

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2026 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

### **Senate Bill 459**

By Senator Chapman

[Introduced January 16, 2026; referred

to the Committee on the Judiciary]

1 A BILL amend and reenact §48-9-102 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to  
2 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) Expedited, predictable decision-making 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.

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

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to add meaningful contact with step-siblings to be considered a factor in determining the child's best interests.

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