

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Committee Substitute

for

Senate Bill 459

BY SENATOR CHAPMAN

[Reported February 26, 2026, from the Committee on
the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §48-9-102 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
2 to ensuring meaningful contact between a child and his or her step-siblings.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

**ARTICLE 9. ALLOCATION OF CUSTODIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND DECISION-
MAKING RESPONSIBILITY OF CHILDREN.**

§48-9-102. Objectives; best interests of the child.

1 (a) The primary objective of this article is to serve the child's best interests, by facilitating:

2 (1) Stability of the child;

3 (2) Parental planning and agreement about the child's custodial arrangements and
4 upbringing;

5 (3) Continuity of existing parent-child attachments;

6 (4) Meaningful contact between a child and each parent;

7 (5) Caretaking and parenting relationships by adults who love the child, know how to
8 provide for the child's needs, and who place a high priority on doing so;

9 (6) Security from exposure to physical or emotional harm;

10 (7) Expeditious, predictable decisionmaking, and avoidance of prolonged uncertainty
11 respecting arrangements for the child's care and control; and

12 (8) Meaningful contact between a child and his or her siblings, including half-siblings and
13 step-siblings when the child has an established bond with the step-sibling and the step-sibling
14 lives at least part-time with the biological parent.

15 (b) A secondary objective of this article is to achieve fairness between the parents.