

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 4446

**FISCAL
NOTE**

By Delegates Hillenbrand, Mallow, Statler, Jennings,
Dittman, and Ridenour

[Introduced January 16, 2026; referred to the
Committee on Education then Finance]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended by adding a new article,
2 designated §18B-3G-1, §18B-3G-2, and §18B-3G-3, relating to firefighter education;
3 creating a firefighter education pilot program; providing findings and purpose; providing
4 definitions; establishing requirements for the pilot program; and providing a sunset date.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 3G. WEST VIRGINIA FIREFIGHTER EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAM.

§18B-3G-1. Legislative findings; purpose.

1 (a) The Legislature finds that a firefighter education pilot program in no more than four
2 locations in this state will provide quality training to our youth in firefighting education and is a
3 valuable educational opportunity that can be enhanced by community and technical colleges.
4 These programs will foster community involvement and engagement as well as provide an
5 opportunity to train the next generation of firefighters throughout the state and will further aid in
6 recruitment and retention of qualified, educated firefighters.

§18B-3G-2. Definitions.

1 As used in this article, the following words and phrases are hereby defined:

2 "Approved curriculum" means curriculum for training approved by the West Virginia State
3 Fire Commission.

4 "Firefighter" means any active member of a fire department who is a certified firefighter.

5 "Fire service instructor" means an instructor that has satisfactorily completed all
6 requirements of the NFPA to teach courses related to the minimum job performance requirements
7 for Fire Fighter I and Fire Fighter II professional qualifications.

8 "NFPA" means the National Fire Protection Association Codes and Standards.

§18B-3G-3 Establishment of the West Virginia Fire Fighter Education pilot program;
authorization for four-year pilot program; sunset date of the pilot program; funding;
annual reporting; recommendation to the Legislature.

2 (a) There is hereby created a pilot program known as the West Virginia Firefighter
3 Education pilot program in four West Virginia counties. This pilot program shall be initially
4 established in Kanawha, Ohio, Mineral County, and Raleigh counties. These counties shall
5 provide at least one qualified fire service instructor to provide instruction on Fire Fighter I, and Fire
6 Fighter II courses within the community and technical college system or other educational
7 institutions.

8 (b) This instruction shall be made available to all eligible students, including all eligible high
9 school students, within that county that are eligible to attend a community and technical college or
10 other educational institution to aid in satisfying the minimum training requirements and approved
11 curriculum for rescue and firefighting for volunteer and professional fire departments and
12 educating current and future firefighters as required by the West Virginia State Fire Commission.

13 (c) The pilot program shall be for a term of four years after implementation and shall
14 commence no later than July 1, 2026, and shall commence providing firefighting education in the
15 designated counties no later than the commencement of the 2026 to 2027 school year.

16 (d) The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, in order to implement and
17 administer the West Virginia Firefighter Education pilot program as appropriate, shall pay directly,
18 to the eligible institutions the cost of the tuition and academic fees incurred by eligible students
19 taking courses in accordance with the West Virginia Firefighter Education pilot program
20 established in this section, from appropriations for this purpose.

21 (e) A fire instructor shall be employed by West Virginia University Fire Service Extension.
22 The fire instructor shall obtain, and maintain, an adult part-time teaching permit with the West
23 Virginia Department of Education.

24 (f) By July 1, 2029, and annually thereafter for the duration of the pilot program, the
25 Chancellor of the West Virginia Community and Technical College System and the Chancellor of
26 the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission shall provide a written report to the
27 Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability on:

28 (1) The number of students participating in the program;
29 (2) The number and type of credits and certifications or credentials earned by students
30 who have participated in the program;
31 (3) The dollar amount expended associated with this program;
32 (4) Projected growth in the program and funding needs for the next year;
33 (5) The job status of students who have participated in the program;
34 (6) Any issues with the program reported by students, parents, secondary schools, and
35 institutions of higher education; how these issues are being addressed; and whether the issues
36 require legislative action; and
37 (7) A recommendation from the chancellor of the West Virginia Community and Technical
38 College System and the chancellor of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission on
39 whether the program should be expanded, modified, terminated, or continue beyond its four-year
40 pilot period.

41 (g) The Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability shall review the
42 report submitted pursuant to subsection (d) of this section of this code and thereafter shall report to
43 the Legislature on the progress and success of the pilot program and make further
44 recommendations relating to extending, expanding, modifying, or terminating the pilot program.
45 This legislative report shall be in accordance with the requirements of §29A-3A-11a of this code.
46 (h) The provisions of this article expire and shall have no force and effect after June 30,
47 2031, or until such later date the Legislature terminates the pilot program.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create the West Virginia Fire Fighter Education pilot program which will be located in four counties that will provide Fire Fighter I and Fire Fighter II education to eligible students, including high school students.

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