

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 1371 State Employee Higher Education Fee Waivers

SPONSOR(S): Ausley

TIED BILLS: none **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 252

| REFERENCE | ACTION | ANALYST | STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF |
|---|-----------|---------|--|
| 1) Post-Secondary Education Subcommittee | 14 Y, 0 N | Silver | Bishop |
| 2) Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee | | | |
| 3) Education Committee | | | |

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Florida law requires each state university and Florida College System institution to waive tuition and fees for state employees to enroll for up to 6 credit hours per term on a space-available basis, subject to approval by an employee's agency head or the equivalent.

The bill modifies the postsecondary tuition and fee waiver for employees of the state from 6 credit hours per term to 18 credit hours per calendar year.

There is no fiscal impact to the state.

The bill takes effect May 1, 2018.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Tuition Fee Waiver

Present Situation

Florida law¹ requires each state university and Florida College System institution to waive tuition and fees for state employees to enroll for up to 6 credit hours per term on a space-available basis, subject to approval by an employee's agency head or the equivalent.

Employees of the state include employees of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government, except for persons employed by a state university.² Guidelines for the state employee tuition waiver program³ clarify that the maximum educational assistance available under the program is 18 credit hours per plan year. A plan year is defined as the calendar year (i.e., January 1 – December 31).⁴ Only full time employees of the state are eligible to receive the tuition and fee waiver.⁵

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies the postsecondary tuition and fee waiver benefit for employees of the State of Florida. Specifically, the bill modifies the tuition and fee waiver from 6 credit hours per term to 18 credit hours per calendar year. Such modification may provide flexibility to state employees to enroll in more than 6 credit hours per term, still within the current 18 credit hour maximum for the calendar year.

Accordingly, state employees who are close to meeting their graduation requirements may be able to accelerate their time to degree by increasing their course workload per academic term or terms, as applicable, subject to space availability.⁶

The bill also provides that the modification to 18 credit hours per calendar year applies to any academic term beginning on or after May 1, 2018. However, for a state employee with tuition and fees waived for an academic term beginning on or after January 1, 2018, through April 20, 2018, those credit hours count toward the 18 credit hour maximum for the 2018 calendar year.

The bill takes effect May 1, 2018.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

¹ Section 1009.265(1), F.S. The state employee fee waivers program is also known as the State Employee Tuition Waiver Program or the State of Florida Employee Educational Assistance Program. Department of Management Services, *State Employee Tuition Waiver Program, Frequently Asked Questions* (Sept. 2016), available at:

https://www.dms.myflorida.com/content/download/129121/803063/2016-008_-_State_Employee_Tuition_Waiver_QandA_09-28-16.pdf, at 2.

² Section 1009.265(5), F.S.

³ Department of Management Services, *State Employee Tuition Waiver Program, Frequently Asked Questions* (Sept. 2016), available at: https://www.dms.myflorida.com/content/download/129121/803063/2016-008_-_State_Employee_Tuition_Waiver_QandA_09-28-16.pdf, at 3.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Department of Management Services, *State Employee Tuition Waiver Program, Frequently Asked Questions* (Sept. 2016), available at: https://www.dms.myflorida.com/content/download/129121/803063/2016-008_-_State_Employee_Tuition_Waiver_QandA_09-28-16.pdf, at 4.

⁶ Board of Governors, *2018 Agency Bill Analysis for SB 252* (Oct. 24, 2017), at 2.

Section 1. Amends section 1009.265, F.S.; revising postsecondary tuition and fee waivers for state employees.

Section 2. Provides an effective date of May 1, 2018.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

There is no fiscal impact to the state.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

None.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

None.