

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 4988

By Delegates Chiarelli, Brooks, Stephens, and Willis

[Introduced January 30, 2026; referred to the
Committee on the Judiciary]

A BILL to amend and reenact §60A-4-401 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to imposing a life sentence on those convicted of dealing fentanyl.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 4. OFFENSES AND PENALTIES.

§60A-4-401. Prohibited acts; penalties.

(a) Except as authorized by this act, it is unlawful for any person to manufacture, deliver, or possess with intent to manufacture or deliver a controlled substance.

Any person who violates this subsection with respect to:

(i) A controlled substance classified in Schedule I or II, which is a narcotic drug or which is methamphetamine, is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction thereof, may be imprisoned in a state correctional facility for not less than one year nor more than 15 years, or fined not more than \$25,000, or both fined and imprisoned: *Provided*, That any person who violates this section knowing that the controlled substance classified in Schedule II is fentanyl, either alone or in combination with any other substance shall be ~~fined not more than \$50,000, or be imprisoned in a state correctional facility for not less than 3 nor more than 15 years, or both fined and imprisoned~~ the remainder of their life;

(ii) Any other controlled substance classified in Schedule I, II, or III is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction thereof, may be imprisoned in a state correctional facility for not less than one year nor more than five years, or fined not more than \$15,000, or both fined and imprisoned;

(iii) A substance classified in Schedule IV is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction thereof, may be imprisoned in a state correctional facility for not less than one year nor more than three years, or fined not more than \$10,000, or both fined and imprisoned;

(iv) A substance classified in Schedule V is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, may be confined in jail for not less than six months nor more than one year, or fined not more than \$5,000, or both fined and confined: *Provided*, That for offenses relating to any substance classified as Schedule V in §60A-10-1 *et seq.* of this code, the penalties established in

22 said article apply.

23 (b) Except as authorized by this act, it is unlawful for any person to create, deliver, or
24 possess with intent to deliver, a counterfeit substance.

25 Any person who violates this subsection with respect to:

26 (i) A counterfeit substance classified in Schedule I or II, which is a narcotic drug, or
27 methamphetamine, is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction thereof, may be imprisoned in a state
28 correctional facility for not less than one year nor more than 15 years, or fined not more than
29 \$25,000, or both fined and imprisoned;

30 (ii) Any other counterfeit substance classified in Schedule I, II, or III is guilty of a felony and,
31 upon conviction thereof, may be imprisoned in a state correctional facility for not less than one
32 year nor more than five years, or fined not more than \$15,000, or both fined and imprisoned;

33 (iii) A counterfeit substance classified in Schedule IV is guilty of a felony and, upon
34 conviction thereof, may be imprisoned in a state correctional facility for not less than one year nor
35 more than three years, or fined not more than \$10,000, or both fined and imprisoned;

36 (iv) A counterfeit substance classified in Schedule V is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon
37 conviction thereof, may be confined in jail for not less than six months nor more than one year, or
38 fined not more than \$5,000, or both fined and confined: *Provided*, That for offenses relating to any
39 substance classified as Schedule V in §60A-10-1 *et seq.* of this code, the penalties established in
40 said article apply.

41 (c) It is unlawful for any person knowingly or intentionally to possess a controlled
42 substance unless the substance was obtained directly from, or pursuant to, a valid prescription or
43 order of a practitioner while acting in the course of his or her professional practice, or except as
44 otherwise authorized by this act. Any person who violates this subsection is guilty of a
45 misdemeanor, and disposition may be made under §60A-4-407 of this code, subject to the
46 limitations specified in said section, or upon conviction thereof, the person may be confined in jail
47 not less than 90 days nor more than six months, or fined not more than \$1,000, or both fined and

48 confined: *Provided*, That notwithstanding any other provision of this act to the contrary, any first
49 offense for possession of synthetic cannabinoids as defined by §60A-1-101(d)(32) of this code;
50 3,4-methylenedioxypyrovalerone (MPVD) and 3,4-methylenedioxypyrovalerone and/or
51 mephedrone as defined in §60A-1-101(f) of this code; or less than 15 grams of marijuana, shall be
52 disposed of under §60A-4-407 of this code.

53 (d) It is unlawful for any person knowingly or intentionally:

54 (1) To create, distribute, deliver, or possess with intent to distribute or deliver, an imitation
55 controlled substance; or

56 (2) To create, possess, sell, or otherwise transfer any equipment with the intent that the
57 equipment shall be used to apply a trademark, trade name, or other identifying mark, imprint,
58 number, or device, or any likeness thereof, upon a counterfeit substance, an imitation controlled
59 substance, or the container or label of a counterfeit substance or an imitation controlled
60 substance.

61 (3) Any person who violates this subsection is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon
62 conviction thereof, may be confined in jail for not less than six months nor more than one year, or
63 fined not more than \$5,000, or both fined and confined. Any person 18 years old or more who
64 violates subdivision (1) of this subsection and distributes or delivers an imitation controlled
65 substance to a minor child who is at least three years younger than that person is guilty of a felony
66 and, upon conviction thereof, may be imprisoned in a state correctional facility for not less than
67 one year nor more than three years, or fined not more than \$10,000, or both fined and imprisoned.

68 (4) The provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection shall not apply to a practitioner who
69 administers or dispenses a placebo.

70 (e) It is unlawful for any person knowingly or intentionally:

71 (1) To adulterate another controlled substance using fentanyl as an adulterant;

72 (2) To create a counterfeit substance or imitation controlled substance using fentanyl; or

73 (3) To cause the adulteration or counterfeiting or imitation of another controlled substance

74 using fentanyl.

75 (4) Any person who violates this subsection is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction
76 thereof, shall be imprisoned in a state correctional facility for ~~not less than three nor more than 15~~
77 ~~years, or fined not more than \$50,000, or both fined and imprisoned~~ the remainder of their life.

78 (5) For purposes of this section:

79 (i) A controlled substance has been adulterated if fentanyl has been mixed or packed with
80 it; and

81 (ii) Counterfeit substances and imitation controlled substances are further defined in §60A-
82 1-101 of this code.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to impose a life sentence on fentanyl dealers.

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