

# WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

## 2022 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

### House Bill 4702

FISCAL  
NOTE

BY DELEGATE LOVEJOY

[Introduced February 15, 2022; Referred to the  
Committee on Government Organization then  
Finance]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by creating thereto a new article,  
2 designated §5-1F-1, §5-1F-2, §5-1F-3, §5-1F-4 and §5-1F-5, all relating to establishing a  
3 state office to promote community food security; establishing the office within the  
4 Governor's Office; providing that that office coordinate all state recourses and any federal  
5 and private grants for promoting food security in the state; providing findings for creation  
6 of the office; providing directives for the office relating to enhancing food security in this  
7 state; creating an advisory board; providing for county offices to coordinate local  
8 resources; and providing for the creation of a special revenue account.

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

## **ARTICLE 1F. COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY.**

### **§5-1F-1. Findings and purpose.**

1 West Virginia has one of the highest food insecurity rates in the country, yet despite  
2 hundreds of millions worth of federal food assistance dollars distributed in various forms across  
3 the state each year, accessing nutritious food on a regular basis remains difficult for many of our  
4 citizens. Fifteen different federal nutrition assistance programs are administered by four separate  
5 state administrative agencies. These lack the integration necessary to maximize their  
6 effectiveness at the local level, both in terms of their contribution to the state's economy and the  
7 wellbeing of our communities. Furthermore, most of this nutrition assistance funding is captured  
8 by out-of-state food businesses. Community-driven initiatives that improve food access while  
9 enhancing the viability of West Virginia's food and farm sector are largely dependent on  
10 intermittent and competitive funding for their programs. Thus, it is difficult for the organizations  
11 administering healthy food access programs and public officials working to improve food access  
12 across their jurisdictions, to engage in long-term planning around community food security in the  
13 state.

14 The purpose of this article is to establish a centralized office that can organize community  
15 food initiatives on a county level, coordinate and facilitate between all the resources available to

16 the state and make sure the state maximizes its resources to assist all state residents suffering  
17 from food insecurity.

**§5-1F-2. Creation of the Office of Community Food Security.**

1 (a) There is hereby created the “Office of Community Food Security” within the Office of  
2 the Governor. The office shall be administered by a person appointed to the position by the  
3 Governor who is vested with the authority to assist state agencies and oversee and coordinate  
4 nutrition assistance programs currently administered by all states and local government agencies.

5 (b) The Office of Community Food Security shall assure coordination and continuity by  
6 overseeing all state and local agencies within the state that administer nutrition assistance, food  
7 distribution, farming practices and other food resourcing activities to facilitate food security and  
8 distribution. These include, without limitation, all existing programs administered by the  
9 Department of Health and Human Resources, the Department of Agriculture, Department of  
10 Education, and any other state or local governmental agency or unit that has authority associated  
11 with facilitating the reduction of food insecurity and nutrition.

12 (c) The Governor shall appoint the Community Food Security Advisory Board to develop  
13 and approve state-level community food security plans and advise the director of the office in the  
14 implementation of those plans. The Advisory Board shall consist of persons knowledgeable of  
15 food security issues in the state and shall include but not be limited to persons who have lived  
16 with food insecurity, persons representing emergency food agencies, state farmers, state food  
17 retailers, agricultural and nutrition extension agencies, food system researchers and all state  
18 agencies administering nutrition assistance programs. The Director of the Office of Community  
19 Food Security shall serve as ex officio chair of the board. Members of the board are not entitled  
20 to compensation for services performed as members; however each member is entitled to  
21 reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred in the discharge of their official duties. All  
22 expenses incurred by members shall be paid in a manner consistent with guidelines of the Travel

23 Management Office of the Department of Administration and are payable solely from the funds of  
24 the Department of Commerce or from funds appropriated for that purpose by the Legislature.

**§5-1F-3. Powers and duties of Office.**

1 The Office of Community Food Security shall:

2 (a) Work and engage directly with low-income households to understand and prioritize  
3 their long-term nutrition and food access needs;

4 (b) Support development of multi-sectional community food security plans at the municipal  
5 and county levels that integrate with state-level nutrition assistance and community food security  
6 investments;

7 (c) Maintain a data repository of all federal, private and state administered nutrition  
8 assistance programs to serve the information needs of municipalities, counties, school districts,  
9 hunger relief originations, food and farm businesses, agriculture development organizations,  
10 social service and health care providers, academic researchers and others engaged in advancing  
11 community food security initiatives;

12 (d) Support and assist grant application processes related to community food security for  
13 in-state providers and agencies;

14 (e) Coordinate communication with and between all public agencies administering nutrition  
15 assistance programs, private business and non-profit organizations such as foodbanks engaged  
16 in improving food access;

17 (f) Collaborate with research organizations and universities to monitor ongoing gap  
18 analysis and identify areas underserved by current programs;

19 (g) Collaborate with state agencies and community partners to integrate public nutrition  
20 assistance programming with emergent food system development opportunities;

21 (h) Invest in community food system projects that improve access to food while enhancing  
22 the viability of West Virginia's food and farm sector; and

23 (i) Provide support in coordinating assistance to address food insecurity during federal or

24 state declared emergencies.

**§5-1F-4. County and regional offices.**

1 The Office of Community Food Security shall establish county community-based offices  
2 in each county, known as County Food Security Offices, to serve as localized community food  
3 security resource coordination. Each County Food Security Office shall serve to facilitate  
4 distribution of federal and private grants and support, and provide state resources to local  
5 agencies, communities, food banks, schools, churches, non-profits and other benevolent  
6 institutions who partner to promote and enhance food security and nutrition in our state. The  
7 County Food Security Office shall coordinate staffing and activities of state agencies and of local  
8 food providers and engage in long-term planning in support of community food security.

**§5-1F-5. Creation of Community Food Security Fund.**

1 A special revenue fund named the Community Food Security Fund is hereby created  
2 which shall consist of all moneys made available for the purposes of this article and include any  
3 amounts to be deposited in the fund, including all appropriations to the fund, all interest earned  
4 from investment of the fund, and any gifts, grants, or contributions received by the fund. All  
5 amounts deposited in the fund shall be used to fund the activities awarded by the Office of  
6 Community Food Security and County Community Food Security Offices as provided pursuant to  
7 the provisions of this article to local governmental units and private and public entities for the  
8 public purposes as provided for in this article.

NOTE: This bill establishes within the Office of Governor the state Office of Community Food Security to provide coordination and cooperation between state agencies that provide food security services. The bill assists in directing federal and private funds to maximize their benefit in the state. The bill provides that the office establish county offices to assist and coordinate local agencies and entities that are food providers. Finally, the bill provides all of this with the purpose of providing a unified state approach to addressing household and state food insecurity issues.

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