

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2023 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 3496

FISCAL
NOTE

By Delegates Holstein, McGeehan, Pinson, and

Mazzocchi

[Introduced February 14, 2023; Referred to the
Committee on Health and Human Resources then
Finance]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new article,
2 designated §49-10-1, relating to the creation of the Responsible Fatherhood Act.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 10. THE RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD ACT.

§49-10-1. The Responsible Fatherhood Act.

1 The Responsible Fatherhood Act provides resources to promote responsible fatherhood,
2 gives competitive grants to engage private sector partners in the effort to address the needs of
3 fathers, increases fatherhood engagement services, increases child support services, creates a
4 responsible fatherhood month, and addresses the low graduation rate of fatherless children.

5 West Virginia recognizes the threat of government growth to prosperity, responsibility, and
6 liberty, and thus embraces the important role that the private sector, including faith-based
7 organizations, can often play in lieu of direct government involvement in addressing the
8 fatherlessness crisis. This bill is not intended to increase government programs or spending but
9 rather to reallocate funds towards effective and competitive grant programs, increase
10 transparency, and offer solutions to a growing crisis in the State of West Virginia.

11 (a) Promoting Responsible Fatherhood. –

12 (1) The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) shall contract
13 with a not-for-profit for the development and implementation of an initiative to promote responsible
14 Fatherhood by July 2023. The initiative must include a website, electronic resources for fathers,
15 regional public events, and social media campaigns.

16 (2) DHHR must contract with a not-for-profit organization with a history and substantial
17 experience in fatherhood that includes, but is not limited to, public awareness campaigns, online
18 resources, engaging with fathers in the community, engaging at school sponsored events to
19 promote fatherhood, and has the capacity to implement and maintain a state-wide campaign.

20 (A) The nonprofit chosen must be nonpolitical and nonpartisan.

21 (B) The choice of nonprofit must come after an open and transparent competitive selection

22 process that ensures the most effective partner organization is chosen.

23 (b) Grants to Address the Needs of Fathers. –

24 (1) Recognizing the benefit of private-public partnerships, DHHR shall award competitive
25 grants to state and local nonprofit organizations, churches, or other private sector partners to
26 address unmet needs of fathers to increase their presence in their child’s life. Grants will be to
27 comprehensively address the needs of fathers, such as assisting them in finding employment,
28 establishing appropriate child support obligations, transitioning from incarceration, and accessing
29 health care. Services provided must be tailored to the needs of fathers being served. These grants
30 shall require case management services to be provided to fathers.

31 (2) After three years DHHR shall submit a report to the Governor on the effectiveness of
32 these grants including measurable data on number of fathers assisted. Programs will expire
33 unless explicitly reauthorized after a rigorous review.

34 (c) Increased Fatherhood Engagement Services. –

35 (1) Community-based-care lead agencies (CBC’s) must assess their current engagement
36 with fathers, report on any gaps, and identify viable solutions by April 2023. Solutions to these
37 identified gaps must be implemented by October 2023.

38 (2) DHHR will conduct bi-annual reviews of how CBCs are implementing plans to address
39 gaps in fatherhood engagement and will assess how well CBCs are meeting the needs of fathers.
40 These reports will be made public within 30 days of assessment.

41 (3) The Department of Health and Human Resources alone, subcontractors alone, or both,
42 shall integrate father engagement activities into home visit programs. Engagement activities
43 include, but are not limited to, increased and individualized support to increase fathers’
44 participation in services offered to strengthen the family and increase child-wellbeing.

45 (d) Child Support Services for Fathers. –

46 (1) The West Virginia Bureau for Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) shall provide
47 information to those having trouble paying child support.

48 (A) BCSE shall establish a webpage on its existing website to provide information to
49 obligors that are having difficulty making their child support payments.

50 (B) Information on the webpage must be user-friendly, in plain language, and provide at a
51 minimum detailed information about how an obligor can modify a child support order, how to
52 access career services at Workforce West Virginia, and all organizations that have received grants
53 to assist noncustodial parents.

54 (2) Notifications of delinquent child support payments shall be provided to obligors in a
55 timely and efficient manner and must include information on how the obligor can access the career
56 services mentioned in §49-10-1(d) of this code, and information on how to access career services
57 and organizations awarded grants to assist noncustodial parents with child support payments.

58 (e) Establishing Responsible Fatherhood Month. –

59 (1) The month of June shall be designated as "Responsible Fatherhood Month" to honor
60 the important contribution of fathers to child well-being, safety, and stability.

61 (2) Throughout Responsible Fatherhood Month, DHHR shall actively, meaning at least on
62 a weekly basis, promote the direct link between fatherhood and the health and well-being of
63 children.

64 (3) Other agencies and local governments are encouraged to support Responsible
65 Fatherhood Month through community engagement events, social media posts, news media, and
66 other public support campaigns.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to establish the Responsible Fatherhood Act.

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