

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 5647

By Delegate Brooks

[Introduced February 17, 2026; referred to the
Committee on Education]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding a new section,
2 designated §18-2-47, relating to creating the Open and Equal Opportunities in Student
3 Activities Act; setting forth purpose; defining terms; permitting homeschooled students,
4 Hope Scholarship students, or students enrolled in a nonpublic school, who do not attend a
5 school that is a member of the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission or
6 attends a school that does not sponsor, or engage in, an extracurricular activity a student
7 seeks to participate in, to participate in extracurricular activities sponsored by, or engaged
8 in by, certain schools that are members of the West Virginia Secondary School Activities
9 Commission; making students who are participating in extracurricular activities pursuant
10 to this act and who leave a member school during the school year subject to the same
11 transfer protocols that apply to any other member-to-member transfer; setting forth
12 conditions for participation; allowing participation in curricular activities if a requirement of
13 the extracurricular activity; setting forth provisions pertaining to fair treatment for students
14 participating in activities pursuant to this act; requiring that any insurance provided by a
15 district school board for participants in extracurricular activities cover a student
16 participating in extracurricular activities pursuant to this act; and clarifying that act does not
17 guarantee that a student trying out for an interscholastic sport or other extracurricular
18 activity that is under the authority of the West Virginia Secondary School Activities
19 Commission will make the team or become part of another extracurricular activity.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 2. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

§18-2-47. Open and Equal Opportunities in Student Activities Act; permitting students who are homeschooled or taught by a private tutor, or enrolled in a private, parochial, or church school, or school operated by a religious order to participate in extracurricular activities at schools that are members of the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission.

1 (a) This section shall be known as the Open and Equal Opportunities in Student Activities
2 Act.

3 (b) The purpose of this section is to allow homeschooled students, Hope Scholarship
4 students, or students enrolled in a nonpublic school, who do not attend a school that is a member
5 of the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission or attends a school that does not
6 sponsor, or engage in, an extracurricular activity a student seeks to participate in, to participate in
7 extracurricular activities that are under the authority of the commission, including athletic teams, at
8 schools that are members of the commission.

9 (c) For the purposes of this section:

10 (1) "Homeschooled students" means students who are exempt from compulsory school
11 attendance pursuant to §18-8-1(c);

12 (2) "Hope Scholarship students" means students who are exempt from compulsory school
13 attendance pursuant to §18-8-1(m);

14 (3) "Nonpublic school" means a school for which the enrolled students are exempt from
15 compulsory school attendance pursuant to §18-8-1(b) or §18-8-1(k);

16 (4) "Member school" means any public school or nonpublic school that is a member of the
17 West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission; and

18 (5) "Extracurricular activities" means all programs of the school that are under the authority
19 of the commission.

20 (d) Homeschooled students, Hope Scholarship students, or students enrolled in a
21 nonpublic school, who do not attend a school that is a member of the West Virginia Secondary
22 School Activities Commission or attend a school that does not sponsor, or engage in, an
23 extracurricular activity a student seeks to participate in, may participate in extracurricular activities
24 sponsored by, or engaged in by, a member school that the student would be authorized to attend
25 pursuant to §18-5-16 in the case of a member public school, or a member nonpublic school that
26 has agreed to open its extracurricular activities to those students. A student who participates in

27 extracurricular activities who leaves a member school during the school year shall be subject to
28 the same transfer protocols that apply to any other member-to-member transfer. Participation is
29 conditioned on all of the following:

30 (1) The student registers with the county school board in the district where the student
31 resides an intention to participate in the extracurricular activities as a representative of one of the
32 schools in the district;

33 (2) The student pays the same fee as any other students related to participation in the
34 interscholastic athletic events and other extracurricular activities;

35 (3) The student agrees to comply with all disciplinary rules of the West Virginia Secondary
36 School Activities Commission and the county board in which he or she lives;

37 (4) The student adheres to the same academic standards as other participants of the team
38 or activity, with those standards confirmed by appropriate documentation provided to the member
39 school providing the activity in which the student is to participate. The student shall be permitted to
40 participate in curricular activities if that is a requirement of the extracurricular activity, including, but
41 not limited to, weight training. Appropriate documentation consists of one of the following:

42 (A) The student's transcript for the previous semester;

43 (B) The results of a nationally normed standardized achievement test published or normed
44 not more than 10 years from the date of administration and administered in accordance with the
45 test publisher's guidelines in the subjects of reading, language, mathematics, science, and social
46 studies which demonstrate that the student is on grade level or, if grade equivalency is not
47 available, that the student scores at or above the fourth stanine; or

48 (C) A portfolio of the previous semester's schoolwork demonstrating the student's
49 proficiency appropriate for his or her grade level as determined by the school principal or guidance
50 counselor.

51 If the student was enrolled in a member school during the immediately preceding school
52 year, the student's eligibility is based on his or her academic performance at that school;

53 (5) The student complies with the same physical examination and immunization
54 requirements as other participants of the team or activity; and

55 (6) The student satisfies the same residency requirements as other students in the school
56 at which the student participates.

57 (e) A student of a member school who has been unable to maintain academic eligibility for
58 participation in extracurricular activities is ineligible to participate in the activities pursuant to this
59 section until the student has successfully satisfied standards to regain eligibility that are equivalent
60 to those imposed on other students at the same grade level.

61 (f) A student participating in extracurricular activities pursuant to this section who transfers
62 to a member school before or during the first grading period of the school year is academically
63 eligible to participate in extracurricular activities during the first grading period provided the
64 student has a successful evaluation from the previous semester.

65 (g) Student standards for participation in interscholastic extracurricular activities shall be
66 applied beginning with the first semester of the sixth-grade year of the student. A county board
67 may not establish requirements for participation in interscholastic extracurricular activities which
68 make participation in the activities less accessible to students participating pursuant to this section
69 than to other students. Except as otherwise provided in this section, evaluation processes or
70 requirements that are placed on students participating pursuant to this section may not exceed
71 those that apply to other students generally.

72 (h) Any insurance provided by a district school board for participants in extracurricular
73 activities shall cover a student permitted to participate by provisions of this section. If there is an
74 additional premium for the coverage, the student shall pay the additional premium.

75 (i)(1) No member school athletic team or group may be impeded from competing against
76 any other member school team or group because the team or group includes students
77 participating pursuant to this section.

78 (2) A member school is prohibited from membership in any organization or entity which

79 regulates or governs interscholastic extracurricular activities and discriminates against students
80 eligible to participate pursuant to the provisions of this section.

81 (j) This section does not guarantee that a student trying out for an interscholastic sport or
82 other extracurricular activity that is under the authority of the West Virginia Secondary School
83 Activities Commission will make the team or become part of another extracurricular activity, but
84 only that the student is not prohibited from trying out for the team or activity if the student is
85 otherwise eligible, as provided herein and under the rules of an organization or association that
86 regulates interscholastic sports.

87 (k) Notwithstanding any provision of this code to the contrary, any elementary or middle
88 school student enrolled in any private, parochial or church school or school of a religious order,
89 other nonpublic school, public charter school, a student who is receiving home instruction
90 pursuant to §18-8-1(c), is a participant in the Hope Scholarship Program, pursuant to §18-8-1(m)
91 and as provided for in §18-31-1, et seq., or participates in a microschool or learning pod, pursuant
92 to §18-8-1(n) shall be eligible to participate in all extracurricular activities, inclusive of
93 cheerleading, in the district where the student resides. A registered intention to participate in the
94 extracurricular activities as a representative of one of the schools in the district is not a necessary
95 prerequisite for any elementary or middle school student to participate in the extracurricular
96 activities contemplated in this subsection.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to permit students instructed at home, by a private tutor or enrolled in a private, parochial or church school or a school operated by a religious order, who do not attend a school that is a member of the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission to participate in extracurricular athletic or other extracurricular activities at a school that is a member of the commission.

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