

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2025 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 3285

By Delegates Fluharty, Hornbuckle, and Lewis

[Introduced March 10, 2025; 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; school: *Provided*, That a recipient of the PROMISE scholarship
43 award who does not meet the requirements of this subdivision and loses the award may petition
44 the institution to reinstate the award upon successfully reattaining the credit hour and minimum

45 overall grade point qualifications set out in the commission's rule governing eligibility for receipt of
46 the PROMISE scholarship: *Provided, however,* That a student who has lost the PROMISE
47 scholarship award is only eligible to be reinstated one time; if the student becomes ineligible for
48 the PROMISE scholarship award a second time, the student may not again petition the institution
49 for reinstatement of the award nor again be reinstated: *Provided further,* That the student forfeits a
50 term of eligibility for each term in which the student is enrolled to meet the renewal requirements
51 as authorized by this subdivision: *And provided further,* That upon a finding that the student
52 successfully reattained the credit hour and minimum overall grade point qualifications set out in
53 the commission's rule governing eligibility for receipt of the PROMISE scholarship award as
54 required by this subdivision, the institution shall reinstate the award;

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

56 (6) Meet additional objective standards the commission considers necessary to promote
57 academic excellence and to maintain the financial stability of the fund; and

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

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

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

66 (d) It is the intent of the Legislature that the commission shall strongly encourage
67 prospective candidates for the PROMISE scholarship to perform at least 20 hours of unpaid
68 community service while in high school to help prepare them for success in post-secondary
69 education. The community service may include, but is not limited to, participation with nonprofit,

70 governmental or community-based organizations designed with any or all of the following
71 purposes:

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

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

74 (3) Fostering civic responsibility.

75 (e) The commission shall promulgate a legislative rule in accordance with the provisions of
76 §29A-3A-1 *et seq.* of this code.

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

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

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

84 (i) To promote academic excellence;

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

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

87 (C) Provisions for making the highest and best use of the PROMISE Scholarship Program
88 in conjunction with the West Virginia College Prepaid Tuition and Savings Program Act set forth in
89 §18-30-1 *et seq.* of this code;

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

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

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

95 and

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

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

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

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

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

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

106 (A) Requiring repayment of the amount of the scholarship, in whole or in part, if a
107 scholarship recipient chooses to work outside the state after graduation. The rule may not require
108 a recipient to repay a scholarship, in whole or in part, unless the prospective recipient has been
109 informed of this requirement in writing before initial acceptance of the PROMISE scholarship
110 award;

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

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

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

116 (3) Any rule promulgated by the commission pursuant to previous enactments of this
117 article in effect on the effective date of the amendment and reenactment of this article in the year
118 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.