WEST virginia legislature

**FISCAL NOTE**

2021 regular session

Introduced

House Bill 3007

By Delegates Young, Thompson, Hornbuckle, Williams and Bates

[Introduced March 09, 2021; Referred to the Committee on Workforce Development then Finance]

A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new article, designated §5B-6-1, §5B-6-2, §5B-6-3, §5B-6-4, §5B-6-5, and §5B-6-6, all relating to establishing a pilot program to provide grants to workers who relocate to West Virginia as remote workers; creating program; defining terms; specifying eligibility criteria, and limitations on grant awards; requiring the Department of Commerce to implement a simple application procedure, to market the program; and to determine appropriate measures to evaluate the benefits of the program; authorizing promulgation of emergency rules; requiring an annual report; and specifying a date for the end of the pilot program.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 6. REMOTE WORKER RELOCATION GRANT PROGRAM.

§5B-6-1. Creation of Remote Worker Relocation Grant Program.

There is hereby established a Remote Worker Relocation Grant Program, to be administered by the Department of Commerce, as a pilot program with the purpose of providing incentives in the form of cash grants to workers who come to this state to reside and work as remote workers or teleworkers.

§5B-6-2. Definitions.

As used in this article:

“New remote worker” means an individual who:

(1) Is a full-time employee of a business with its domicile or primary place of business within or outside West Virginia;

(2) Becomes a full-time resident of this state on or after January 1, 2022; and

(3) Performs the majority of his or her employment duties remotely from a home office or a co-working space located in this state; and

“Program” means the Remote Worker Relocation Grant Program established by the article;

“Qualifying remote worker expenses” means actual costs that a new remote worker incurs for one or more of the following that are necessary to perform his or her employment duties:

(1) Relocation to this state;

(2) Computer software and hardware acquired incident to relocation in this state;

(3) Broadband Internet access or upgrade; and

(4) Membership in a co-working facility or similar space.

§5B-6-3. Eligibility; grant awards.

(a) A new remote worker may be eligible for a grant under the program for qualifying remote worker expenses in the amount of not more than $5,000 per year apportioned as follows:

(1) The amount of $2,000 awarded upon relocation with documentation of proof of employment and of residency;

(2) An additional amount of $1,000 to be awarded after six months of residency; and

(3) An additional amount of up to $2,000 for qualifying remote expenses upon the completion of one year of residency.

(b) Grants shall be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to available funding as appropriated by the Legislature. An initial award of $2,000 does not entitle the grantee to subsequent payments under subsection (a) of this section if funds are not available to pay all awards.

§5B-6-4. Department duties; rule-making authority.

(a) The Department of Commerce shall create and adopt a simple procedure to implement this program including, but not limited to, an application process, evidence necessary for proof of residence and qualifying remote work expenses, grant accounting, and recipient tracking.

(b) The Department of Commerce shall promote awareness of the program through marketing and coordination with other state economic development campaigns.

(c) The Department of Commerce shall adopt measurable goals, performance measures, and an audit strategy to assess the utilization and performance of the program.

(d) In order to implement this pilot program by July 1, 2021, the Department of Commerce is authorized to promulgate emergency legislative rules, pursuant to §29A-3-15 of this code, to carry out the provisions of this act.

§5B-6-5. Annual report required.

The Department of Commerce shall file a report with the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Government and Finance, the Legislative Oversight Commission on Workforce Investment for Economic Development, and the Governor at the end of each fiscal year for the life of the program, commencing June 30, 2022. This report shall include the following:

(1) The number of persons receiving grants under the program;

(2) The average grant amount awarded and the average salary of grant recipients;

(3) The locations within this state of recipients of program grants and of their original residences prior to relocation;

(4) The locations of the companies with whom grant recipients are employed; and

(5) The types of work or professions in which grant recipients are employed.

§5B-6-6. Termination of pilot program.

Unless extended or revived by act of the Legislature, the pilot program shall terminate on June 30, 2024.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create a pilot program to provide grants to workers who relocate to West Virginia as remote workers or teleworkers.

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