

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Committee Substitute

for

Senate Bill 544

By Senators Deeds, Grady, M. Maynard, Roberts,

Tarr, and Rucker

[Reported January 23, 2026, from the Committee on

Health and Human Resources]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding a new section,
2 designated §49-2-815, relating to the temporary increase in subsidy payment to a kinship
3 parent; requiring background check; requiring home screening; requiring Department of
4 Human Services to provide a list of child-placing agencies; setting forth time frames; and
5 providing authority for department to conduct background check.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 2. STATE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CHILDREN.

§49-2-815. Temporary increase in kinship payment subsidy.

1 (a) Temporary increase in subsidy amount — Notwithstanding any other provision to the
2 contrary, a kinship parent shall be eligible for a temporary increase in the subsidy amounts equal
3 to that of the foster parent subsidy if at the time of initial placement, the following conditions are
4 satisfied:

5 (1) The kinship parent shall submit to state and national criminal history record check
6 which shall be submitted within five days of the initial date of placement;

7 (2) The kinship parent shall pass the state and national criminal history record check;

8 (3) The kinship placement shall pass an initial home screening to identify and to correct
9 fatal life safety issues; and

10 (4) The Department of Human Services shall provide a list of available child placing
11 agencies to the kinship parents that can assist them with obtaining certification as a foster parent
12 and compliance with all other aspects of certification.

13 (b) Time frame for temporary increase — The temporary increase in subsidy amounts shall
14 become payable to the kinship parent within 30 days of the initial kinship placement and will
15 continue for a period of no more than six months at the temporary rate to allow the kinship parent
16 to become certified. The subsidy will be payable to the kinship placement each month on the first
17 business day of the month. If the kinship parent is unable or unwilling to become certified at the
18 end of the six-month period, the temporary increase will be removed and is no longer payable.

19 (c) Authority to conduct background check. — The Department of Human Services is
20 hereby authorized to conduct a state and national criminal history criminal record check as set
21 forth in this section, including:

22 (1) Submitting fingerprints for the purposes set forth in this subsection; and

23 (2) Authorizing the board, the West Virginia State Police, and the Federal Bureau of
24 Investigation to use all records submitted and produced for the purpose of screening the applicant
25 for the kinship placement.

26 (d) The results of the state and national criminal history record check may not be released
27 to or by a private entity except:

28 (1) To the individual who is the subject of the criminal history record check;

29 (2) With the written authorization of the individual who is the subject of the criminal history
30 record check; or

31 (3) Pursuant to a court order.

32 (e) The criminal history record check and related records are not public records for the
33 purposes of §29B-1-1 et seq. of this code.

34 (f) The applicant shall ensure that the criminal history record check is completed as soon
35 as possible after the date of the initial placement for prompt processing of the temporary increase
36 in the kinship subsidy.

37 (g) The kinship parent shall pay the actual costs of the fingerprinting and criminal history
38 record check.