

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2018 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 4456

**FISCAL
NOTE**

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STORCH, GRAVES, SOBONYA, MILLER, C., LOVEJOY,
ROBINSON, ISNER AND PUSHKIN

[Introduced February 7, 2018; Referred
to the Committee on the Judiciary.]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,
 2 designated §29A-5-3a, relating to orders or decisions involving claims of sexual
 3 harassment, sexual abuse or sexual assault; prohibiting confidential financial terms of
 4 settlement or nondisclosure of defendant; penalties.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 5. CONTESTED CASES.

§29A-5-3a. Certain confidential settlement terms prohibited; civil penalty; termination from public service.

1 (a) In settlement of a contested case involving a claim of sexual harassment, sexual
 2 abuse, or sexual assault, no agency may render an order or decision which provides for
 3 confidential financial terms or provides for nondisclosure of the identity of the defendant accused
 4 of the harassment or assault.

5 (b) In settlement of a contested case pursuant to §29A-5-1 et seq. of this code involving a
 6 claim of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual assault, the defendant accused of the
 7 harassment, abuse, or assault may not enter into a settlement agreement providing for
 8 nondisclosure of financial terms of the agreement or the identity of the defendant.

9 (c) A person who, as an employer or under color of an employer’s authority, violates this
 10 section, is personally liable for a civil fine of not more than \$5,000. A civil fine which is collected
 11 under this section shall be paid to the State Treasurer for deposit into the General Fund.

12 (d) In addition to subsection (c) of this section, and notwithstanding any provision in this
 13 code to the contrary, if the court specifically finds that the person, while in the employment of a
 14 public body, committed a violation of this section with the intent to discourage the disclosure of
 15 information, such finding: (1) Shall be deemed a finding of official misconduct and malfeasance
 16 in office, and may be relied upon as admissible evidence in any subsequent proceeding or petition
 17 to remove the person from public office; and (2) may be relied upon by the public body as a basis
 18 to discipline the person, including, but not limited to, termination from employment: *Provided, That*

19 nothing shall be construed as requiring a civil action, civil penalty, or a court finding under this
20 section as a condition or prerequisite for a public body to take disciplinary action against the
21 person.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to prohibit confidential settlement terms of a contested case involving sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual assault, and to provide penalties.

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