

H. B. 4381

(By Delegates R. Smith, Eldridge, L. Phillips, Sponaugle, Pasdon, Cooper, Canterbury, Sumner, Arvon, Staggers and Frich)

[Introduced January 31, 2014; referred to the Committee on Education then Finance.]

FISCAL NOTE

A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section, designated §18-5-18f, relating to establishing a four year pilot program to have social workers in public schools, from prekindergarten through the elementary school; requiring a minimum of one social worker per county; defining a term; requiring rule-making; and requiring annual and final reports.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

That the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended by adding thereto a new section, designated §18-5-18f, to read as follows:

ARTICLE 5. COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION.

§18-5-18f. Social worker pilot programs; reports.

(a) County boards shall, by July 1, 2014, establish four year social worker pilot programs for all children in prekindergarten through elementary school.

1        (b) For purposes of this section, "social worker" means a  
2 nonteaching school employee who, at a minimum:

3        (1) Possesses a license in social work with the West Virginia  
4 Board of Social Work;

5        (2) Has a minimum of five years experience working with  
6 children and families; and

7        (3) Has experience conducting home visits, providing parent  
8 education, crisis intervention and advocacy and support services,  
9 with school based social work experience being preferred.

10       (c) Abuse and neglect, poor nutrition and health care,  
11 behavior problems, homelessness, poor academic performance, lack of  
12 parent involvement and substance abuse are areas of concern facing  
13 public education. Teachers and support staff are called upon to  
14 address these issues to the detriment of their educational  
15 responsibilities. Having a trained social worker available to  
16 students, staff and parents is beneficial in the following ways:

17       (1) Permit problems to be addressed by professionals trained  
18 to deal with those issues and guide teachers and staff on child  
19 protective laws;

20       (2) Unburden teachers and support staff so they can focus on  
21 performing their educational responsibilities to the students;

22       (3) The social worker's role will be to work with the guidance  
23 counselor with a team approach. The social worker would not only  
24 work with the child at the school but conduct home visits as

1 necessary to address parent issues, provide parenting education,  
2 address social and emotional issues, address physical and mental  
3 health issues and advocate for the family linking them to necessary  
4 community resources; and

5 (4) Assist in ensuring an atmosphere in the classroom where  
6 learning can be achieved to ensure the child's success in school  
7 and life.

8 (d) Pilot programs implemented by the county boards shall  
9 provide for a minimum of one social worker for one Title 1,  
10 prekindergarten through elementary school, in each county. If more  
11 than one Title 1 elementary school exists in the county that  
12 qualifies, the Title 1 school with the lowest test scores should be  
13 given preference. This will ensure the social worker is placed in  
14 a high poverty school where students are most in need. Addressing  
15 issues of concern in a child's early educational experience can  
16 prevent future problems from occurring.

17 (e) The state board with the advice of the state  
18 superintendent shall establish and prescribe guidelines and  
19 criteria relating to the establishment and operation of the social  
20 worker pilot programs.

21 (f) Each county board shall submit an annual report on the  
22 effectiveness of the social worker pilot programs to the state  
23 board no later than June 15 of each year, beginning in 2015. The  
24 state board shall compile these individual reports and submit its

1 own annual report to the Legislative Oversight Commission on  
2 Education Accountability before September 1 of each year, beginning  
3 in 2015.

4 (g) The state board shall submit a final report on the social  
5 worker pilot program, including findings, conclusions and  
6 recommendations, together with drafts of any legislation or rule  
7 changes necessary to effectuate the recommendations, to the  
8 Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability no  
9 later than September 1, 2018.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to establish a four year pilot program to have social workers in public schools, from prekindergarten through the elementary school. The bill requires a minimum of one social worker per county. The bill defines "social worker." The bill requires rule-making. The bill requires annual and final reports.

This section is new; therefore, it has been completely underscored.