

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 5248

**FISCAL
NOTE**

By Delegates Hornbuckle and Lewis

[Introduced February 05, 2026; referred to the
Committee on Education then Finance]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding two new sections,
2 designated §18-2-47 and §18-5-55; and to amend the code by adding a new article,
3 designated §18C-10-1, §18C-10-2, §18C-10-3, §18C-10-4, and §18C-10-5, relating to
4 creating a statewide initiative to promote teacher preparation programs aimed at
5 underrepresented groups; providing that the West Virginia State Board of Education will
6 create an initiative for this purpose; providing that county boards of education in this state
7 will create initiatives for this purpose; establishing a scholarship fund and providing for
8 funding; providing for definitions; setting forth criteria for the scholarship; and enacting the
9 scholarship.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

CHAPTER 18. EDUCATION.

ARTICLE 2. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

§18-2-47. Statewide initiative to promote teacher preparation programs aimed at underrepresented groups.

1 (a) Legislative findings. – The Legislature finds that there are underrepresented portions of
2 the population serving as public educators in this state. Minorities, males, and those persons in
3 rural, isolated, or impoverished areas have had increased difficulty finding employment in the field
4 of public education. Some of these individuals may not be aware of opportunities available to them
5 to become educators, while others may not know the process to become a teacher. For this
6 reason, it is necessary for the West Virginia State Board of Education to create an initiative to
7 provide minorities, males, and those in isolated areas with an incentive to join the public education
8 field and become teachers in this state. Surrounding states have implemented similar initiatives
9 with success, and the teacher shortage in West Virginia could be alleviated by employing more
10 persons in these underrepresented groups.

11 (b) Definitions. – For purposes of this initiative, "underrepresented groups" as educators

includes the following:

(1) Minorities;

(2) Males; or

(3) Those persons in rural, isolated, or impoverished areas.

(c) *Enactment.* – The West Virginia State Board of Education shall develop an initiative to attract underrepresented groups to become educators. The board shall develop literature to distribute and may place information for these teacher preparation programs on their website for informational purposes. This initiative shall also include information relating to the scholarship opportunity set forth in §18C-10-1 *et seq.* of this code.

ARTICLE 5. COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION.

§18-5-55. County initiative to promote teacher preparation programs aimed at underrepresented groups.

(a) *Legislative findings.* – The Legislature finds that there are underrepresented portions of the population serving as public educators in this state. Minorities, males, and those persons in rural, isolated, or impoverished areas have had increased difficulty finding employment in the field of public education. Some of these individuals may not be aware of opportunities available to them to become educators, while others may not know the process to become a teacher. For this reason, it is necessary for county boards of education in this state to create an initiative to provide minorities, males, and those in isolated areas with an incentive to join the public education field and become teachers in this state. Surrounding states have implemented similar initiatives with success, and the teacher shortage in West Virginia could be alleviated by employing more persons in these underrepresented groups.

(b) *Definitions.* – For purposes of this initiative, "underrepresented groups" as educators includes the following:

(1) Minorities;

(2) Males; or

(3) Those persons in rural, isolated, or impoverished areas.

(c) Enactment. – County boards of education in this state shall develop an initiative to attract underrepresented groups to become educators. The county boards shall develop literature to distribute and may place information for these teacher preparation programs on their respective websites for informational purposes. This initiative shall also include information relating to the scholarship opportunity set forth in §18C-10-1 *et seq.* of this code.

CHAPTER 18C. STUDENT LOANS; SCHOLARSHIPS AND STATE AID.

ARTICLE 10. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS AS EDUCATORS.

§18C-10-1. Scholarship fund created; purposes; funding.

(a) The purpose of this article is to attract minorities, males, or those persons in rural, isolated, or impoverished areas to become teachers in this state. The Legislature recognizes that a teacher shortage exists, and that incentivizing individuals in these three groups to become educators in this state would increase the workforce, while also providing new opportunities to those who want a career in public education and who may not have previously been aware of the opportunity to become a licensed educator.

(b) The higher education governing boards shall propose a joint legislative rule in accordance with the provisions of §29A-3A-1 *et seq.* of this code, to implement the provisions of this article and shall file the rule with the Legislative Oversight commission on education accountability no later than December 1, 2026. The rule shall provide for the administration of the scholarship for underrepresented groups as educators by the senior administrator in furtherance of the purposes of this article, including, but not limited to, an expression of legislative intent that academic ability be the primary criteria for selecting scholarship recipients, scholarship selection criteria and procedures, renewal, compliance, noncompliance and repayment, deferral, and excusal. The rules also shall provide for appeal procedures under which a recipient may appeal

any determination of noncompliance. The rules may provide for satisfaction of the work requirement provided in §18C-10-4(a)(2)(A) of this code through community service relating to public education. In accordance with the rules, the senior administrator shall establish appropriate guidelines for program operation.

(c) There is hereby created in the State Treasury a special fund known as the "Scholarship Fund for Underrepresented Groups as Educators" to be administered by the senior administrator for granting scholarships to prospective minorities, males, or those in rural, isolated, or impoverished areas to become educators, in accordance with this article. The Legislature shall appropriate the amount of \$10 million per year from the state general revenue fund to the special treasury fund. Scholarships shall be distributed in the following manner:

(1) One third of the scholarships shall go to male applicants;

(2) One third of the scholarships shall go to minority applicants; and

(3) One third of the scholarships shall go to applicants from isolated, rural, or impoverished areas of this state.

(d) Any moneys which may be appropriated by the Legislature, or received by the senior administrator from other sources, for the purposes of this article shall be deposited in the fund. Any moneys remaining in the fund at the close of the fiscal year shall be carried forward for use in the next fiscal year. Any moneys repaid to the senior administrator by reason of default of a scholarship agreement under this article also shall be deposited in the fund. Fund balances shall be invested with the state's consolidated investment fund, and any and all interest earnings on these investments shall be used solely for the purposes for which moneys invested were appropriated or otherwise received.

(e) The senior administrator may accept and expend any gift, grant, contribution, bequest, endowment, or other money for the purposes of this article and shall make a reasonable effort to encourage external support for the scholarship program.

§18C-10-2.

Definitions.

1 When used in this article the following terms have the following meanings, unless the
2 context clearly indicates a different meaning:

3 (a) "Eligible institution of higher education" means a state institution of higher education as
4 defined in §18B-1-2 of this code, and any other institution of higher education in this state, public or
5 private, approved by the senior administrator: *Provided*, That if any institution listed in this
6 paragraph is not regionally accredited, it shall not be included as an eligible institution.

7 (b) "Underrepresented groups" means students who are a member of a minority class,
8 including, but not limited to, the following:

9 (1) "African American" means a person having origins in any of the original peoples of
10 Africa and who is regarded as such by the community of which this person claims to be a part.

11 (2) "Asian American" means a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the
12 Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent or the Pacific Islands, including, but not limited
13 to, Japan, China, Vietnam, Samoa, Laos, Cambodia, Taiwan, Northern Mariana, the Philippines, a
14 U.S. territory of the Pacific, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka and who is regarded as such
15 by the community of which this person claims to be a part.

16 (3) "Hispanic American" means a person having origins in any of the Spanish-speaking
17 peoples of Mexico, South or Central America, or the Caribbean Islands or other Spanish or
18 Portuguese cultures and who is regarded as such by the community of which this person claims to
19 be a part.

20 (4) "Native American" means a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North
21 America and who is regarded as such by the community of which this person claims to be a part or
22 who is recognized by a tribal organization.

23 (A) Males; or

24 (B) Those students in rural, isolated, or impoverished areas. The definition includes, but is
25 not limited to, individuals who come from any region of the state with a poverty rate greater than
26 the average statewide poverty rate as determined by the U. S. Census Bureau's most recently

27 published data.

§18C-10-3. Selection criteria and procedures.

1 (a) The higher education governing boards shall designate an existing scholarship
2 selection agency or panel to select the recipients of the Scholarship Program for
3 Underrepresented Groups as Educators from among those applicants who meet eligibility criteria
4 set forth in subsection (b) of this section. If no such agency or panel exists, the higher education
5 governing boards shall appoint a scholarship selection panel for this purpose.

6 (b) To be eligible to receive a scholarship under the provisions of this article, applicants
7 must meet the following conditions:

8 (1) Be a member of an underrepresented group; and

9 (2) Be enrolled in a program leading directly to specialized certification in the education
10 field.

11 (c) In accordance with the rules of the governing boards, and the intent of this article, the
12 senior administrator shall develop criteria and procedures for the selection of scholarship
13 recipients that reflect the purposes of this article and the areas in which particular efforts will be
14 made in the selection of recipients as set forth in section one of this article and which may include,
15 but not be limited to:

16 (1) The grade point average of the applicant;

17 (2) Involvement in extracurricular activities;

18 (3) Financial need;

19 (4) Current academic standing; and

20 (5) An expression of interest in education as demonstrated in an essay written by the
21 applicant.

22 The criteria and procedures further may require the applicant to furnish letters of
23 recommendation from teachers and others.

24 (d) The senior administrator shall make application forms for these scholarships available

to public and private high schools in the state and other locations convenient to applicants, parents and others and shall make an effort to attract students from low-income backgrounds, ethnic or racial minority students, or male students who show interest in pursuing careers in education in this state and who are underrepresented in those fields.

(e) In awarding the scholarships, the panel shall give preference to applicants who are West Virginia residents.

§18C-10-4. Scholarship agreement.

(a) Each recipient of the Scholarship for Underrepresented Groups as Educators shall enter into an agreement with the senior administrator under which the recipient shall:

(1) Provide the governing boards with evidence of compliance with subsection (a), section five of this article;

(2) Agree that within one year following the date the recipient ceases to be a full-time student at an eligible institution in an education program for which the scholarship was awarded he or she will:

(A) Begin working full-time in an education related field in this state for a duration of not less than one year for each year the scholarship was received; or

(B) Begin repayment of all or part of the Scholarship for Underrepresented Groups as Educators received under this article plus interest and, if applicable, reasonable collection fees, in accordance with §18C-10-5b(b) of this code, except as provided in §18C-10-5(c) and (d) of this code.

(b) A scholarship agreement shall disclose fully the terms and conditions of this article under which the scholarship is provided and under which repayment of the scholarship may be required.

§18C-10-5. Renewal conditions; noncompliance; deferral; excusal.

(a) The recipient of a Scholarship for Underrepresented Groups as Educators is eligible for scholarship renewal if the recipient is:

3 (1) Enrolled as a full-time student in an eligible institution of higher education;

4 (2) Pursuing a course of study leading to a certificate, associate or baccalaureate degree in
5 public education as established by industry-based standards;

6 (3) Maintaining satisfactory progress as determined by the eligible institution of higher
7 education the recipient is attending; and

8 (4) Complying with any other standards established by the governing boards by rule.

9 (b) A recipient who violates a scholarship agreement is required to repay the amount of any
10 scholarship award received, plus interest, and, where applicable, reasonable collection fees, on a
11 schedule and at a rate of interest prescribed in the guidelines of the senior administrator. The
12 legislative rules required in section one of this article shall provide for a method of prorating
13 repayment amounts against any amount of the work requirement that has been fulfilled by the
14 recipient.

15 (c) A recipient is not in violation of the agreement entered into under section three of this
16 article during any period in which the recipient is:

17 (1) Pursuing a full-time course of study at an accredited institution of higher education;

18 (2) Serving as a member of the armed services of the United States for a period not in
19 excess of four years; or

20 (3) Satisfying the provisions of additional repayment exemptions that may be prescribed by
21 the governing boards by rule.

22 (d) A recipient is excused from repayment of a scholarship received under this article if the
23 recipient dies or becomes permanently and totally disabled as established by sworn affidavit of a
24 physician qualified to make such a determination as determined by the rules established by the
25 governing boards.

26 (e) The rules adopted by the governing boards shall provide that the length of the
27 repayment period may not exceed 10 years: *Provided*, That the rules may include provisions
28 under which the senior administrator may, if extenuating circumstances exist, extend the period for

29 fulfilling the obligation to 15 years.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create a statewide initiative to promote teacher preparation programs aimed at underrepresented groups. The bill provides that the West Virginia State Board of Education will create an initiative for this purpose. The bill provides that county boards of education in this state will create initiatives for this purpose. The bill establishes a scholarship fund and provides for funding. The bill provides for definitions. The bill sets forth criteria for the scholarship. Finally, the bill enacts the scholarship.

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