receive instruction in vocational skills, including maintenance, agriculture, and food
24 preservation, in collaboration with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture.

25 (d) Transition to Independent Living. –

26 (1) Upon program completion, the Department of Health Services shall coordinate with
27 Workforce West Virginia and relevant agencies to assist with job placement.

28 (2) A financial plan shall be created for each resident, ensuring savings accumulation
29 under the supervision of an appointed financial overseer.

30 (3) The individual shall be eligible for assistance in purchasing a vehicle once sufficient
31 savings are acquired.

32 (4) Upon saving enough for a security deposit and one month's rent, the program shall
33 provide assistance in securing housing and transitioning into independent living.

34 (e) Funding and Partnerships. –

35 (1) All funding for this program shall be absorbed through the Department of Human
36 Services.

37 (2) The department may partner with nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and mental
38 health facilities to enhance service delivery.

39 (f) Accountability and Reporting. –

40 (1) The Department of Human Services shall submit an annual report to the legislature for
41 the first five years following the implementation of this act.

42 (2) Reports shall include key metrics such as:

43 (A) The number of individuals rehabilitated.

44 (B) Job placements facilitated.

45 (C) Financial independence rates achieved.

46 (g) Enforcement of Existing Penalties. –

- 47 (1) Any individual refusing participation in rehabilitation programs shall be subject to
48 penalties as prescribed under existing West Virginia law.
- 49 (2) Law enforcement shall strictly enforce penalties for repeat violations of loitering and
50 vagrancy laws as already codified.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create the West Virginia Homelessness Rehabilitation and Public Safety Act.

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