

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2023 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 2273

By Delegate Fluharty

[Introduced January 11, 2023; Referred to the
Committee on Education then Finance]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §18C-7-6 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
 2 to expanding the amount of PROMISE scholarship funds awarded to persons majoring in
 3 science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

**ARTICLE 7. WEST VIRGINIA PROVIDING REAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAXIMIZING
 IN-STATE STUDENT EXCELLENCE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM.**

§18C-7-6. PROMISE Scholarship Program requirements; legislative rule.

1 (a) A PROMISE scholarship annual award shall meet the following conditions:

2 (1) For a student enrolled in a state institution of higher education, the annual award is
 3 equal to the lesser of the cost of tuition or \$4,750, except that a student who was awarded and
 4 used a PROMISE scholarship annual award prior to January 1, 2010, shall continue to receive the
 5 annual award calculated under the same terms and conditions that applied on the day before the
 6 effective date of this article;

7 (2) For a student enrolled in an eligible institution other than a state institution of higher
 8 education, the annual award is equal to, but may not exceed, the lesser of the cost of tuition or
 9 \$4,750, except that a student who was awarded and used a PROMISE scholarship annual award
 10 prior to January 1, 2010, shall continue to receive the annual award calculated under the same
 11 terms and conditions that applied on the day before the effective date of this article;

12 (3) The annual award may exceed \$4,750, if the commission determines that adequate
 13 funds are available, but in any case may not be greater than the actual cost of tuition;

14 (4) The annual award shall be used by an eligible institution to supplement, but may not
 15 supplant, a tuition and fee waiver for which the individual is eligible pursuant to §18B-10-5, §18B-
 16 10-6a, §18B-10-7, or §18B-10-7b of this code.

17 (5) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivisions (1), (2), and (3) of this subsection, for
 18 each student enrolled in a state institution of higher education in a major which falls within the

19 fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), as determined by the
20 commission, the annual award shall cover full tuition, room and board.

21 (b) The total cost of all scholarships awarded by the commission in any year may not
22 exceed the amount of funds available to the commission during that fiscal year.

23 (c) In order to be eligible to receive a PROMISE scholarship award, an individual shall:

24 (1) Submit a scholarship award application to the commission:

25 (A) Within two years of completing a secondary education program in a public, private, or
26 home school or within two years of obtaining a GED or equivalent; or

27 (B) Within seven years of initially entering military service, and within one year of discharge
28 from military service, if the individual has entered the United States armed services within two
29 years after completing a secondary education program in a public, private, or home school or
30 obtaining a GED or equivalent;

31 (2) Apply for and submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid;

32 (3) Maintain a grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 grading scale in the required core
33 and elective course work necessary to prepare students for success in post-secondary education
34 at the associate and baccalaureate degree levels as determined by the commission, if the
35 individual has completed not more than one semester or term at an institution of higher education,
36 excluding credits earned in advanced placement, international baccalaureate, dual credit, and
37 comparable courses while the student is enrolled in high school;

38 (4) Maintain appropriate academic progress toward the completion of a degree at the
39 undergraduate education level as determined by the commission if the individual has completed
40 more than one semester or term at an institution of higher education, excluding credits earned in
41 advanced placement, international baccalaureate, dual credit and comparable courses while the
42 student is enrolled in high school;

43 (5) Be a United States citizen or legal immigrant to the United States;

44 (6) Meet additional objective standards the commission considers necessary to promote

45 academic excellence and to maintain the financial stability of the fund; and

46 (7) Enroll in an eligible institution. A student enrolled at an eligible institution who receives a
47 PROMISE scholarship award may retain and renew the scholarship to complete his or her
48 undergraduate education at that institution or any other eligible institution under the following
49 circumstances:

50 (A) The institution at which the student is enrolled loses its status as an eligible institution
51 pursuant to the provisions of §18B-7-3(b)(1) of this code; and

52 (B) The student meets all other renewal requirements of this code and of commission
53 rules.

54 (d) It is the intent of the Legislature that the commission shall strongly encourage
55 prospective candidates for the PROMISE scholarship to perform at least 20 hours of unpaid
56 community service while in high school to help prepare them for success in post-secondary
57 education. The community service may include, but is not limited to, participation with nonprofit,
58 governmental or community-based organizations designed with any or all of the following
59 purposes:

60 (1) Improving the quality of life for community residents;

61 (2) Meeting the needs of community residents; or

62 (3) Fostering civic responsibility.

63 (e) The commission shall promulgate a legislative rule in accordance with the provisions of
64 §29A-3A-1 *et seq.* of this code.

65 (1) The rule shall include at least the following provisions:

66 (A) The amount of a PROMISE scholarship award in combination with aid from all other
67 sources may not exceed the cost of education at the institution the recipient is attending. This
68 provision does not apply to members of the West Virginia National Guard, recipients of an
69 Underwood-Smith teacher scholarship and recipients of a West Virginia engineering, science and
70 technology scholarship;

71 (B) Additional objective standards the commission considers necessary:

72 (i) To promote academic excellence;

73 (ii) To maintain the financial stability of the fund; and

74 (iii) To operate the program within the limits of available funds;

75 (C) Provisions for making the highest and best use of the PROMISE Scholarship Program

76 in conjunction with the West Virginia College Prepaid Tuition and Savings Program Act set forth in

77 §18-30-1 *et seq.* of this code;

78 (D) A provision defining the relationship of PROMISE scholarship awards to all other
79 sources of student financial aid to ensure maximum coordination. The provision shall include the
80 following:

81 (i) Methods to maximize student eligibility for federal student financial aid;

82 (ii) A requirement that PROMISE scholarship awards not supplant tuition and fee waivers;

83 and

84 (iii) Clarification of the relationship between the PROMISE Scholarship Program, tuition
85 savings plans and other state-funded student financial aid programs;

86 (E) A method for awarding scholarships within the limits of available appropriations,
87 including circumstances when program funds are not sufficient to provide awards to all eligible
88 applicants. The commission may not use any of the following methods:

89 (i) Providing for an annual PROMISE scholarship award that is less than the amounts
90 provided for in this section; or

91 (ii) Eliminating any current recipient from eligibility; and

92 (F) A method for applicants to appeal determinations of eligibility and renewal.

93 (2) The rule may provide for or require the following at the commission's discretion:

94 (A) Requiring repayment of the amount of the scholarship, in whole or in part, if a
95 scholarship recipient chooses to work outside the state after graduation. The rule may not require
96 a recipient to repay a scholarship, in whole or in part, unless the prospective recipient has been

97 informed of this requirement in writing before initial acceptance of the PROMISE scholarship
98 award;

99 (B) Targeting a portion of the scholarship funds to be used for applicants enrolled in an
100 engineering, science, technology or other designated program;

101 (C) Determining what other sources of funding for higher education are to be deducted
102 from the PROMISE scholarship award; and

103 (D) Providing additional criteria as determined by the commission.

104 (3) The Legislature finds that an emergency exists and, therefore, the commission shall file
105 a rule to implement the provisions of this section as an emergency rule pursuant to the provisions
106 of §29A-3A-1 *et seq.* of this code. The rule is subject to the prior approval of the Legislative
107 Oversight Commission on Education Accountability.

108 (4) Any rule promulgated by the commission pursuant to previous enactments of this
109 article in effect on the effective date of the amendment and reenactment of this article in the year
110 2009 remains in effect until amended, modified, repealed, or replaced by the commission.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to increase PROMISE scholarships to persons majoring in STEM (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields to pay the full cost of tuition, room and board.

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