

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2025 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 897

By Senator Hart

[Introduced March 24, 2025; referred
to the Committee on Education; 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 §18-5-13f, relating to schools; creating a Community School Support Fund;
3 providing legislative findings; providing a purpose; requiring the State Superintendent of
4 Schools to take certain actions; and clarifying the application process for assistance from
5 the fund.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 5. COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION.

§18-5-13f. Community School Support Fund.

1 (a) The Legislature finds that the demographic, social, and cultural diversity of our
2 communities requires a flexible approach to school planning and funding.

3 (b) The Legislature finds that the culture and social dynamics of schools located near
4 affluent neighborhoods may differ substantially from schools located in economically challenged
5 communities with lower incomes.

6 (c) The Legislature finds that social and emotional dynamics within smaller schools are
7 more favorable to students from low-income neighborhoods than larger schools.

8 (d) The Legislature finds that smaller schools located in relatively close proximity to
9 student homes meet the needs of students from low-income rural neighborhoods more effectively
10 than larger schools with longer times in transit.

11 (e) The purpose of this section is to create within the Department of Education a
12 Community School Support Fund, or "CSS Fund."

13 (f) The West Virginia State Superintendent of Schools shall review all programs and
14 initiatives within the budget of the Department of Education and identify areas where sufficient
15 savings and efficiencies can be found to fund an account exclusively for the support of community
16 schools at risk for consolidation and closure due to decreased enrollment, school aid formula
17 compliance, and associated operational challenges.

18 (g) The Superintendent shall identify and set aside an annual sum of five million dollars
19 toward the fund.

20 (h) Each school at risk for closure or consolidation which qualified for Federal Title 1 during
21 the 2023-2024 school year will also automatically qualify for assistance from the fund up to, but not
22 exceeding, 20% of the total operating cost of the school.

23 (1) Application shall be made by the Local School Improvement Council (LSIC) of the
24 requesting school;

25 (2) Compliance with school funding formula regarding professional and service personnel
26 is exempt; and

27 (3) The Superintendent is authorized to utilize Step 7 funds toward cost of personnel,
28 operation of facility, and other necessary expenses for sustaining the viability of the school.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create a community school support fund; provide legislative findings; provide a purpose; establish the State Superintendent of Schools to take certain actions; and clarify the application process for assistance from the fund.

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