

## Committee on Education Postsecondary

### CS/SB 7032 — Education

by Appropriations Committee and Education Postsecondary Committee

The bill creates the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program, GATE Scholarship Program, GATE Startup Grant Program, and GATE Program Performance Fund. All four programs are aimed at re-engaging students who have withdrawn from high school by providing opportunities to earn career education credentials while also completing a standard high school diploma or equivalent credential. The bill adds information about the GATE Program to the required notifications to 16 and 17 year old students who withdraw from high school.

The bill waives tuition and specified fees and the costs of instructional materials for students that are enrolled in the GATE Program at a school district career center, charter technical career center, or a Florida College System (FCS) institution. After the student's first term, the waiver is provided after an award of state aid from the Open Door Grant Program is applied, as available. The bill provides eligibility criteria for students to enroll in the GATE Program to specify that a student must:

- Not have earned a standard high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma.
- Have been withdrawn from high school. If age 16 or 17, have withdrawn according to requirements specified in law.
- Be a resident of this state for tuition purposes.
- Be 16 to 21 years of age at the time of initial enrollment.
- Select an adult secondary education program and career education program at the time of admission to the GATE Program, provided that the career education program is included on the Master Credentials List. The student must remain in the pathway after enrollment, except that the student may enroll in an adult basic education program prior to enrolling in the adult secondary education program.
- Maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) for career and technical education coursework.
- Complete the adult secondary education program and the career education program within three years unless the institution determines that an extension is warranted due to extenuating circumstances.

To assist FCS institutions, school districts, and charter technical career centers in administering the GATE Program, the GATE Scholarship and GATE Startup Grant Programs provide funds for starting programs in rural areas and reimbursing all participating institutions for the tuition and fees and instructional materials for students enrolled in the GATE program.

Additionally, the bill provides funding for institutions through the GATE Program Performance Fund. The performance funding is provided based on the number of students enrolled in the GATE program who earn a standard high school diploma or equivalent credential and a career certification that has been identified as having local, regional, or statewide value. The bill requires the Department of Education to disseminate information about the GATE Program and administer the GATE Scholarship and GATE Startup Grant Programs.

The GATE Scholarship and Startup Grant programs and the GATE Program Performance Fund provided for in this bill are subject to legislative appropriation.

To support students in earning a standard high school diploma, the bill increases from 2 to 4 the number of courses that may be reported for funding for a student who is coenrolled in a K-12 education program and adult education program. The bill also removes the requirement that the courses funded be core curricula.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

*Vote: Senate 40-0; House 112-0*