

FLORIDA SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

SENATOR BILL GALVANO, MAJORITY LEADER



This Week in the Florida Senate

January 11-15, 2016

Opening Day – 2016 Legislative Session Begins

The 2016 Legislative Session began on Tuesday, January 12th. Senate President Gardiner shared his legislative priorities for his final term as Senate President including a statewide water and natural resources policy and the cradle to career pathway to economic independence for people with unique abilities. Priorities of the Senate include cutting taxes to leave more money with the hardworking Florida families and businesses who earn it, passing a balanced budget, and to appropriate unprecedented K-12 per student funding. We will work with Governor Scott and our colleagues in the House to ensure Florida has the tools we need to recruit and retain businesses that create jobs and grow our economy. And last, but by no means least, we will continue our commitment to the most vulnerable in our state by taking more people with unique abilities off the APD waiting list, so they can receive services they need in their homes and communities.

Senate Bill 676, Access to Health Care Services

SB 676: Expands Availability of Quality Medical Care

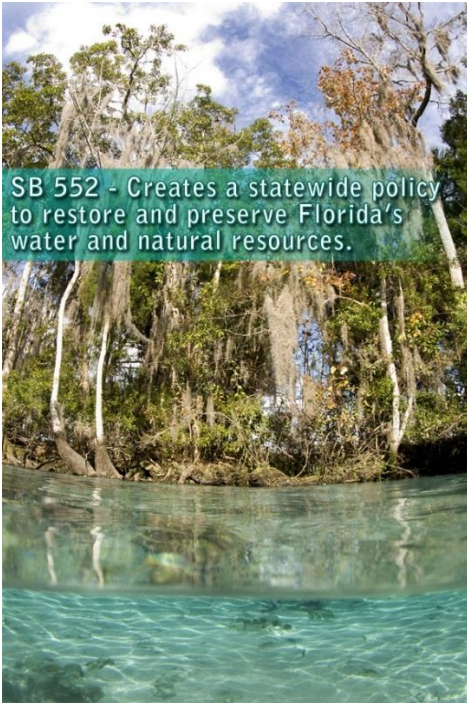


Allows Practitioners with Advanced Medical Training to Better Meet the Needs of Patients

The Senate Committee on Health Policy passed Senate Bill 676, Access to Health Care Services, to expand prescribing privileges for physician assistants (PAs) and advanced registered nurse practitioners (ARNPs). This bill will assist many rural communities across our state where physicians are simply not available and patients with serious medical conditions have to travel great distances to receive care. Florida is currently the only state that does not allow ARNPs to prescribe controlled substances and is one of two states that does not allow PAs to prescribe these medications.

After completing years of education of clinical training, PAs and ARNPs have the skills needed to prescribe these medications to the patients they serve. This legislation will help make medical care more readily available while maintaining the high standards of training required to prescribe these controlled substances. SB 676 authorizes PAs and ARNPs to prescribe controlled substances under current supervisory standards for PAs and protocols for ARNPs beginning January 1, 2017, and creates additional statutory parameters for their controlled substance prescribing. The bill requires PAs and ARNPs to complete biennial continuing education on the safe and effective prescribing of controlled substances.

Senate Bill 552, Environmental Resources



On Wednesday, the Florida Senate passed Senate Bill 552, Environmental Resources, to implement a statewide policy to preserve and restore Florida's water and natural resources for future generations.

Passing this legislation is a win for Floridians, as it increases public access to conservation lands for recreational purposes, protects Florida's unique environment, and ensures Floridians have quality water for future use through restoration and conservation efforts of our water bodies. SB 552 transforms the way Florida conserves our most valuable natural resources, making certain that we take a statewide, comprehensive approach on restoring and preserving our water and natural resources. The bill establishes a systematic and transparent process to ensure taxpayer dollars are allocated to meaningful water quality and restoration projects and implements best management practices to increase our clean water supply.

Senate Bill 12, Mental Health and Substance Abuse

The Senate Committee on Children, Families and Elder Affairs, on Thursday, unanimously passed Senate Bill 12, Mental Health and Substance Abuse, to improve the delivery of mental health and substance abuse services. Florida's current system of behavioral health services is fragmented and inefficient, making it hard for persons with complex and persistent illnesses to obtain the services they need. SB 12 re-assesses our current method of providing and funding mental health services through a more pro-active, comprehensive approach to treatment. This bill responds to the comments shared by providers, law enforcement, judges and other concerned Floridians over the last several years. The bill will help people suffering from mental illness and substance abuse disorders by improving coordination among service providers, increasing access to appropriate care, and reducing repeat hospitalizations.

SB 12 clarifies the use of involuntary outpatient services to encourage courts to use outpatient services when appropriate and available rather than more costly inpatient care at the state's treatment facilities. The bill defines the "No Wrong Door" model of behavioral health services as a way of optimizing patients' access to care regardless of their point of entry into the behavioral health system. SB 12 updates the duties and responsibilities of the behavioral health managing entities to better serve local communities by coordinating care among a full array of behavior health services. In addition, the legislation directs the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to create performance measures and standards to be used in contracts with managing entities and directs the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and DCF to develop a plan to obtain federal approval for increasing availability of federal funding for behavioral health care.

Senate Advances Cradle to Career Pathway to Economic Independence for People with Unique Abilities

Senate Bill 672, Educational Options

The Florida Senate passed Senate Bill 672, Educational Options, to codify into Florida law the expansion of the Personal Learning Scholarship Account (PLSA) Program and the statewide coordination of Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Programs for students with intellectual disabilities funded by the Florida Legislature in the 2015-16 General Appropriations Act (GAA). The bill was amended to rename the Personal Learning Scholarship Account Program the “Gardiner Scholarship” in honor of President Gardiner and his family.

For people with unique abilities and their families, Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts and Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Programs represent freedom from a one-size-fits-all system and the opportunity to pursue education and career choices suited to their own unique skills. This bill is a pillar of our cradle to career pathway to economic independence for people with unique abilities. The Legislature has worked diligently to make the dream of a high school diploma, the college experience, and a meaningful career a reality for more people with unique abilities across Florida. The House of Representatives took up and passed SB 672 on Friday, ensuring this bill will now be transmitted to Governor Scott.

Expanding Education Options for Students with Unique Abilities

SB 672 - The Gardiner Scholarship



House Bill 7003, Individuals with Disabilities – Unique Abilities Employment Pathway

The Legislature significantly advanced key components of a cradle to career pathway to economic independence for people with unique abilities by passing House Bill 7003 on Friday. Many Floridians with unique abilities will benefit from the opportunity to learn the skills needed to contribute to Florida’s workforce in a meaningful way. This comprehensive package, will give people with unique abilities and their families a roadmap to meaningful employment opportunities that will help them on the path to economic independence.

Enhancing State Employment Options for People with Unique Abilities



Senate Bill 7034, Prenatal Services and Early Childhood Development

SB 7034 Improves Early Steps/ Early Intervention Services for Florida Children with Unique Abilities

- Creates Performance Standards/Accountability
- ▲ Improves Early Identification & Expands Eligibility
- ◆ Better Coordination of Available Resources
- Establishes Procedures for Successful Transition to School

#CradleToCareer



On Wednesday, the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services passed Senate Bill 7034 to improve and expand the Early Steps Program, which serves infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities and delays. SB 7034 creates performance standards and accountability measures for the Early Steps Program and will also improve early identification, expand eligibility, implement statewide planning, provide for better coordination of available resources, and establish procedures for children to successfully transition to school district services when they age out of the Early Steps Program.

Senate Bill 962, Vocational Rehabilitation

Making Florida the Leader in Employing Adults with Disabilities



SB 962 - Vocational Rehabilitation

To make Florida the national leader in employing people with unique abilities, we need to set specified goals and establish a performance improvement plan for the state Vocational Rehabilitation program to achieve. This week, the Senate worked to establish this policy by passing Senate Bill 962, Vocational Rehabilitation. SB 962 requires the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to develop and implement a performance improvement plan to achieve specified goals and annually submit a performance report to the Governor and presiding officers of the Florida Legislature. Establishing metrics that focus on outcomes related to employment and independence will allow Florida to make measurable progress in ensuring people with unique abilities can secure meaningful employment.