

# West Virginia's Hope Scholarship and What It Means for You

In West Virginia's 2021 legislative session, lawmakers passed the Hope Scholarship Act, a momentous step toward providing every eligible student in the state with the opportunity to obtain an individualized, unique education experience that better helps prepare them for their future. Hope Students will receive approximately \$4,600 annually to help cover the cost of their K-12 education. Over 90% of current West Virginia students – and all incoming students – are eligible to become a Hope Student beginning in the fall of 2022.

## **Are only private schools eligible to receive these dollars?**

No! Hope Dollars can be used on any expense deemed qualifying by the Hope Scholarship Board. This includes, but not limited to, tuition and fees at participating public and nonpublic schools, in-person or virtual schools, tutoring services, fees for national assessments and preparatory courses, any curriculum of courses that leads to an industry-recognized credential, educational services and therapies, and fees for after-school or summer education programs.

## **How does the payment process work for tuition-based programs?**

Families will directly pay providers with funds drawn from their child's designated account. Necessary refunds will be sent back to the same account. These accounts are funded twice annually, with half of the amount deposited no later than August 15 and half no later than January 15. Families may personally cover any costs that exceed their available balance.

## **How does my program become approved as an eligible provider?**

To become eligible to accept payments from a Hope Account, the law states that providers must simply submit notice to the Hope Scholarship Board that they wish to participate in the program. As the program goes through the rulemaking process at the direction of the State Treasurer's office, the application process will become clearer – these details should be available before the end of the year, likely in October.

## **Will I need to change curriculums to participate?**

The Hope Scholarship Act specifically states that a participating provider's independence and autonomy is in no way limited, that providers shall be given maximum freedom to provide for the educational needs of students, and that participating schools are not required to alter their creed, practices, admission policy, hiring policy or curriculum in order to accept eligible Hope Students. Put simply, accepting Hope Students in no way expands the regulatory authority of the state or your local school district to impose any additional regulations on your service.

## **Who sits on the Hope Scholarship Board?**

The Board is comprised of nine members with the State Treasurer serving as chairman. Other members include the State Auditor and Attorney General, the State Superintendent of Schools, Chancellor of Higher Education, the Director of the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs and three private citizens and parents of Hope Scholarship students appointed by the Governor.

