

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 5668

FISCAL
NOTE

By Delegates Dittman, Hanshaw (Mr. Speaker),
Akers, Moore, Drennan, Dean, Bridges, G. Howell,
Watt, Hornby, and Burkhammer

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

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia of 1931, as amended, by adding a new article,
 2 designated §5B-12-1, §5B-12-2, §5B-12-3, §5B-12-4, §5B-12-5, §5B-12-6, §5B-12-7,
 3 §5B-12-8, §5B-12-9, §5B-12-10, and §5B-12-11, relating to establishing the Central West
 4 Virginia Economic Development and Rural Revitalization Act; providing legislative
 5 findings; defining eligible counties; creating a regional economic development program;
 6 authorizing grants, loans, and technical assistance; creating tax incentives and credits;
 7 providing for administration and rulemaking; requiring reporting; and providing an effective
 8 date; all relating to economic development in central West Virginia.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

**ARTICLE 12. CENTRAL WEST VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL
 REVITALIZATION ACT.**

§5B-12-1. Short title.

1 This article shall be known and may be cited as the "Central West Virginia Economic
 2 Development and Rural Revitalization Act."

§5B-12-2. Legislative findings and purpose.

1 (a) The Legislature finds that certain counties in central West Virginia experience
 2 persistent economic distress, including limited employment opportunities, declining population,
 3 aging infrastructure, and reduced access to capital.

4 (b) The Legislature further finds that targeted, regionally focused economic development
 5 strategies are necessary to promote job creation, entrepreneurship, infrastructure investment,
 6 tourism, and long-term economic sustainability while preserving the rural character of these
 7 communities.

8 (c) The purpose of this article is to establish a coordinated economic and rural revitalization
 9 program to:

10 (1) Encourage private investment and job creation;

- 11 (2) Support small businesses and entrepreneurship;
- 12 (3) Expand workforce development opportunities;
- 13 (4) Improve infrastructure and broadband access;
- 14 (5) Strengthen downtowns and rural communities; and
- 15 (6) Strengthen and expand tourism by investing in outdoor recreation, heritage, and
- 16 community-based destinations.

§5B-12-3. Definitions.

1 As used in this article:

2 (1) "Central West Virginia region" means the counties of Webster, Clay, Braxton, Roane,
3 Calhoun, Wirt, Lewis, and Gilmer.

4 (2) "Department" means the West Virginia Department Commerce

5 (3) "Eligible entity" means a county or municipal government, development authority,
6 nonprofit organization, small business, or public-private partnership operating within the Central
7 West Virginia region.

8 (4) "Program" means the Central West Virginia Economic Development and Rural
9 Revitalization Program established by this article.

§5B-12-4. Establishment of program; administration.

1 (a) There is hereby created within the Department the Central West Virginia Economic
2 Development and Rural Revitalization Program.

3 (b) The Department shall administer the program and may coordinate with WorkForce
4 West Virginia, the Division of Highways, the West Virginia Development Office, and other state
5 agencies as necessary.

§5B-12-5. Authorized program activities.

1 (a) The Department may provide grants, loans, and technical assistance for projects
2 located in the Central West Virginia region, including but not limited to:

- 3 (1) Business development, expansion, and site preparation;

- 4 (2) Small business and entrepreneurial support;
- 5 (3) Workforce training and skills development;
- 6 (4) Infrastructure, water, sewer, transportation, and broadband projects;
- 7 (5) Downtown redevelopment, housing rehabilitation, new housing, community facilities,
- 8 and renovation of viable buildings throughout the region that could expand, attract, and
- 9 support businesses; and
- 10 (6) Tourism, agriculture, and value-added manufacturing initiatives.

§5B-12-6. Eligibility and priority.

- 1 (a) Only projects located within the Central West Virginia region are eligible for assistance
- 2 pursuant to this article.
- 3 (b) In awarding assistance, the Department shall give priority to projects that:
- 4 (1) Create or retain jobs;
- 5 (2) Leverage private or federal funding;
- 6 (3) Demonstrate regional collaboration;
- 7 (4) Promote long-term economic sustainability
- 8 (5) Benefit economically distressed or underserved communities; and
- 9 (6) Promote Tourism.

§5B-12-7. Central West Virginia investment tax credit.

- 1 (a) There is hereby created a Central West Virginia Investment Tax Credit against the
- 2 personal income tax and corporation net income tax.
- 3 (b) A taxpayer is eligible for the credit if the taxpayer:
- 4 (1) Makes a qualified capital investment in a business or facility located in the Central West
- 5 Virginia region; and
- 6 (2) Creates or retains full-time jobs within the region.
- 7 (c) The credit shall equal up to 25 percent of the qualified investment, as determined by the
- 8 Department in consultation with the State Tax Department.

9 (d) The credit may be applied over a period not to exceed five taxable years.

§5B-12-8. Small business job creation tax credit.

1 (a) A small business located within the Central West Virginia region that creates new full-
2 time jobs may receive a tax credit of up to \$3,000 per job, per year, for a period not to exceed three
3 years.

4 (b) The Department shall certify eligible businesses and job creation prior to issuance of
5 the credit.

§5B-12-9. Rulemaking authority.

1 The Department shall propose legislative rules in accordance with §29A-3-1 et seq. of this
2 code to implement this article, including rules governing application procedures, eligibility
3 standards, tax credit certification, and reporting requirements.

§5B-12-10. Reporting requirements.

1 (a) The Department shall submit an annual report to the Governor and the Joint Committee
2 on Government and Finance.

3 (b) The report shall include:

4 (1) A list of funded projects;

5 (2) Counties served;

6 (3) Jobs created or retained;

7 (4) Amount of private and public investment leveraged; and

8 (5) Program outcomes and performance metrics.

§5B-12-11. Effective date.

1 This article shall take effect July 1, 2026.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create The Central West Virginia Economic Development and Rural Revitalization 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.