

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2026 REGULAR SESSION**

**Enrolled**

**Committee Substitute**

**for**

**Committee Substitute**

**for**

**Senate Bill 402**

BY SENATORS SMITH (MR. PRESIDENT) AND WOELFEL

(BY REQUEST OF THE EXECUTIVE)

[Passed March 14, 2026; in effect 90 days from  
passage (June 12, 2026)]



1 AN ACT to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding a new section,  
2 designated §18B-3D-8, relating to creating the West Virginia Micro-Credential Program  
3 under the authority of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

**ARTICLE 3D. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE.**

**§18B-3D-8. West Virginia Micro-Credential Program.**

1 (a) The Legislature finds that:

2 (1) Within and outside of the classroom, students and employees often engage in project-  
3 based and experiential learning by which they attain knowledge and skills, such as critical  
4 thinking, communication, and collaboration, that are essential for productive employment and  
5 effective citizenship, but are not recognized or identified through an assessment score or a course  
6 grade;

7 (2) Students and employees often attain the mastery of valuable skills but lack the ability  
8 to demonstrate this mastery in a manner that is meaningful or credible for school districts, charter  
9 schools, institutions of higher education, or employers;

10 (3) School districts, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and  
11 employers have created micro-credentialing systems in the past. In these systems, an entity that  
12 provides educational opportunities for students and adults establishes the criteria, including  
13 curriculum and competencies, and assessments for determining whether a person has acquired  
14 the necessary skills for the micro-credential. Individuals who earn the micro-credential can then  
15 share the credential with formal or informal education providers or employers or other groups that  
16 have a need for persons with the skills represented by the micro-credential;

17 (4) A micro-credentialing system enables individuals to earn micro-credentials from a  
18 variety of issuers and use the micro-credentials to provide a much more complete picture of the  
19 range of knowledge and skills that the individual has developed. The individual can then

20 incorporate the micro-credentials with the individual's resume when applying for entrance into  
21 select postsecondary education programs or the workforce;

22 (5) For certain persons, nonprofits, and employers, especially those involved in manual  
23 labor and skilled-trades, a system of micro-credentialing may be a cost and time-effective  
24 alternative to traditional higher education formats for employee development and workforce-  
25 readiness; and

26 (6) State institutions of higher education can also incorporate micro-credentials into  
27 degree programs to provide students with enhanced practical skills that improve their employment  
28 prospects compared to peers.

29 (b) The Legislature concludes that promoting and expanding a system of micro-  
30 credentialing to document student learning and mastery of distinct skills is useful to enable  
31 students and employees to demonstrate specific skills attained either within or outside of the  
32 classroom in a manner that is credible and useful for school districts, charter schools, and state  
33 institutions of higher education. The Legislature further finds that a standardized, credible system  
34 of micro-credentialing is a valuable component of workforce development in West Virginia.

35 (c) Therefore, the West Virginia Micro-Credential Program is established within the West  
36 Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. The Chancellor or their designee shall be  
37 responsible for developing and administering the Micro-Credential Program that shall provide at  
38 least the following:

39 (1) Standards and procedures for identifying the appropriate subjects and skills for micro-  
40 credentialing and the manner in which a traditional or nontraditional student may demonstrate the  
41 level of mastery necessary to obtain a micro-credential;

42 (2) Standards and procedures for the design of micro-credentials, including how the micro-  
43 credentials are validated, stored, accessed, and maintained; and

44 (3) Standards and procedures for the platform for creating, maintaining, accessing, and  
45 sharing micro-credentials; and

46 (4) Standards and procedures for determining the entity or entities that may store and  
47 maintain records of the micro-credential completion, along with other educational attainments and  
48 learning achievements such as post-secondary certificates and degrees, professional licenses,  
49 industry certifications, and completed apprenticeships, and protocols to protect the security of  
50 micro-credentials and other educational attainments and learning achievements and to help  
51 ensure that a student who obtains a micro-credential and other educational attainment and  
52 learning achievements controls access to their record.

53 (5) Standards and procedures for verifying the completion of micro-credentials and that  
54 they lead to demonstrable, measurable improvements in workforce participation and earnings;  
55 and

56 (6) Assistance to state institutions of higher education with implementing micro-credential  
57 offerings that are high-quality, transparent, aligned with workforce needs, and implemented  
58 through sound institutional processes, through increased capacity building for needs assessment,  
59 program development, marketing, student supports, documentation, and program and process  
60 improvement.

61 (d) The commission is authorized and empowered, as necessary in developing and  
62 implementing the Micro-Credential Program, to:

63 (1) Coordinate with the Department of Commerce, Department of Education, the  
64 Professional Charter School Board, the Council for Community and Technical College Education,  
65 any institution of higher education, as that term is defined in §18B-1-2 of this code, and employers  
66 to develop joint criteria, curriculum, competencies, assessments, and class credit for specific  
67 micro-credentials within the program;

68 (2) Contract with education experts and service providers to consult on and develop the  
69 program or specific micro-credentials within the program;

70           (3) Prioritize the development and deployment of micro-credentials for manual labor or  
71 skilled trade related workforce positions such as those found within the industries of construction,  
72 manufacturing, and energy;

73           (4) Utilize digital, web-based, artificial intelligence-based, hands-on, or on-the-job micro-  
74 credentials as needed to meet workforce and market demands; and

75           (5) Communicate with the Department of Commerce, employers, and industry  
76 representatives to ensure that the micro-credentials being offered respond to local and regional  
77 needs for specific workforce knowledge and skills.

78           (e) The commission may propose rules in accordance with §29A-3A-1 *et seq.* of this code,  
79 as needed, to establish and implement the Micro-Credential Program.

The Clerk of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Delegates hereby certify that the foregoing bill is correctly enrolled.

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*Clerk of the Senate*

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*Clerk of the House of Delegates*

Originated in the Senate.

In effect 90 days from passage.

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*President of the Senate*

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*Speaker of the House of Delegates*

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The within is ..... this the.....  
Day of ....., 2026.

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*Governor*