

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2022 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 267

BY SENATORS WELD AND GRADY

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

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §18-5-13 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
2 to the transportation of students.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 5. COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION.

§18-5-13. Authority of boards generally.

1 Subject to the provisions of this chapter and the rules of the state board, each county
2 board may:

3 (a) Control and manage all of the schools and school interests for all school activities and
4 upon all school property owned or leased by the county, including:

5 (1) Requiring schools to keep records regarding funds connected with the school or school
6 interests, including all receipts and disbursements of all funds collected or received by:

7 (A) Any principal, teacher, student or other person in connection with the schools and
8 school interests;

9 (B) Any program, activity or other endeavor of any nature operated or conducted by or in
10 the name of the school; and

11 (C) Any organization or body directly connected with the school;

12 (2) Allowing schools to expend funds for student, parent, teacher and community
13 recognition programs. A school may use only funds it generates through a fund-raising or
14 donation-soliciting activity. Prior to commencing the activity, the school shall:

15 (A) Publicize the activity as intended for this purpose; and

16 (B) Designate for this purpose the funds generated;

17 (3) Auditing the records and conserving the funds, including securing surety bonds by
18 expending board moneys. The funds described in this subsection are quasipublic funds, which
19 means the moneys were received for the benefit of the school system as a result of curricular or
20 noncurricular activities;

21 (b) Establish:

- 22 (1) Schools, from preschool through high school;
- 23 (2) Vocational schools; and
- 24 (3) Schools and programs for post-high school instruction, subject to approval of the state
25 board;
- 26 (c) Close any school:
- 27 (1) Which is unnecessary and assign the students to other schools. The closing shall occur
28 pursuant to official action of the county board. Except in emergency situations when the timing
29 and manner of notification are subject to approval by the state superintendent, the county board
30 shall notify the affected teachers and service personnel of the county board action not later than
31 the first Monday in April. The board shall provide notice in the same manner as set forth in section
32 four of this article; or
- 33 (2) Pursuant to subsection (e) of this section;
- 34 (d) Consolidate schools;
- 35 (e) Close any elementary school whose average daily attendance falls below twenty
36 students for two consecutive months. The county board may assign the students to other schools
37 in the district or to schools in adjoining districts. If the teachers in the closed school are not
38 transferred or reassigned to other schools, they shall receive one month's salary;
- 39 (f) Provide transportation according to rules established by the county board, as follows:
- 40 (1) To provide at public expense adequate means of transportation:
- 41 (A) For all children of school age who live more than two-miles distance from school by
42 the nearest available road;
- 43 (B) For school children participating in county board-approved curricular and
44 extracurricular activities;
- 45 (C) Across county lines for students transferred from one district to another by mutual
46 agreement of both county boards. The agreement shall be recorded in the meeting minutes of
47 each participating county board and is subject to subsection (h) of this section; and

48 (D) Within available revenues, for students within two-miles distance of the school; and

49 (2) To provide transportation for participants in projects operated, financed, sponsored or
50 approved by the Bureau of Senior Services. This transportation shall be provided at no cost to
51 the county board. All costs and expenses incident in any way to this transportation shall be borne
52 by the bureau or the local or county affiliate of the bureau;

53 (3) Any school bus owned by the county board may be operated only by a bus operator
54 regularly employed by the county board, except as provided in subsection (g) of this section;

55 (4) Pursuant to rules established by the state board, the county board may provide for
56 professional or service employees to be certified to drive county board-owned and insured
57 vehicles, regardless of capacity but excluding buses that have a seating capacity of fewer than
58 ~~ten passengers~~. These employees may use the vehicles to transport students for school-
59 sponsored activities, but may not use the vehicles to transport students between school and
60 home. ~~Not more than one of these vehicles may be used for any school-sponsored activity;~~

61 ~~(5) Students may not be transported to a school-sponsored activity in any county-owned~~
62 ~~or leased vehicle that does not meet school bus or public transit ratings~~ This section does not
63 prohibit a parent, guardian, or other adult approved in writing by the parent, from transporting ~~ten~~
64 ~~or fewer~~ students in a privately-owned vehicle;

65 (6) Students may be transported to a school-sponsored activity in a vehicle that has a
66 seating capacity of sixteen or more passengers which is not owned and operated by the county
67 board only as follows:

68 (A) The state board shall promulgate a rule to establish requirements for:

69 (i) Automobile insurance coverage;

70 (ii) Vehicle safety specifications;

71 (iii) School bus or public transit ratings; and

72 (iv) Driver training, certification and criminal history record check; and

73 (B) The vehicle owner shall provide to the county board proof that the vehicle and driver

74 satisfy the requirements of the state board rule; and

75 (7) Buses shall be used for extracurricular activities as provided in this section only when
76 the insurance coverage required by this section is in effect;

77 (g) Lease school buses pursuant to rules established by the county board.

78 (1) Leased buses may be operated only by bus operators regularly employed by the
79 county board, except that these buses may be operated by bus operators regularly employed by
80 another county board in this state if bus operators from the owning county are unavailable.

81 (2) The lessee shall bear all costs and expenses incurred by, or incidental to the use of,
82 the bus.

83 (3) The county board may lease buses to:

84 (A) Public and private nonprofit organizations and private corporations to transport school-
85 age children for camps or educational activities;

86 (B) Any college, university or officially recognized campus organization for transporting
87 students, faculty and staff to and from the college or university. Only college and university
88 students, faculty and staff may be transported pursuant to this paragraph. The lease shall include
89 provisions for:

90 (i) Compensation for bus operators;

91 (ii) Consideration for insurance coverage, repairs and other costs of service; and

92 (iii) Any rules concerning student behavior;

93 (C) Public and private nonprofit organizations, including education employee
94 organizations, for transportation associated with fairs, festivals and other educational and cultural
95 events. The county board may charge fees in addition to those charges otherwise required by this
96 subsection;

97 (h) To provide at public expense for insurance coverage against negligence of the drivers
98 of school buses, trucks or other vehicles operated by the county board. Any contractual
99 agreement for transportation of students shall require the vehicle owner to maintain insurance

100 coverage against negligence in an amount specified by the county board;

101 (i) Provide for the full cost or any portion thereof for group plan insurance benefits not
102 provided or available under the West Virginia Public Employees Insurance Act. Any of these
103 benefits shall be provided:

104 (1) Solely from county board funds; and

105 (2) For all regular full-time employees of the county board;

106 (j) Employ teacher aides; to provide in-service training for the aides pursuant to rules
107 established by the state board; and, prior to assignment, to provide a four-clock-hour program of
108 training for a service person assigned duties as a teacher aide in an exceptional children program.

109 The four-clock-hour program shall consist of training in areas specifically related to the education
110 of exceptional children;

111 (k) Establish and operate a self-supporting dormitory for:

112 (1) Students attending a high school or participating in a post high school program; and

113 (2) Persons employed to teach in the high school or post high school program;

114 (l) At the county board's discretion, employ, contract with or otherwise engage legal
115 counsel in lieu of using the services of the prosecuting attorney to advise, attend to, bring,
116 prosecute or defend, as the case may be, any matters, actions, suits and proceedings in which
117 the county board is interested;

118 (m) Provide appropriate uniforms for school service personnel;

119 (n) Provide at public expense for payment of traveling expenses incurred by any person
120 invited to appear to be interviewed concerning possible employment by the county board, subject
121 to rules established by the county board;

122 (o) Allow designated employees to use publicly provided carriage to travel from their
123 residences to their workplace and return. The use:

124 (1) Is subject to the supervision of the county board; and

125 (2) Shall be directly connected with, required by and essential to the performance of the

126 employee's duties and responsibilities;

127 (p) Provide at public expense adequate public liability insurance, including professional
128 liability insurance, for county board employees;

129 (q) (1) Enter into cooperative agreements with one or more county boards or educational
130 services cooperative to provide improvements to the instructional needs of each district. The
131 cooperative agreements may be used to employ specialists in a field of academic study or for
132 support functions or services for the field.

133 (2) Enter into cooperative agreements with one or more county boards to facilitate
134 coordination and cooperation in areas of service to reduce administrative and/or operational
135 costs, including the consolidation of administrative, coordinating, and other county level functions
136 into shared functions to promote the efficient administration and operation of the public school
137 systems including, but not limited to:

138 (A) Purchasing;

139 (B) Operation of specialized programs for exceptional children;

140 (C) Employment of any school personnel as defined in section one, article one, chapter
141 eighteen-a of this code;

142 (D) Professional development;

143 (E) Technology including, but not limited to WVEIS; and

144 (F) Billing for school-based Medicaid services in schools throughout the state.

145 Each such cooperative agreement shall be in writing and agreed to by each county board
146 participating in the cooperative agreement. Each cooperative agreement that is an employment
147 agreement may be entered into on a case-by-case basis. Notwithstanding the geographic
148 quadrants as provided in section thirteen-b of this article, school systems may enter into
149 cooperative agreements with any school system in the state.

150 (3) Enter into a cooperative agreement with other county boards to establish educational
151 services cooperatives as provided in section thirteen-c of this article.

152 (r) Provide information about vocational and higher education opportunities to exceptional
153 students. The county board shall provide in writing to the students and their parents or guardians
154 information relating to programs of vocational education and to programs available at state
155 institutions of higher education. The information may include sources of available funding,
156 including grants, mentorships and loans for students who wish to attend classes at institutions of
157 higher education;

158 (s) Enter into agreements with other county boards for the transfer and receipt of any funds
159 determined to be fair when students are permitted or required to attend school in a district other
160 than the district of their residence. These agreements are subject to the approval of the state
161 board; and

162 (t) Enter into job-sharing arrangements, as defined in section one, article one, chapter
163 eighteen-a of this code, with its employees, subject to the following provisions:

164 (1) A job-sharing arrangement shall meet all the requirements relating to posting,
165 qualifications and seniority, as provided in article four, chapter eighteen-a of this code;

166 (2) Notwithstanding any contrary provision of this code or legislative rule and specifically
167 article sixteen, chapter five of this code, a county board that enters into a job-sharing arrangement:

168 (A) Shall provide insurance coverage to the one employee mutually agreed upon by the
169 employees participating in that arrangement; and

170 (B) May not provide insurance benefits of any type to more than one of the job-sharing
171 employees, including any group plan available under the State Public Employees Insurance Act;

172 (3) Each job-sharing agreement shall be in writing on a form prescribed and furnished by
173 the county board. The agreement shall designate specifically one employee only who is entitled
174 to the insurance coverage. Any employee who is not designated is not eligible for state public
175 employees insurance coverage regardless of the number of hours he or she works;

176 (4) All employees involved in the job-sharing agreement shall meet the requirements of
177 subdivision (3), section two, article sixteen, chapter five of this code; and

178 (5) When entering into a job-sharing agreement, the county board and the participating
179 employees shall consider issues such as retirement benefits, termination of the job-sharing
180 agreement and any other issue the parties consider appropriate. Any provision in the agreement
181 relating to retirement benefits may not cause any cost to be incurred by the retirement system
182 that is more than the cost that would be incurred if a single employee were filling the position; and

183 (u) Under rules it establishes for each child, expend an amount not to exceed the
184 proportion of all school funds of the district that each child would be entitled to receive if all the
185 funds were distributed equally among all the children of school age in the district upon a per capita
186 basis.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to clarify the authority of the county board of education to transport students in county owned and insured vehicles, and to provide that a parent, guardian, or another adult approved in writing by a parent may transport students in privately owned vehicles.

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