

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 5384

By Delegates Pritt, Holstein, Flanigan, Crouse,

Mallow, Willis, and Toney

[Introduced February 09, 2026; referred to the

Committee on Education then Finance]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §18C-7-6 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
 2 to permitting the Higher Education Policy Commission ("HEPC") to adjust the qualifications
 3 for the PROMISE scholarship in order to maximize the number of students who may be
 4 eligible for the award.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

**ARTICLE 7. WEST VIRGINIA PROVIDING REAL OPPORTUNITIES FORMAXIMIZING
 IN-STATE STUDENT EXCELLENCE SCHOLARSHIPPROGRAM.**

§18C-7-6. PROMISE Scholarship Program requirements; legislative rule.

1 (a) A PROMISE scholarship annual award shall meet the following conditions:

2 (1) For a student enrolled in a state institution of higher education, the annual award is
 3 equal to the lesser of the cost of tuition or \$4,750, except that a student who was awarded and
 4 used a PROMISE scholarship annual award prior to January 1, 2010, shall continue to receive the
 5 annual award calculated under the same terms and conditions that applied on the day before the
 6 effective date of this article;

7 (2) For a student enrolled in an eligible institution other than a state institution of higher
 8 education, the annual award is equal to, but may not exceed, the lesser of the cost of tuition or
 9 \$4,750, except that a student who was awarded and used a PROMISE scholarship annual award
 10 prior to January 1, 2010, shall continue to receive the annual award calculated under the same
 11 terms and conditions that applied on the day before the effective date of this article;

12 (3) The annual award may exceed \$4,750, if the commission determines that adequate
 13 funds are available, but in any case may not be greater than the actual cost of tuition;

14 (4) The annual award shall be used by an eligible institution to supplement, but may not
 15 supplant, a tuition and fee waiver for which the individual is eligible pursuant to §18B-10-5, §18B-
 16 10-6a, §18B-10-7, or §18B-10-7b of this code.

17 (b) The total cost of all scholarships awarded by the commission in any year may not

18 exceed the amount of funds available to the commission during that fiscal year.

19 (c) In order to be eligible to receive a PROMISE scholarship award, an individual shall:

20 (1) Submit a scholarship award application to the commission:

21 (A) Within two years of completing a secondary education program in a public, private, or
22 home school or within two years of obtaining a GED or equivalent; or

23 (B) Within seven years of initially entering military service, and within one year of discharge
24 from military service, if the individual has entered the United States armed services within two
25 years after completing a secondary education program in a public, private, or home school or
26 obtaining a GED or equivalent;

27 (2) Apply for and submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid;

28 (3) Maintain a grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 grading scale in the required core
29 and elective course work necessary to prepare students for success in post-secondary education
30 at the associate and baccalaureate degree levels as determined by the commission, if the
31 individual has completed not more than one semester or term at an institution of higher education,
32 excluding credits earned in advanced placement, international baccalaureate, dual credit, and
33 comparable courses while the student is enrolled in high school;

34 (4) Maintain appropriate academic progress toward the completion of a degree at the
35 undergraduate education level as determined by the commission if the individual has completed
36 more than one semester or term at an institution of higher education, excluding credits earned in
37 advanced placement, international baccalaureate, dual credit and comparable courses while the
38 student is enrolled in high school; school: *Provided*, That a recipient of the PROMISE scholarship
39 award who does not meet the requirements of this subdivision and loses the award may petition
40 the institution to reinstate the award upon successfully reattaining the credit hour and minimum
41 overall grade point qualifications set out in the commission's rule governing eligibility for receipt of
42 the PROMISE scholarship: *Provided, however*, That a student who has lost the PROMISE
43 scholarship award is only eligible to be reinstated one time; if the student becomes ineligible for

44 the PROMISE scholarship award a second time, the student may not again petition the institution
45 for reinstatement of the award nor again be reinstated: *Provided further*, That the student forfeits a
46 term of eligibility for each term in which the student is enrolled to meet the renewal requirements
47 as authorized by this subdivision: *And provided further*, That upon a finding that the student
48 successfully reattained the credit hour and minimum overall grade point qualifications set out in
49 the commission's rule governing eligibility for receipt of the PROMISE scholarship award as
50 required by this subdivision, the institution shall reinstate the award;

51 (5) Be a United States citizen or legal immigrant to the United States;

52 (6) Meet additional objective standards the commission considers necessary to promote
53 academic excellence and to maintain the financial stability of the fund; and

54 (7) Enroll in an eligible institution. A student enrolled at an eligible institution who receives a
55 PROMISE scholarship award may retain and renew the scholarship to complete his or her
56 undergraduate education at that institution or any other eligible institution under the following
57 circumstances:

58 (A) The institution at which the student is enrolled loses its status as an eligible institution
59 pursuant to the provisions of §18B-7-3(b)(1) of this code; and

60 (B) The student meets all other renewal requirements of this code and of commission
61 rules.

62 (d) It is the intent of the Legislature that the commission shall strongly encourage
63 prospective candidates for the PROMISE scholarship to perform at least 20 hours of unpaid
64 community service while in high school to help prepare them for success in post-secondary
65 education. The community service may include, but is not limited to, participation with nonprofit,
66 governmental or community-based organizations designed with any or all of the following
67 purposes:

68 (1) Improving the quality of life for community residents;

69 (2) Meeting the needs of community residents; or

70 (3) Fostering civic responsibility.

71 (e) The commission shall promulgate a legislative rule in accordance with the provisions of
72 §29A-3A-1 *et seq.* of this code.

73 (1) The rule shall include at least the following provisions:

74 (A) The amount of a PROMISE scholarship award in combination with aid from all other
75 sources may not exceed the cost of education at the institution the recipient is attending. This
76 provision does not apply to members of the West Virginia National Guard, recipients of an
77 Underwood-Smith teacher scholarship and recipients of a West Virginia engineering, science and
78 technology scholarship;

79 (B) Additional objective standards the commission considers necessary:

80 (i) To promote academic excellence;

81 (ii) To maintain the financial stability of the fund; and

82 (iii) To operate the program within the limits of available funds;

83 (C) Provisions for making the highest and best use of the PROMISE Scholarship Program
84 in conjunction with the West Virginia College Prepaid Tuition and Savings Program Act set forth in
85 §18-30-1 *et seq.* of this code;

86 (D) A provision defining the relationship of PROMISE scholarship awards to all other
87 sources of student financial aid to ensure maximum coordination. The provision shall include the
88 following:

89 (i) Methods to maximize student eligibility for federal student financial aid;

90 (ii) A requirement that PROMISE scholarship awards not supplant tuition and fee waivers;

91 and

92 (iii) Clarification of the relationship between the PROMISE Scholarship Program, tuition
93 savings plans and other state-funded student financial aid programs;

94 (E) A method for awarding scholarships within the limits of available appropriations,
95 including circumstances when program funds are not sufficient to provide awards to all eligible

96 applicants. The commission may not use any of the following methods:

97 (i) Providing for an annual PROMISE scholarship award that is less than the amounts
98 provided for in this section; or

99 (ii) Eliminating any current recipient from eligibility; and

100 (F) A method for applicants to appeal determinations of eligibility and renewal.

101 (2) The rule may provide for or require the following at the commission's discretion:

102 (A) Requiring repayment of the amount of the scholarship, in whole or in part, if a
103 scholarship recipient chooses to work outside the state after graduation. The rule may not require
104 a recipient to repay a scholarship, in whole or in part, unless the prospective recipient has been
105 informed of this requirement in writing before initial acceptance of the PROMISE scholarship
106 award;

107 (B) Targeting a portion of the scholarship funds to be used for applicants enrolled in an
108 engineering, science, technology or other designated program;

109 (C) Determining what other sources of funding for higher education are to be deducted
110 from the PROMISE scholarship award; and

111 (D) Providing additional criteria as determined by the commission.

112 (3) Any rule promulgated by the commission pursuant to previous enactments of this
113 article in effect on the effective date of the amendment and reenactment of this article in the year
114 2009 remains in effect until amended, modified, repealed, or replaced by the commission.

115 (f) Effective for the school year 2026-2027 and continuing thereafter, the Higher Education
116 Policy Commission ("HEPC") is hereby authorized to adjust the required composite testing scores
117 for the ACT and the SAT regarding PROMISE scholarship eligibility, year to year, to maximize the
118 number of awards available to prospective students. Individual subject score requirements for the
119 ACT and SAT tests shall be eliminated, and instead, the total composite scores of a student shall
120 be used in determining a student's ability to qualify for the PROMISE scholarship.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to permit the Higher Education Policy Commission ("HEPC") to adjust the qualifications for the PROMISE scholarship in order to maximize the number of students who may be eligible for the award.

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