

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2025 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Education Postsecondary

CS/CS/SB 312 — Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, Inc.

by Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee; Education Postsecondary Committee; and Senators Gaetz and Harrell

The bill modifies governance and reporting requirements for the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, Inc. (IHMC). The bill transfers authority for creating not-for-profit subsidiaries from the Board of Governors to the IHMC's board of directors and removes the requirement for the Board of Governors to approve subsidiary articles of incorporation. Subsidiaries are also authorized to enter into affiliation agreements with certain universities. The bill also updates reporting responsibilities, requiring the IHMC to certify compliance with state requirements rather than the University of West Florida.

Additionally, the bill revises the composition of the IHMC board by removing the chair of the University of West Florida Board of Trustees and adding an additional public representative appointed by that board.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 112-0

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CS/CS/SB 584 — Young Adult Housing Support

by Fiscal Policy Committee; Education Postsecondary Committee; and Senators Garcia and Osgood

The bill requires each Florida College System (FCS) institution and state university, in consultation with the State Office on Homelessness within the Department of Children and Families (DCF), to develop plans for prioritizing the placement of students who are or were formerly in foster care and those experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness into residence halls and dormitory residences owned by the institution or university. This includes, but is not limited to, students who qualify for a tuition and fee exemption based on meeting the federal definition of homeless children and youth and students who are current or former foster youth. The bill specifies that the Office of Continuing Care is responsible for determining whether a student is or was formerly in foster care, and each FCS and state university is responsible for determining whether a student is experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The bill provides that if an FCS institution or state university implements a priority system for assigning students to, or awarding any of the following, the institution or university must give first priority to students who qualify for a tuition and fee exemption based on meeting the federal definition of homeless children and students who are current or former foster youth:

- Institution-operated or university-operated housing.
- Year-round housing.
- Work-study opportunities.

The bill prohibits FCS institutions and state universities from requiring students to have a cosigner or guarantor to obtain housing if the student receives housing support through the Road to Independence Program or is in a continuing care program for young adults.

The bill requires the DCF, community-based care lead agencies, and housing authorities to take any action required by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to administer the federal Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative, to include:

- Entering into a memorandum of understanding or letter of intent with all housing authorities within their service areas.
- Providing or securing supportive services for participating youth for the duration of the FYI initiative voucher.
- Providing a written certification to the housing authority verifying the youth's child welfare history.
- Identifying youth eligible for an FYI initiative voucher within the community-based care lead agency's caseload and communicating their eligibility to the youth.

The bill requires the DCF, community-based care lead agencies, and their subcontracted service providers that administer housing funds for young adults in the child welfare system to document actions taken to facilitate a young adult's acquisition of a residential lease, which may include,

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but are not limited to, providing assurances to a landlord that funding will be provided on a monthly basis through a housing voucher.

Finally, the bill requires the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), in consultation with specified groups, to conduct a study of the barriers that young adults who are homeless or were formerly in foster care face when trying to obtain housing. OPPAGA must report its findings by December 1, 2026, to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

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Vote: Senate 38-0; House 116-0

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CS/HB 681 — Apprenticeship and Preapprenticeship Program Funding

by Careers and Workforce Subcommittee and Rep. Melo and others (CS/SB 1458 by Education Postsecondary Committee and Senator DiCeglie)

The bill modifies transparency, financial accountability, and governance requirements in the administration of registered apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs. It establishes new requirements for partnerships between local educational agencies (LEAs) and program providers, modifies reporting timelines and content, and expands public access to workforce education funding information. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires the Department of Education (DOE) uniform minimum standards and policies for apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs to allow partnerships between LEAs and program partners to ensure equitable and transparent funding arrangements.
- Requires partnership agreements between LEAs and apprenticeship or preapprenticeship providers to document each party's responsibilities and define a funding split based on services provided. If the LEA's role is administrative only, its funding share may not exceed 10 percent.
- Requires the DOE to develop a standard model contract template for LEA-program partnerships that addresses roles, funding terms, legal compliance, and reporting obligations.
- Modifies the required contents of the DOE's annual apprenticeship and preapprenticeship report by expanding existing reporting elements related to local educational LEA expenditures. Specifically, the bill:
 - Shifts the deadline for publication of the report from September 1 to November 30.
 - Expands the expenditure summary to include both the LEA's and the apprenticeship or preapprenticeship program's responsibilities and costs.
 - Adds to the requirement for reporting allocations by training provider, program, and occupation to also include the total funds "received."
 - Adds to the reporting of administrative costs a requirement to include the total number of personnel hours required to administer each apprenticeship and preapprenticeship program.
- Directs the DOE to develop and publish an online funding transparency tool by July 1, 2026. The tool must provide searchable historical funding data (by source, school district, or Florida College System institution) for the previous three fiscal years.
- Adds requirements for District Workforce Education Funding Steering Committee meetings, including public notice, opportunity for comment, publication of workpapers, and authorization for remote participation. It also moves the deadline for submitting the funding model to the Legislature from March 1 to at least two months before the start of the regular session.

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Vote: Senate 37-0; House 117-0

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SB 892 — Florida State University Election Law Center

by Senator Simon

The bill creates the Florida State University (FSU) Election Law Center within the FSU College of Law to serve as a nonpartisan, evidence-based academic center focused on election law. The center is authorized to conduct research, hold events, offer training and technical assistance, and support students pursuing careers in election law.

The bill defines “election law” broadly to include historical, empirical, and comparative aspects of voting rights, election administration, redistricting, campaign finance, election audits, election contests, and legal doctrines relevant to election-related litigation, among other topics.

The center’s goals include conducting rigorous, objective, and nonpartisan research; providing public education and training; supporting student education and experience in election law; and serving as a resource for election officials and the Legislature. The center is also directed to develop best practices and propose evidence-based reforms to strengthen Florida’s electoral system and public confidence in elections.

To fulfill its mission, the center may:

- Hire faculty and staff and develop election law courses.
- Host events such as workshops, lectures, and conferences.
- Conduct and publish election law research and develop public resources.
- Provide continuing education to attorneys, judges, election officials, and others.
- Assist government entities with election law inquiries.
- Offer scholarships, fellowships, and research assistantships to students.
- Partner with other entities to support its goals.

The Department of State, supervisors of elections, and related entities may share relevant data with the center, subject to confidentiality and security safeguards.

The bill requires the dean of the FSU College of Law to appoint a tenured faculty director, who must hire an executive director. The directors oversee the center’s programs, budget, staffing, and operations. The center’s work is protected by academic freedom and must promote intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity.

The center will be funded through legislative appropriations, charitable donations, and university funds.

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Vote: Senate 37-0; House 112-0

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CS/CS/HB 907 — Florida Institute for Pediatric Rare Diseases

by Health Care Budget Subcommittee; Education Administration Subcommittee; and Rep. Anderson and others (CS/CS/SB 1356 by Fiscal Policy Committee; Education Postsecondary Committee; and Senators Burton and Berman)

The bill codifies the Florida Institute for Pediatric Rare Diseases (Institute) within the Florida State University College of Medicine as a statewide resource to advance research, clinical care, and education related to pediatric rare diseases. The Institute’s responsibilities include:

- Conducting research on the causes, diagnosis, and treatment of pediatric rare diseases;
- Developing advanced diagnostic and genetic screening tools;
- Providing multidisciplinary clinical services and family support;
- Educating and training healthcare professionals; and
- Collaborating with research institutions, medical centers, advocacy organizations, and government agencies.

The bill creates the Sunshine Genetics Consortium (Consortium), a statewide network of researchers, geneticists, and physicians from Florida’s public universities and children’s hospitals. The Consortium is responsible for:

- Integrating genomic sequencing technologies;
- Advancing research in genetic and precision medicine;
- Leveraging artificial intelligence in genomics;
- Promoting clinician education and workforce development; and
- Securing external funding to support and expand genetic screening efforts.

The Consortium will be overseen by an oversight board chaired by the director of the Institute and composed of representatives from:

- Florida State University,
- University of Florida,
- University of South Florida,
- University of Miami,
- Florida International University,
- Nicklaus Children’s Hospital, and
- One member each appointed by of the Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The oversight board must meet at least twice annually and submit its first report on research and outreach activities to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by October 15, 2026.

The bill requires the Institute to establish the Sunshine Genetics Pilot Program, a five-year opt-in initiative offering newborn genetic screening, including whole genome sequencing, with parental consent. Under the program:

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- Clinical results must be provided to the newborn's healthcare practitioner and parent.
- The Institute must maintain a secure database of screening data; and
- Deidentified data must be shared with Consortium researchers under a data-sharing agreement.

The Institute must submit a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1, 2030, evaluating the pilot program's outcomes, including clinical impact and cost-effectiveness.

Implementation of the Institute, Consortium, and pilot program is contingent upon funding provided in the General Appropriations Act.

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Vote: Senate 37-0; House 116-0

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CS/CS/CS/HB 1105 — Education

by Education & Employment Committee; Higher Education Budget Subcommittee; Careers & Workforce Subcommittee; and Rep. Kincart Jonsson and others (CS/CS/SB 270 by Appropriations Committee on Higher Education; Education Postsecondary Committee; and Senator Burgess)

The bill revises multiple components of Florida’s K–20 education system, including charter school funding and accountability, high school graduation requirements, school bus safety, student device use, and postsecondary program eligibility.

Charter Schools

The bill establishes new funding and reporting requirements related to charter schools. The bill:

- Requires school districts to share any local government infrastructure surtax revenues with eligible charter schools based on enrollment, for levies approved on or after July 1, 2025.
- Requires school districts to provide to district charter schools information related to shared discretionary revenues.
- Requires use of a State Board of Education-adopted standard monitoring tool to monitor charter school performance.

The bill modifies charter school conversion procedures and establishes a new class of “job engine” charter schools focused on job creation and economic development. The bill:

- Requires that charter school conversion applications submitted by parents must originate from parents of students enrolled in the school to be converted and removes the requirement for demonstration of teacher support.
- Authorizes municipalities to apply to establish a job engine charter school, either as a new or conversion school, and allows such schools to give enrollment preference to children of employees of identified job-producing entities.
- Expands Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant eligibility to include job engine charter schools and clarifies eligibility for serving students in grades 6-12.

Private School Construction

The bill authorizes private schools located in counties with four incorporated municipalities to construct new facilities on property that housed specified facilities, such as a church or theater, under that facility’s preexisting zoning and land use designations without obtaining a special exception or a land use change and without complying with any mitigation requirements or conditions.

High School Instruction and Graduation Requirements

The bill modifies provisions related to high school instruction and graduation options. The bill:

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- Allows marching band to substitute for a performing arts or physical education credit, with exceptions.
- Eliminates the certificate of completion and requires the DOE to develop, by January 1, 2026, guidance about adult education and postsecondary options for students who do not earn a diploma.
- Requires the DOE to develop new applied, equivalent, and integrated courses to substitute for course requirements, and to incorporate work-based internships in graduation planning.
- Expands the Florida Seal of Fine Arts to include Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) arts courses.
- Requires the DOE to establish, by August 1, 2026, competencies for a mathematics endorsement for teachers, which must include specified topics.

Bright Futures Scholarship Program

The bill:

- Expands Bright Futures Scholarship eligibility to include students who graduate from non-Florida high schools while residing with a parent or guardian who retired from military or public service within 12 months prior to graduation.
- Authorizes use of the Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone designation, with conditions, to meet specified diploma eligibility requirements for the Florida Academic Scholars (FAS) award, beginning with students graduating in the 2025–2026 school year, but clarifies that earning the AP Capstone designation does not satisfy the requirements for earning a standard high school diploma.

Career and Professional Education

The bill makes several changes to the Florida Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act and associated Bright Futures scholarship programs. The bill:

- Updates references to reflect inclusion of the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars and Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars awards in the Bright Futures Scholarship Program.
- Requires CAPE academies and high schools offering career-themed courses to provide students the opportunity to earn the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award.
- Modifies eligibility for the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars award by:
 - Shifting the requirement from a 3-course sequential program of studies to 3 career and technical education courses; and
 - Requiring 75 hours of volunteer service, rather than the current 30, to satisfy the community service requirement for both Gold Seal Vocational and Gold Seal CAPE Scholars awards for students entering grade 9 in the 2024–2025 school year and thereafter.

Career Dual Enrollment Access

The bill requires dual enrollment agreements between career centers and the high schools they serve to specify how students will be notified of available transportation options and to address scheduling changes to increase access and participation. The bill also requires that dual enrollment articulation agreements between district school superintendents and public postsecondary institution presidents include any necessary scheduling changes.

Workforce Credential Program for Students with Disabilities

The bill creates a new program to help students with disabilities demonstrate job readiness through employer-recognized credentials. The bill:

- Establishes a DOE-led credentialing program for students with autism or cognitive disabilities, to be implemented by January 1, 2026.
- Requires validation by exceptional student education (ESE) instructors and collaboration with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) on a safety badge.
- Mandates annual reports through 2030, on participation and outcomes.

Student Wireless Communications Device Use

The bill establishes statewide restrictions on student cell phone use and creates a pilot to evaluate full-day prohibitions. The bill:

- Prohibits device use by elementary and middle school students during the school day.
- Prohibits high school use during instructional time, except as authorized, with teacher-designated storage areas and board-adopted usage zones.
- Provides exceptions for medical or educational needs.
- Requires the DOE to study full-day restrictions in high schools in six districts and submit a report with a model policy by December 1, 2026.

School Bus Trespass

The bill modifies enforcement of trespassing laws on school property by:

- Expanding the definition of “school” for purposes of the school trespass statute to include any vehicle operated, owned, or contracted by a school district for student transportation.
- Clarifying that verbal notice or a posted sign is sufficient to support prosecution for trespass.
- Authorizing arrest without a warrant based on probable cause for trespass on a school bus.

Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys

The bill revises the structure and operations of the Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys by:

- Transferring the council and administrative support from the Department of Legal Affairs to Florida Memorial University.

- Reducing the quorum requirement from 11 to 9 members, and allowing members participating via communications media technology to count toward a quorum and vote.

ABLE Program Governance

The bill authorizes the chair of the Florida Prepaid College Board to designate a representative to serve on the board of directors of Florida ABLE, Inc. It also revises the governance structure of Florida ABLE, Inc. by requiring its board to annually elect a chair from among its members, rather than designating the chair of the Florida Prepaid College Board to serve in that role.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 85-14