

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 5367

FISCAL
NOTE

By Delegates Funkhouser and Ridenour

[Introduced February 09, 2026; referred to the
Committee on the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding a new article,
 2 designated §15-17-1, §15-17-2, §15-17-3, §15-17-4, §15-17-5, §15-17-6, §15-17-7, and
 3 §15-17-8, relating to enacting the Refugee Absorptive Capacity Act; providing a short title;
 4 defining terms; designating a state office within the Department of Human Services which
 5 deals with refugees; providing for a moratorium on applications and cessations; providing
 6 for a fiscal impact assessment; requiring reports; and providing for administration and
 7 severability.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 17. REFUGEE ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY ACT.

§15-17-1. Short title.

1 This article shall be known and may be cited as the "The West Virginia Refugee Absorptive
 2 Capacity Act."

§15-17-2. Definitions.

1 As used in this article:

2 (1) "Absorptive capacity" is as determination made by the Governor or by a local
 3 government evaluating:

4 (A) The capacity of the social service agencies, child welfare agencies, child care facilities,
 5 educational facilities, healthcare facilities, translation and interpreter services, and law-
 6 enforcement agencies of the state or in the jurisdiction of the local government to meet the existing
 7 needs of the community's current residents considering budgetary and other restraints;

8 (B) The capacity to provide medical care to refugees who at the time of resettlement in the
 9 state or in the jurisdiction of the local government are determined to have medical conditions
 10 requiring, or medical histories indicating a need for treatment or observation, or affecting the public
 11 health, both with or without expenditures by this state, including expenditures under this state's
 12 approved Medicaid state plan in accordance with Section 1902(a)(10)(C) of the Social Security
 13 Act, State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or other public assistance programs;

14 (C) The capacity to provide affordable housing, low-cost housing, or both, considering
15 existing waiting lists for such housing in the state or in the jurisdiction of the local government;

16 (D) The capacity of the local school district in the jurisdiction of the local government to
17 meet the needs of the existing or anticipated refugee population, including education of
18 unaccompanied refugee minors and provision of English language training;

19 (E) The capacity of the economy of the state or in the jurisdiction of the local government to
20 absorb new workers, including the likelihood of refugees placed in the jurisdiction of the local
21 government becoming employed, self-sufficient, and free from long-term dependence on public
22 assistance, without causing competition with local residents for job opportunities, displacing
23 existing local workers, or adversely affecting the wages or working conditions of the local
24 workforce;

25 (F) The capacity of state and local law enforcement in the jurisdiction of the local
26 government to assure that law and order can be maintained and ensure that the refugee
27 population and the general public can be protected from crime, including child abuse, domestic
28 abuse and sex trafficking, as well as threats to national security; and

29 (G) The capacity of the state and local government to provide services considering
30 whether the jurisdiction of the local government has been highly impacted by the presence of
31 refugees or comparable populations, including the proportion of refugees and comparable
32 entrants in the population in the state or in the jurisdiction of the local government, the amount of
33 secondary migration of refugees to the state or to the jurisdiction of the local government, and the
34 proportion of refugees in the state or in the jurisdiction of the local government receiving cash or
35 medical assistance through public assistance.

36 (2) "Department" means Department of Human Services.

37 (3) "Local government" or "local governments" refers to either the city council or county
38 commission that regulates any host community being considered for refugee resettlement activity.

39 (4) "Local educational agency" means:

40 (A) A public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a state for
41 either administrative control of or direction of, or to perform service functions for, public elementary
42 or secondary schools in:

43 (i) A county; or

44 (ii) Such combination of school districts or counties the state recognizes as an
45 administrative agency for its public elementary or secondary schools; or

46 (B) Any other public institution or agency that has administrative control and direction of a
47 public elementary or secondary school.

48 (5) "Refugee resettlement organization" means any organization that receives federal
49 funding for refugee resettlement, including any replacement designee.

50 (6) "State office dealing with refugees" means the state office within the Department of
51 Human Services that administers the refugee program for this state, or the entity or agency to
52 whom the state has delegated such function and that has been designated and recognized by the
53 federal government to administer such program.

54 (7) "State refugee coordinator" means the official designated by the state office dealing
55 with refugees.

§15-17-3. State office within the Department Human Services dealing with refugees.

1 The state office within the department which deals with refugees shall:

2 (1) Meet at least quarterly with representatives of local governments to plan and coordinate
3 the appropriate placement of refugees in advance of the refugees' arrival; at least 30 days public
4 notice shall be provided, and specific notice shall be provided to all persons who make a request to
5 receive direct notice through the means of the person's choosing, including, but not limited to,
6 certified mail, regular United States mail, or electronic mail;

7 (2) Ensure that representatives of local resettlement agencies, local community service
8 agencies, and other publicly-funded or tax-exempt agencies that serve refugees in this state shall
9 meet at least quarterly with representatives of local governments, including representatives of law

10 enforcement and local educational agencies, to plan and coordinate the appropriate placement of
11 refugees in the host community in advance of the refugees' arrival;

12 (3) Execute a letter of agreement with each agency providing refugee resettlement
13 services in this state. The letter of agreement shall require the parties to mutually consult and
14 prepare a plan for the initial placement of refugees in a host community and set forth the
15 continuing process of consultation between the parties. The provisions of the letter agreement
16 shall be consistent with federal law regulating the resettlement of refugees;

17 (4) Provide a certification that the refugees settled in the state do not pose a security or
18 health risk to the citizens of the state; and

19 (5) At least quarterly, transmit copies of the letters of agreement and any initial refugee
20 placement plans prepared thereunder to the chairman of the House and Senate committees on
21 Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security and the Judiciary of the Legislature, respectively, to the
22 chairman of the budget committee of the local government hosting the host refugee community, to
23 the Secretary of the Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety, to the Attorney General of the
24 state, to the head of all local law-enforcement agencies in the state, to the Superintendent of the
25 West Virginia State Police, to the sheriff of every county in this state, to the West Virginia
26 Superintendent of Schools, and to the superintendent of schools for all counties in the state.

27 (6) On or before January 1, 2027, the state refugee coordinator shall provide to the Select
28 Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary of the
29 Legislature, to the chairman of the budget committee of the local government hosting the host
30 refugee community, to the Secretary of the Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety, to the
31 Attorney General of the state, to the head of all local law-enforcement agencies in the state, to the
32 Superintendent of the West Virginia State Police, to the sheriff of every county in this state, to the
33 West Virginia Superintendent of Schools, and to the superintendent of schools for all counties in
34 the state, the fiscal impact refugees have had on the state and the economic impact refugees have
35 had on the state from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2026.

36 (7) Within 30 days of the close of the state fiscal year, transmit to the Select Committee on
37 Veterans' Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary of the Legislature, to the
38 chairman of the budget committee of the local government hosting the host refugee community, to
39 the Secretary of the Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety, to the Attorney General of the
40 state, to the head of all local law-enforcement agencies in the state, to the Superintendent of the
41 West Virginia State Police, to the sheriff of every county in this state, to the West Virginia
42 Superintendent of Schools, and to the superintendent of schools for all counties in the state, the
43 following data for the prior fiscal or calendar year:

44 (A) Copies of statistical and programmatic information provided to the federal government,
45 including any Reception and Placement Program Proposal or resettlement abstract, but this
46 information shall be provided prior to being provided to the federal government:

47 (B) Copies of the written policies of the Refugee Cash Assistance program, including
48 agency policies regarding eligibility standards, the duration and amount of cash assistance
49 payments, the requirements for participation in services, the penalties for noncooperation and
50 client rights and responsibilities to ensure that refugees understand what they are eligible for, what
51 is expected of them, and what protections are available to them;

52 (C) Copies of any written public/private Refugee Cash Assistance program operating at
53 any time in the calendar year;

54 (D) A report documenting the number of refugees sanctioned for failure to comply with the
55 requirements of the Refugee Cash Assistance Program, and the number of determinations
56 concerning employability, or failure or refusal to carry out job search or to accept an appropriate
57 offer of employability services or employment, resulting in denial or termination of assistance;

58 (E) A certification that women have the same opportunities as men to participate in all
59 services provided, including job placement services;

60 (F) Any reports, either submitted or received, of crime committed by a refugee who has
61 been resettled in the state, or crime committed against a refugee who has been resettled in the

62 state, including incidents of child abuse, female genital mutilation, domestic abuse, sex trafficking,
63 human trafficking, or terrorism, whether prosecuted or not; and

64 (G) A report delineating:

65 (i) The total number of refugees resettled;

66 (ii) The total number of refugees under the age of 18 resettled;

67 (iii) The total number of refugees between the ages of 18 and 40 resettled;

68 (iv) The total number of refugees between the ages of 40 and 65 resettled;

69 (v) The total number of refugees over the age of 65;

70 (vi) The total number of refugees who are women and men, respectively;

71 (vii) The public assistance benefit programs that the refugees have applied for or enrolled
72 into;

73 (viii) The total number of refugee minors enrolled in a public school;

74 (ix) The total of refugee minors accessing English language learner services;

75 (x) The education levels of the refugees resettled by gender;

76 (xi) The locations by zip code of initial resettlement for refugees resettled that year;

77 (xii) The locations by zip code of refugees who have migrated from the zip code at which
78 they were initially resettled;

79 (xiii) The numbers of refugees resettled with and without family already residing in the
80 United States;

81 (xiv) The number of refugees for which the President of the United States, the Secretary of
82 State, the Attorney General, or the Secretary of Homeland Security exercised discretionary
83 authority granted by Section 212(d)(3)(B)(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 79 Fed. Reg.
84 6913 not to apply the material support inadmissibility provisions of Section 212(a)(3)(B) of the
85 Immigration and Nationality Act to admit the refugee into the United States;

86 (xv) The fiscal impact refugees have on the state;

87 (xvi) The economic impact refugees have on the state;

88 (xvii) The process by which the refugees entering the state were determined to not pose a
89 security risk to the citizens of the state:

90 (xviii) For each and every refugee a description as to what vaccinations the refugee has
91 received and the diseases for which the refugee has been screened;

92 (xix) For each and every refugee their five previous employers and incomes;

93 (xx) The total number of refugees needing translation services throughout the year; and

94 (xxi) A certification that all of the requirements found in this section have been met.

§15-17-4. Moratorium.

1 (a) The State Office for Refugees or the Governor shall accept an application from a local
2 government to a moratorium on new refugee resettlement activities in a host community that lacks
3 sufficient absorptive capacity.

4 (b) A host community lacks sufficient absorptive capacity where the local government,
5 after consultation with the state refugee coordinator, holds a public hearing and issues findings
6 based on the factors in §15-17-2(a) of this code that further resettlement of refugees in the host
7 community would result in an adverse impart to existing residents.

8 (c) Upon notice of a determination made pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, the
9 State Office for Refugees or the Governor shall thereafter suspend additional resettlement of
10 refugees in that community until the state refugee coordinator and the local government have
11 jointly determined that sufficient absorptive capacity for refugee resettlement exists to implement
12 the initial refugee placement plan prepared for the host refugee community.

13 (d) The period of validity of a moratorium described in subsection (c) of this section or any
14 extension thereof may not exceed one year.

§15-17-5. Fiscal impacts.

1 (a) The state office in the department which deals with refugees may collect fees stated in
2 this section and each year shall assess the fiscal impact refugees have on the state.

3 (b) On or before July 1 of each year, the state refugee coordinator shall make a

4 determination regarding the total fiscal impact on the state that is not reimbursable through the
5 federal government or otherwise.

6 (c) The amount each refugee resettlement organization must reimburse to the state shall
7 be proportional to the number of refugees the refugee resettlement organization has facilitated
8 bringing into the state.

9 (d) The amount each refugee resettlement organization must reimburse to the state will be
10 transmitted to every refugee resettlement organization each and every year before July 1 of each
11 year.

12 (e) Payment pursuant to this section shall be made on or before August 1 of each year.

§15-17-6. Executive order.

1 The Governor may issue findings based on the factors in §15-17-2 of this code that further
2 resettlement of refugees in the state would result in an adverse impact to existing residents of the
3 state and issue an executive order declaring that the state, through any entity or designee, will not,
4 until revocation of the executive order, participate in the resettlement of refugees.

§15-17-7. Administration of article.

1 Nothing in this article creates a new agency for administering the implementation of this
2 article. The department, as referenced in the West Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program Plan
3 (the Plan) along with persons and programs referenced in the plan shall enforce this article. This
4 is the same plan signed by the Governor on July 28, 2016 and created pursuant to the provisions
5 of the United States Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR §400.5.

§15-17-8. Severability.

1 If any section, subsection, subdivision, paragraph, sentence clause or phrase of this article
2 is for any reason held to be invalid, unlawful or unconstitutional, that decision does not affect the
3 validity of the remaining portions of this article or any part thereof.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to enact the Refugee Absorptive Capacity 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.