

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

**2022 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

## **Senate Bill 256**

BY SENATORS LINDSAY, BEACH, AND CAPUTO

[Introduced January 13, 2022; referred  
to the Committee on the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §61-6-21 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating  
 2 to prohibiting civil rights violations based on disability, gender identity, or sexual  
 3 orientation; criminal penalties; when evidence of constitutionally protected speech or  
 4 associations is not admissible in criminal prosecutions; exceptions; providing for  
 5 sentencing alternatives for persons convicted of violations; and designating amendments  
 6 to this section as “Angel’s Law”.

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

**ARTICLE 6. CRIMES AGAINST THE PEACE.**

**§61-6-21. Prohibiting violations of an individual’s civil rights; penalties; when evidence not  
 admissible; sentencing alternatives; “Angel’s Law”.**

1 (a) All persons within the boundaries of the State of West Virginia have the right to be free  
 2 from any violence, or intimidation by threat of violence, committed against their persons or  
 3 property because of their race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, political affiliation, ~~or~~ sex,  
 4 disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

5 (b) If any person does by force or threat of force, willfully injure, intimidate or interfere with,  
 6 or attempt to injure, intimidate or interfere with, or oppress or threaten any other person in the  
 7 free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him or her by the Constitution or  
 8 laws of the State of West Virginia or by the Constitution or laws of the United States, ~~because of~~  
 9 ~~such other person's~~ and the other person was intentionally selected due to their actual or  
 10 perceived race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, political affiliation, ~~or~~ sex, disability,  
 11 gender identity or sexual orientation, he or she ~~shall be~~ is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction,  
 12 shall be fined not more than \$5,000 or imprisoned in a state correctional facility not more than 10  
 13 years, or both fined and imprisoned: *Provided,* That an adjudication under subsection (h) of this  
 14 section is an appropriate alternative sentencing.

15 (c) If any person conspires with another person or persons to, by force or threat of force,  
 16 willfully injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate or interfere with any citizen ~~because of such~~

17 intentionally selected due to that other person's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin,  
18 political affiliation, ~~or~~ sex, disability gender identity, or sexual orientation in the free exercise or  
19 enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him or her by the Constitution or laws of the State  
20 of West Virginia or by the Constitution or laws of the United States, and in willful furtherance  
21 thereof to assemble with one or more persons for the purpose of teaching any technique or means  
22 capable of causing property damage, bodily injury or death when such person or persons intend  
23 to employ such techniques or means to violate this section, each such person ~~shall be~~ is guilty of  
24 a felony, and, upon conviction, shall be fined not more than \$5,000 or imprisoned in a state  
25 correctional facility not more than 10 years, or both fined and imprisoned: *Provided, That an*  
26 adjudication under subsection (h) of this section is an appropriate alternative sentencing.

27 (d) The fact that a person committed a felony or misdemeanor, or attempted to commit a  
28 felony, ~~because of~~ and intentionally selected the victim due to the victim's actual or perceived  
29 race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, political affiliation, or sex, gender identity, or sexual  
30 orientation shall be considered a circumstance in aggravation of any crime in imposing sentence.

31 (e) Nothing contained in this section makes unlawful the teaching of any technique in self-  
32 defense.

33 (f) Nothing in this section shall be construed so as to make it unlawful nor to prohibit nor,  
34 in any manner, to impede or to interfere with any person in conducting labor union or labor union  
35 organizing activities.

36 (g) In any prosecution under this section, evidence of constitutionally protected speech or  
37 associations is not admissible in the prosecution of the charge, unless the speech or associations  
38 are:

39 (1) Specifically related to the crime charged; and

40 (2) Probative of intent to target a specific victim or to commit a specific crime, as defined  
41 in subsections (a), (b), (c), and (d) of this section.

42 (h) A person convicted under this section shall be considered for deferred adjudication

43 under §61-11-22a of this code, and alternative sentencing including, but not limited to, community  
44 corrections programming under §62-11C-1 *et seq.* of this code.

45 (i) The judge or magistrate shall determine if alternative sentencing is appropriate by  
46 considering the following factors:

47 (1) Whether appropriate community corrections programs exist in the county or  
48 municipality with jurisdiction; and

49 (2) Whether a community corrections program provides an opportunity for the harm to be  
50 remediated, or for the victim or convicted to be reintegrated into the community.

51 (j) The amendments to this section shall be known as “Angel’s Law”.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to prohibit civil rights violations based on disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The bill provides that evidence of constitutionally protected speech or associations is not admissible in criminal prosecutions except in certain situations. The bill provides for sentencing alternatives for persons convicted of violations. And, the amendments to this section are to be known as “Angel’s Law”.

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