

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 445

By Senators Taylor and Smith (Mr. President)

[Introduced January 16, 2026; referred
to the Committee on Education]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §18B-3D-6 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
2 to adding Potomac State College of West Virginia University as an eligible institution for
3 participation in the Learn and Earn Program; and removing reference to the program being
4 a pilot program.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 3D. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE.

§18B-3D-6. Learn and Earn Cooperative Education Program established.

1 (a) *Legislative findings.*

2 (1) The Legislature finds that many West Virginians cannot enroll full-time in a community
3 and technical college technical program because circumstances require them to maintain full-time
4 employment. It is critically important that technical programs leading to high-wage occupations be
5 more accessible and affordable for all West Virginians.

6 (2) The Legislature further finds that cooperative education programs are successful in
7 providing access to these technical programs while providing students enrolled full-time in a
8 community and technical college with the financial benefits they need to continue their education.
9 These cooperative education programs provide opportunities for students to work with West
10 Virginia companies while in college, thus increasing the likelihood that they will complete the
11 program, find gainful employment and choose to remain in West Virginia upon graduation. They
12 provide students with hands-on, real world work experience with a salary while they complete a
13 technical program of study and, at the same time, provide employers with a cost-effective tool for
14 recruiting and training.

15 (b) The purpose of this section is to establish a cooperative education program, under the
16 jurisdiction of the council, as a component of the Workforce Development Initiative Program
17 established pursuant to this article. The program shall be known and may be cited as the "Learn
18 and Earn Program".

19 (c) The program requires a dollar-for-dollar cash match from participating employers or
20 groups of employers from which the student receives a salary from the employer or employers
21 while participating in the program. Participants may not substitute a match in-kind for the cash
22 match required by this section.

23 (d) An institution is eligible to apply for a program grant in cooperation with one or more
24 employer partners if it meets the definition of a community and technical college provided in §18B-
25 1-2 of this code: *Provided, That, as a pilot program beginning at the start of the 2023-2024*
26 *academic year and concluding at the end of the 2025-2026 academic year, Potomac State College*
27 *of West Virginia University is eligible to participate in the "Learn and Earn Program" established by*
28 *this section in accordance with the rules promulgated pursuant to §18B-3D-5 of this code. At the*
29 *conclusion of the pilot program, the council shall determine whether Potomac State College of*
30 *West Virginia University has achieved sufficient results to continue to participate in the Learn and*
31 *Earn program.* The council shall define the application process in the rules required in section five
32 of this article.

33 (e) The council may expend funds available through the Workforce Development Initiative
34 program to implement the provisions of this section.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create a program to include Potomac State College of West Virginia University as an eligible institution for participation in the "Learn and Earn Program". The bill removes reference to the program being a "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.