

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 4593

By Delegates Hornby, Clark, Crouse, Funkhouser,
Browning, Dean, Ridenour, McGeehan, and Anderson

[Introduced January 20, 2026; referred to the
Committee on Education]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §18-2-7a of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to
2 requiring each child enrolled in the public schools of this state to actively participate in
3 physical education classes during the school year to the level of his or her ability.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 2. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

§18-2-7a. Legislative findings; required physical education; program in physical fitness.

1 (a) The Legislature hereby finds that obesity is a problem of epidemic proportions in this
2 state. There is increasing evidence that all segments of the population, beginning with children,
3 are becoming more sedentary, more overweight and more likely to develop health risks and
4 diseases including Type II Diabetes, high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure. The
5 Legislature further finds that the promotion of physical activity during the school day for school
6 children is a crucial step in combating this growing epidemic and in changing the attitudes and
7 behavior of the residents of this state toward health promoting physical activity.

8 (b) As a result of these findings, the state Department of Education shall establish the
9 requirement that each child enrolled in the public schools of this state actively participates in
10 physical education classes during the school year to the level of his or her ability as follows:

11 (1) *Elementary school grades.* — Not less than thirty minutes of physical education,
12 including physical exercise and age-appropriate physical activities, for not less than three days a
13 week.

14 (2) *Middle school grades.* — Not less than one full period of physical education, including
15 physical exercise and age-appropriate physical activities, each school day of one semester of the
16 school year; Provided, That an optional and supervised academic study hall period, rather than a
17 period of physical education, shall be made available to any student who can successfully
18 demonstrate by written and signed form, affidavit, or other evidence, a history of and intent to
19 continue with participation in an average of five hours or more of school sponsored or privately
20 organized sports or physical education each week of the required semester.

(3) *High school grades.* — Not less than one full course credit of physical education, including physical exercise and age-appropriate physical activities, which shall be required for graduation and the opportunity to enroll in an elective lifetime physical education course.: Provided, That an optional and supervised academic study hall period, rather than a period of physical education, shall be made available and shall satisfy the graduation requirement for any student who can successfully demonstrate by written and signed form, affidavit, or other evidence, a history of and intent to continue with participation in an average of five hours or more of school sponsored or privately organized sports or physical education each week of the required course.

(c) Enrollment in physical education classes and activities required by the provisions of this section shall not exceed, and shall be consistent with, state guidelines for enrollment in all other subjects and classes: *Provided, That* schools which do not currently have the number of certified physical education teachers, do not currently have the required physical setting or would have to significantly alter academic offerings to meet the physical education requirements may develop alternate programs that will enable current staff, physical settings and offerings to be used to meet the physical education requirements established herein. These alternate programs shall be submitted to the state Department of Education and the Healthy Lifestyle Council for approval. Those schools needing to develop alternate programs shall not be required to implement this program until the school year commencing two thousand six.

(d) The state board shall prescribe a program within the existing health and physical education program which incorporates fitness testing, reporting, recognition, fitness events and incentive programs which requires the participation in grades four through eight and the required high school course. The program shall be selected from nationally accepted fitness testing programs designed for school-aged children that test cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility and body composition: *Provided, That* nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prohibit the use of programs designed under the auspices of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. The program shall include modified tests for exceptional students.

Each school in the state shall participate in National Physical Fitness and Sports Month in May of each year and shall make every effort to involve the community it serves in the related events.

(e) The state board shall promulgate a rule in accordance with the provisions ~~article three-~~
~~b, chapter twenty-nine-a~~ of §29A-3B-1 et seq. of this code that includes at least the following provisions to provide for the collection, reporting and use of body mass index data in the public schools:

(1) The data shall be collected using the appropriate methodology for assessing the body mass index from student height and weight data;

(2) The data shall be collected on a scientifically drawn sample of students;

(3) The data shall be collected and reported in a manner that protects student confidentiality;

(4) The data shall be reported to the Department of Education; and

(5) All body mass index data shall be reported in aggregate to the Governor, the state Board of Education, the Healthy Lifestyles Coalition and the Legislative Oversight Commission on Health and Human Resources Accountability for use as an indicator of progress toward promoting healthy lifestyles among school-aged children.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to require each child enrolled in the public schools of this state to actively participate in physical education classes during the school year to the level of his or her ability.

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