

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 5478

By Delegates Hornbuckle, Hanshaw (Mr. Speaker),

Criss, Riley, Ellington, Statler, Hansen, Lewis,

Hamilton, Fluharty, and Garcia

[Introduced February 12, 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 section,
 2 designated §18-2A-11, relating to the creation of the "Kindergarten Readiness Touchpad
 3 Pilot Program"; establishing a statewide pilot program to improve kindergarten readiness
 4 by providing preloaded early-learning touchpads to eligible preschool-aged children;
 5 assigning program administration; and requiring evaluation

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

**ARTICLE 2A. ADOPTION OF TEXTBOOKS, INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND
 LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES.**

§18-2A-11. Kindergarten Readiness Touchpad Pilot Program.

1 (a) This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Kindergarten Readiness Touchpad
 2 Pilot Program".

3 (b) The Legislature finds that:

4 (1) Early literacy and numeracy skills developed before kindergarten are strongly
 5 associated with later academic success.

6 (2) Many West Virginia children enter kindergarten lacking foundational readiness skills,
 7 and access to high-quality early learning resources varies by geography and income.

8 (3) A simple, family-friendly learning tool that works without internet may help reduce
 9 opportunity gaps and support parents and caregivers as first teachers.

10 (b) The purpose of this act is to establish a pilot program to distribute preloaded early-
 11 learning touchpads to eligible children and to evaluate impacts on kindergarten readiness
 12 indicators.

13 (c) Definitions. - For purposes of this article:

14 (1) "Department" means the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE).

15 (2) "Pilot Program" means the Kindergarten Readiness Touchpad Pilot Program created
 16 by this article.

17 (3) "Touchpad" means a durable, child-friendly learning device that is preloaded with
18 early learning applications aligned to school readiness domains designed to function without
19 internet access.

20 (4) "Eligible child" means a child who:

21 (A) Is three or four years of age at the time of enrollment, or is otherwise eligible as a
22 rising kindergartener; and

23 (B) Resides in West Virginia; and

24 (C) Meets at least one of the following criteria:

25 (i) Family income at or below the federal poverty level;

26 (ii) Enrollment in or eligibility for Head Start, Early Head Start, WV Pre-K, Women,
27 Infants, and Children (WIC), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, or
28 foster/kinship care; or

29 (iii) Other risk factors identified by the department by legislative rule.

30 Establishment of the Pilot Program; administration.

31 (d) The Department of Education shall establish and administer the Kindergarten
32 Readiness Touchpad Pilot Program.

33 (e) The department may coordinate implementation with the:

34 (1) West Virginia Department of Human Services;

35 (2) West Virginia Department of Health;

36 (3) County boards of education;

37 (4) West Virginia Pre-K programs, Head Start agencies, pediatric and family health
38 clinics, libraries, and other appropriate community partners.

39 (f) The department shall select participating counties or regions using criteria that
40 include:

41 (1) Kindergarten readiness indicators;

42 (2) Child poverty and economic distress indicators;

- 43 (3) Limited broadband or digital access barriers; and
- 44 (4) Partner capacity to support enrollment and family engagement.
- 45 (g) Distribution and program components. – The department shall procure and distribute
- 46 touchpad kits during the pilot period.
- 47 (1) Each touchpad kit shall, at minimum, include:
- 48 (A) The touchpad device preloaded with school-readiness learning content;
- 49 (B) Child-safe headphones;
- 50 (C) A protective carrying case; and
- 51 (D) Simple parent/caregiver guides.
- 52 (2) Family support component. - The department shall ensure participating families
- 53 receive ongoing guidance, which may include:
- 54 (A) Printed or digital tip sheets, short training videos, and weekly text-message tips to
- 55 encourage consistent use;
- 56 (B) Suggested daily routines; and
- 57 (C) Optional caregiver check-ins through community partners and digital surveys.
- 58 (h) Data privacy and child protections. - The department shall ensure the Pilot Program
- 59 complies with applicable state and federal student and child privacy laws, including the Family
- 60 Educational Rights and Privacy Act where applicable.
- 61 (1) The department shall adopt minimum privacy standards requiring that:
- 62 (A) Collection of personally identifiable information is limited to what is necessary to
- 63 administer the program; and
- 64 (B) Data is stored securely and access is limited.
- 65 (i) Evaluation and reporting. - The department shall collect data and evaluate the pilot
- 66 program annually and may contract with an independent evaluator, such as an in-state
- 67 institution of higher education to assess implementation and outcomes.
- 68 (1) The department shall report to the Legislative Oversight on Education Accountability.

69 (2) Evaluation metrics may include:

70 (A) Distribution counts and demographic reach;

71 (B) Caregiver engagement measures (e.g., participation in tips/training, reported usage);

72 (C) Pre- and post- measures of school readiness skills using developmentally

73 appropriate tools selected by the department;

74 (D) Kindergarten entry indicators available to WVDE; and

75 (E) Cost per child, and recommendations for scaling.

76 (j) Special Revenue Account. - There is created in the State Treasury a separate special

77 revenue account, which shall be an interest-bearing account, to be known as the "Kindergarten

78 Readiness Touchpad Pilot Program Fund." The special revenue account shall consist of

79 appropriations made by the Legislature, income from the investment of moneys held in the special

80 revenue account, and all other sums available for deposit to the special revenue account from any

81 source, public or private. No expenditures for purposes of this section are authorized from

82 collections except in accordance with the provisions of article three, chapter twelve of this code

83 and upon fulfillment of the provisions set forth in article two, chapter five-a of this code. No

84 expenses incurred under this section shall be a charge against the General Revenue Fund of the

85 state.

86 (1) Moneys in the special revenue account shall be appropriated to the Department of

87 Education and used exclusively, in accordance with appropriations made by the Legislature, to

88 pay costs, fees, and expenses incurred, or to be incurred, for the following purposes:

89 (A) Procurement of touchpads and kit components;

90 (B) Distribution logistics;

91 (C) Family engagement supports; and

92 (D) Evaluation and reporting.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create the Kindergarten Readiness Touchpad Pilot

Program.

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