

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2021 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

### **House Bill 2909**

BY DELEGATES FOSTER, STEELE, KIMBLE, HAYNES,  
WAMSLEY, KESSINGER, ESPINOSA, KIMES AND J. PACK

[Introduced March 04, 2021; Referred to the  
Committee on Government Organization]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §30-1A-1, §30-1A-2, §30-1A-3, §30-1A-4, §30-1A-5, and §30-1A-6  
2 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended; and to amend said code by adding  
3 thereto a new section, designated §30-1A-1a, all relating to regulation of occupations and  
4 professions; providing for legislative policy; providing for definitions; providing for criteria  
5 to analyze a required application to regulate an occupation or profession; providing for the  
6 Performance Evaluation and Research Division to conduct an analysis of the application;  
7 providing for a rebuttable presumption against regulating an occupation or profession  
8 absent certain conditions; providing for criteria to assess harms to consumers and  
9 possible recommendations that may be instituted against an occupation or profession;  
10 providing for an economic study of the recommendations made; providing for a time frame  
11 for the Performance Evaluation and Research Division to conduct the analysis and return  
12 a report; providing for recommendations based on the assessed harm to consumers in the  
13 Performance Evaluation and Research Division's report; providing for additional  
14 recommendations and findings by the Joint Standing Committee on Government  
15 Organization; providing that additional findings by the Joint Standing Committee on  
16 Government Organization are made public; providing for the committee's findings and  
17 recommendations along with any report be submitted to any committee considering  
18 legislation prior to voting; providing for the Performance Evaluation and Research Division  
19 begin a review of existing licenses under certain criteria; providing for an effective date for  
20 licensure review; providing for a review of a certain percentage of licenses annually;  
21 providing for annual licensing review to be set by the chairs of the Joint Standing  
22 Committee on Government Organization; providing for an eight-year review schedule;  
23 providing for the Performance Evaluation and Research Division to report its findings and  
24 recommendations to the committee relating to licensing review; providing an effective date  
25 for the Performance Evaluation and Research Division to begin reporting its findings and

26 recommendations to the committee; and providing for mechanisms of statutory  
27 interpretation relating to government regulations of occupations or professions.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

**ARTICLE 1A. PROCEDURE FOR REGULATION OF OCCUPATIONS AND  
PROFESSIONS.**

**§30-1A-1. Legislative findings; policy.**

1 (a) The Legislature finds that regulation should be imposed on an occupation or profession  
2 only when necessary for the protection of public health and safety. The Legislature further finds  
3 that establishing a procedure for reviewing the necessity of regulating an occupation or profession  
4 prior to enacting laws for such regulation and analyzing existing occupational regulations will  
5 better enable it to evaluate the need for the regulation and to determine the least restrictive  
6 regulation regulatory alternative consistent with public health and safety.

7 (b) For occupational regulations and the boards of this state, it is the policy of this state  
8 that:

9 (1) The right of an individual to pursue a lawful occupation is a fundamental right;

10 (2) Where the state finds it is necessary to displace competition, it will use the least  
11 restrictive regulation to protect consumers from present, significant, and substantiated harms that  
12 threaten public health and safety; and

13 (3) Legislative leaders will assign the responsibility to review legislation and laws related  
14 to occupational regulations.

**§30-1A-1a. Definitions.**

1 For the purposes of this chapter, the words defined in this section have the meaning given.

2 “Government certification” means a voluntary, government-granted, and nontransferable  
3 recognition to an individual who meets personal qualifications related to a lawful occupation. Upon  
4 the government’s initial and continuing approval, the individual may use “government certified” or

5 “state certified” as a title. A noncertified individual also may perform the lawful occupation for  
6 compensation but may not use the title “government certified” or “state certified.” In this chapter,  
7 the term “government certification” is not synonymous with “occupational license.” It also is not  
8 intended to include credentials, such as those used for medical-board certification or held by a  
9 certified public accountant, that are prerequisites to working lawfully in an occupation.

10 “Government registration” means a requirement to give notice to the government that may  
11 include the individual’s name and address, the individual’s agent for service of process, the  
12 location of the activity to be performed, and a description of the service the individual provides.

13 “Government registration” does not include personal qualifications and is not transferable but it  
14 may require a bond or insurance. Upon the government’s receipt of notice, the individual may use  
15 “government registered” as a title. A nonregistered individual may not perform the occupation for  
16 compensation or use “government registered” as a title. In this chapter, “government registration”  
17 is not intended to be synonymous with “occupational license.” It also is not intended to include  
18 credentials, such as those held by a registered nurse, which are prerequisites to working lawfully  
19 in an occupation.

20 “Lawful occupation” means a course of conduct, pursuit or profession that includes the  
21 sale of goods or services that are not themselves illegal to sell irrespective of whether the  
22 individual selling them is subject to an occupational regulation.

23 “Least restrictive regulation” means, from least to most restrictive,

24 (1) Market competition,

25 (2) Third-party or consumer-created ratings and reviews,

26 (3) Private certification,

27 (4) Voluntary bonding or insurance,

28 (5) Specific private civil cause of action to remedy consumer harm,

29 (6) Deceptive trade practice act,

30 (7) Mandatory disclosure of attributes of the specific good or service,

- 31 (8) Regulation of the process of providing the specific good or service,  
32 (9) Regulation of the facility where the specific good or service is sold,  
33 (10) Inspection,  
34 (11) Bonding,  
35 (12) Insurance,  
36 (13) Government registration,  
37 (14) Government certification,  
38 (15) Specialty occupational certification solely for medical reimbursement, and  
39 (16) Occupational license.

40 “Occupational license” is a nontransferable authorization in law for an individual to perform  
41 exclusively a lawful occupation for compensation based on meeting personal qualifications  
42 established by the Legislature. In an occupation for which a license is required, it is illegal for an  
43 individual who does not possess a valid occupational license to perform the occupation for  
44 compensation.

45 “Occupational regulation” means a statute, rule, practice, policy, or other state law that  
46 allows an individual to use an occupational title or work in a lawful occupation. It includes  
47 government registration, government certification, and occupational license. It excludes a  
48 business license, facility license, building permit, or zoning and land use regulation except to the  
49 extent those state laws regulate an individual’s personal qualifications to perform a lawful  
50 occupation.

51 “Personal qualifications” are criteria related to an individual’s personal background and  
52 characteristics. They may include one or more of the following: Completion of an approved  
53 educational program, satisfactory performance on an examination, work experience,  
54 apprenticeship, other evidence of attainment of requisite knowledge and skills, passing a review  
55 of the individual’s criminal record, and completion of continuing education.

56 “Private certification” is a voluntary program in which a private organization grants

57 nontransferable recognition to an individual who meets personal qualifications and standards  
 58 relevant to performing the occupation as determined by the private organization. The individual  
 59 may use a designated title of “certified” or other title conferred by the private organization.

60 “Specialty occupational certification solely for medical reimbursement” means a non-  
 61 transferable authorization in law for an individual to qualify for payment or reimbursement from a  
 62 government agency for the nonexclusive provision of new or niche medical services based on  
 63 meeting personal qualifications established by the Legislature. A private health insurance  
 64 company or other private company may recognize this credential. Notwithstanding this specialty  
 65 certification, it is legal for a person regulated under another occupational regulation to provide  
 66 similar services as defined in that statute for compensation and reimbursement. It is also legal for  
 67 an individual who does not possess this specialty certification to provide the identified medical  
 68 services for compensation, but the noncertified individual will not qualify for payment or  
 69 reimbursement from a government agency.

**§30-1A-2. Required application for regulation of professional or occupational group;  
 application and reporting dates.**

1 (a) The Joint Standing Committee on Government Organization is responsible for  
 2 facilitating the review of all legislation to enact or modify an occupational regulation to ensure  
 3 compliance with the policy in §30-1A-1 of this code. The Joint Standing Committee on  
 4 Government Organization shall refer the review of a proposal for regulation of any unregulated  
 5 profession or occupation to the Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of  
 6 the Legislative Auditor.

7 (a)(b) Any professional or occupational group or organization, any individual or any other  
 8 interested party which proposes the regulation of any unregulated professional or occupational  
 9 group or organization, or who proposes to establish, revise, or expand the scope of practice of a  
 10 regulated profession or occupation shall submit an application to the Joint Standing Committee  
 11 on Government Organization, as set out in this article.

12           ~~(b)~~(c) The Joint Standing Committee on Government Organization may only accept an  
13 application for regulation of a professional or occupational ~~group or organization~~, or  
14 establishment, revision, or expansion of the scope of practice of a regulated profession or  
15 occupation, when the party submitting an application files with the committee a statement of  
16 support for the proposed regulation which has been signed by at least 10 residents or citizens of  
17 the state of West Virginia who are members of the professional or occupational group or  
18 organization for which regulation is being sought, or for which establishment, revision or  
19 expansion of the scope of practice of a regulated profession or occupation is being sought.

20           ~~(c)~~(d) The completed application shall contain:

21           (1) A description of the occupational or professional ~~group or organization~~ for which  
22 regulation is proposed, or for which establishment, revision, or expansion of the scope of practice  
23 of a regulated profession or occupation is proposed, including a list of associations, organizations,  
24 and other groups currently representing the practitioners in this state, and an estimate of the  
25 number of practitioners in each group;

26           (2) A definition of the problem and the reasons why regulation or establishment, revision,  
27 or expansion of the scope of practice is necessary;

28           (3) The reasons why government certification, government registration, ~~licensure~~ an  
29 occupational licensure, or other type of regulation is being requested and why that regulatory  
30 alternative was chosen over a less restrictive alternative;

31           (4) A detailed statement of the proposed funding mechanism to pay the administrative  
32 costs of the regulation or the establishment, revision, or expansion of the scope of practice, or of  
33 the fee structure conforming with the statutory requirements of financial autonomy as set out in  
34 this chapter;

35           (5) A detailed statement of the location and manner in which the group plans to maintain  
36 records which are accessible to the public as set out in this chapter;

37           (6) The benefit to the public that would result from the proposed regulation or

38 establishment, revision, or expansion of the scope of practice; ~~and~~

39 (7) The cost of the proposed regulation or establishment, revision, or expansion of the  
40 scope of practice; and

41 (8) Evidence, if any, of present, significant and substantiated harms to consumers in the  
42 state.

**§30-1A-3. Analysis and evaluation of application.**

1 (a) The Joint Standing Committee on Government Organization shall refer the completed  
2 application of the professional or occupational group or organization to the Performance  
3 Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative Auditor.

4 (b) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
5 Auditor shall conduct an analysis and evaluation of the application. The analysis and evaluation  
6 shall be based upon the criteria listed in subsection (c) through subsection (k) of this section. The  
7 Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative Auditor shall submit  
8 a report, and such supporting materials as may be required, to the Joint Standing Committee on  
9 Government Organization, as set out in this section.

10 (c) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
11 Auditor shall determine if the proposed regulation meets the state's policy in §30-1A-1(b) of this  
12 code of using the least restrictive regulation necessary to protect consumers from present,  
13 significant, and substantiated harms.

14 (d) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
15 Auditor's analysis in subsection (c) of this section will use a rebuttable presumption that  
16 consumers are sufficiently protected by market competition and private remedies, as listed in §30-  
17 1A-1a(d)(1) through §30-1A-1a(d)(4) of this code. The Joint Standing Committee on Government  
18 Organization will consider the use of private certification programs that allow a provider to give  
19 consumers information about the provider's knowledge, skills, and association with a private  
20 certification organization.



21 (e) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
22 Auditor may rebut the presumption in subsection (d) of this section if it finds both credible empirical  
23 evidence of present, significant, and substantiated harm, and that consumers do not have the  
24 information and means to protect themselves against such harm. If evidence of such  
25 unmanageable harm is found, the committee may recommend the least restrictive government  
26 regulation to address the harm, as listed in §30-1A-1a(d)(5) through §30-1A-1a(d)(16) of this  
27 code.

28 (f) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
29 Auditor will use the following guidelines to form its recommendation in subsection (j) or subsection  
30 (k) of this section. If the harm arises from:

31 (1) Contractual disputes, including pricing disputes, the office may recommend enacting  
32 a specific civil cause of action in small-claims court or district court to remedy consumer harm.  
33 This cause of action may provide for reimbursement of the attorney's fees or court costs, if a  
34 consumer's claim is successful;

35 (2) Fraud, the office may recommend strengthening powers under the state's deceptive  
36 trade practices acts or requiring disclosures that will reduce misleading attributes of the specific  
37 good or service or other relevant recommendations;

38 (3) General health and safety risks, the office may recommend enacting a regulation on  
39 the related process or requiring a facility license;

40 (4) A lack of protection for a person who is not a party to a contract between providers and  
41 consumers, the office may recommend requiring the provider have insurance;

42 (4) Verify that providers have a business license;

43 (5) A shortfall or imbalance in the consumer's knowledge about the good or service relative  
44 to the provider's knowledge (asymmetrical information), the office may recommend enacting  
45 government certification;

46 (6) An inability to qualify providers of new or highly-specialized medical services for

47 reimbursement by the state, the office may recommend enacting a specialty certification solely  
48 for medical reimbursement;

49 (7) A systematic information shortfall in which a reasonable consumer of the service is  
50 permanently unable to distinguish between the quality of providers and there is an absence of  
51 institutions that provide guidance to consumers, the office may recommend enacting an  
52 occupational license; and

53 (8) The need to address multiple types of harm, the office may recommend a combination  
54 of regulations. This may include a government regulation combined with a private remedy  
55 including third-party or consumer-created ratings and reviews, or private certification.

56 (g) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division and other relevant divisions of the  
57 Office of the Legislative Auditor's analysis of the need for regulation in subsection (e) of this  
58 section shall include the effects of legislation on opportunities for workers, consumer choices and  
59 costs, general unemployment, market competition, governmental costs, and other effects.

60 (h) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
61 Auditor's analysis of the need for regulation in subsection (e) of this section should include  
62 comparisons of the legislation to whether and how other states regulate the occupation, including  
63 the occupation's scope of practice that other states use, and the personal qualifications other  
64 states require.

65 (i) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
66 Auditor may also request information from state agencies that contract with individuals in  
67 regulated occupations and others knowledgeable of the occupation, labor market economics, or  
68 other factors, including costs and benefits.

69 ~~(e)~~(i) For an application proposing the regulation of an unregulated professional or  
70 occupational group or organization, the Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the  
71 Office of the Legislative Auditor's report shall include evaluation, analysis, and findings as to:

72 (1) Whether the unregulated practice of the occupation or profession clearly harms or

73 endangers the health, safety, or welfare of the public, and ~~whether~~ any evidence of present,  
74 significant, and substantiated harms to consumers in the state; the potential for the harm is easily  
75 recognizable and not remote or dependent upon tenuous argument

76 (2) The requisite personal qualifications, if any; Whether the practice of the profession or  
77 occupation requires specialized skill or training which is readily measurable or quantifiable so that  
78 examination or training requirements would reasonably assure initial and continuing professional  
79 or occupational competence;

80 (3) The scope of practice, if applicable; Whether the public can be adequately protected  
81 by other means in a more cost-effective manner; and

82 (4) If regulation is required to address evidence of harm to consumers in the state, the  
83 least restrictive regulation of the occupation or profession; and

84 ~~(4)(5)~~ Whether the professional or occupational group or organization should be regulated  
85 as proposed in the application.

86 ~~(d)(k)~~ For an application proposing the establishment, revision, or expansion of the scope  
87 of practice of a regulated profession or occupation, the report shall include the evaluation, analysis  
88 and findings as set forth in subsection ~~(e)(j)~~ of this section inasmuch as applicable, and a clear  
89 recommendation as to whether the scope of practice should be established, revised or expanded  
90 as proposed in the application.

91 (l) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
92 Auditor shall submit its report to the Joint Standing Committee on Government Organization no  
93 later than nine months after receiving the application for analysis.

94 ~~(e) For an application received after December 1, and on or before June 1, the~~  
95 ~~Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative Auditor shall~~  
96 ~~present a report to the Joint Committee on Government Organization by December 31 of that~~  
97 ~~year.~~

98 ~~(f) For an application received after June 1 and on or before December 1, the Performance~~

99 ~~Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative Auditor shall present a report to~~  
100 ~~the Joint Committee on Government Organization by June 30 of the next year~~

**§30-1A-4. Public hearing and committee recommendations.**

1 (a) After receiving the required report, the ~~joint standing committee on government~~  
2 ~~organization~~ Joint Standing Committee on Government Organization may conduct public  
3 hearings to receive testimony from the public, the Governor or his or her designee, the group,  
4 organization or individual who submitted the proposal for regulation, and any other interested  
5 party.

6 (b) The Joint Standing Committee on Government Organization may issue additional  
7 findings and recommendations regarding:

8 (1) The least restrictive regulation of the occupation or profession; and

9 (2) Whether regulation would result in the creation of a new agency or board or could be  
10 implemented more efficiently through an existing agency or board.

11 ~~(b)(c)~~ The joint standing committee on government organization Joint Standing Committee  
12 on Government Organization shall provide the Performance Evaluation and Research Division of  
13 the Office of the Legislative Auditor's report and its findings and recommendations, if any, to the  
14 next regular session of the Legislature.

15 (d) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
16 Auditor shall publish its report on its website. The Joint Standing Committee on Government  
17 Organization shall also make the report and any additional findings and recommendations publicly  
18 available.

19 (e) Any committee considering legislation to enact or modify an occupational regulation to  
20 receive the Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
21 Auditor's report and the Joint Standing Committee on Government Organization's findings and  
22 recommendations in subsection (b) if applicable prior to voting on the legislation.

23 (f) Nothing in this article shall be construed to preempt federal regulation or to require a

24 private certification organization to grant or deny private certification to any individual.

25 ~~(c) The report shall include:~~

26 ~~(1) Whether regulation of each occupation or profession is necessary for the public health~~  
27 ~~and safety and, if regulation is necessary, recommendations as to what is the least restrictive type~~  
28 ~~of regulation consistent with the public interest; and~~

29 ~~(2) Whether regulation would result in the creation of a new agency or board or could be~~  
30 ~~implemented more efficiently through an existing agency or board.~~

31 ~~(d) The report may include a recommendation that the occupation or profession be~~  
32 ~~regulated by any of the following mechanisms, in whole or in part:~~

33 ~~(1) By practice standards, which may include restrictions established by statute;~~

34 ~~(2) By registration, which may include inspections or other enforcement provisions;~~

35 ~~(3) By statutory certification, which may include testing or assessment of the practitioner's~~  
36 ~~credential or competency;~~

37 ~~(4) By supervision by a licensed practitioner, which may include practice standards,~~  
38 ~~registration or statutory certification;~~

39 ~~(5) By licensure by a new or existing agency or board, which may include restrictions of~~  
40 ~~the scope of practice, minimum competency, education, testing, registration, certification,~~  
41 ~~inspection or enforcement~~

**§30-1A-5. Reapplication requirements Review of existing occupational licenses.**

1 ~~(a) If the Joint Standing Committee on Government Organization approves an application~~  
2 ~~for regulation of a professional or occupational group or organization, but the legislation~~  
3 ~~incorporating its recommendations does not become law in the year in which it is first introduced,~~  
4 ~~the applicants for regulation may introduce legislation during each of the two successive regular~~  
5 ~~sessions without having to make reapplication.~~

6 ~~(b) If the Joint Standing Committee on Government Organization does not approve an~~  
7 ~~application for regulation, establishment, revision or expansion of the scope of practice of a~~

8 ~~professional or occupational group or organization, any party who continues to propose the~~  
9 ~~regulation, establishment, revision or expansion must reapply in accordance with the provisions~~  
10 ~~of this article~~

11 (a) Starting on July 1, 2021, the Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the  
12 Office of the Legislative Auditor is responsible for reviewing annually approximately 20 percent of  
13 the current occupational licenses. The committee chairs will select the occupational licenses to  
14 be reviewed annually.

15 (b) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
16 Auditor will review all occupational licenses within the subsequent eight years and will repeat such  
17 review processes in each eight-year period thereafter.

18 (c) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
19 Auditor will use the criteria in §30-1A-3(c) through §30-1A-1a(i) of this code to analyze all existing  
20 occupational licenses. The office also may consider research or other credible evidence whether  
21 an existing regulation directly helps consumers to avoid present, significant, and recognizable  
22 harm.

23 (d)(1) Starting on July 1, 2022, the Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the  
24 Office of the Legislative Auditor shall report the findings of its reviews to the Joint Standing  
25 Committee on Government Organization. In its report, the Performance Evaluation and Research  
26 Division of the Office of the Legislative Auditor may make recommendations to the committee that  
27 the Legislature enact new legislation that:

28 (A) Repeals the occupational licenses;

29 (B) Converts the occupational licenses to less restrictive regulations in §30-1A-1a(d) of  
30 this code;

31 (C) Changes the requisite personal qualifications of an occupational license;

32 (D) Redefines the scope of practice in an occupational license; or

33 (E) Reflects other recommendations to the Legislature.

34 (2) The Performance Evaluation and Research Division of the Office of the Legislative  
35 Auditor also may recommend that no new legislation is enacted.

36 (3) Nothing in this article shall be construed to authorize the office to review the means  
37 that a private certification organization uses to issue, deny, or revoke a private certification to any  
38 individual, or to require a private certification organization to grant or deny private certification to  
39 any individual.

**§30-1A-6. Article construction.**

1 (a) Nothing in this article shall be construed as limiting or interfering with the right of any  
2 member of the Legislature to introduce or of the Legislature to consider any bill that would create  
3 a new state governmental department or agency or amend the law with respect to an existing ~~one~~  
4 department or agency.

5 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, the recommendations  
6 of the Joint Standing Committee on Government Organization are to be given considerable weight  
7 in determining if a profession or occupation should be regulated, or if the scope of practice of a  
8 regulated profession or occupation should be established, revised, or expanded.

9 (c) In construing any governmental regulation of occupations, including an occupational  
10 licensing statute, rule, policy, or practice, the following interpretations are to govern, unless the  
11 regulation is unambiguous:

12 (1) Occupational regulations should be construed and applied to increase economic  
13 opportunities, promote competition, and encourage innovation;

14 (2) Any ambiguities in occupational regulations should be construed in favor of workers  
15 and aspiring workers to work; and

16 (3) The scope of practice in occupational regulations should be construed narrowly to  
17 avoid burdening individuals with regulatory requirements that only have an attenuated relationship  
18 to the goods and services they provide.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to update the criteria the Performance Evaluation and Research Division uses when assessing an application for a new license or other government regulation and when reviewing existing government regulations relating to occupational and professional regulation.

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