

Committee on Criminal Justice

CS/SB 7014 — Juvenile Justice

by Appropriations Committee and Criminal Justice Committee

The bill (Chapter 2023-59, L.O.F.) creates s. 985.619, F.S., to establish the Florida Scholars Academy within the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) developing a single-uniform education system that the DJJ will oversee and provide educational opportunities to students in the DJJ residential commitment programs.

The bill provides that:

- Each residential program site established, authorized, or designated by the DJJ shall be considered a campus of the Florida Scholars Academy.
- The DJJ shall enter into a contractual agreement with an education service provider to operate, provide, or supplement full-time instruction and instructional support services for students to earn a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma, enroll in a degree program at a Florida college or university, and earn industry-recognized credentials of value.
- The superintendent of the Florida Scholars Academy shall be approved by the Secretary of the DJJ and is responsible for the management and day-to-day operation of the Florida Scholars Academy.
- The Florida Scholars Academy shall be governed by a board of trustees comprised of the Secretary of the DJJ, and four board members appointed by the Governor. The bill outlines the powers and duties of the board.
- Subject to appropriation, funding may be provided for the operational and instructional services for students enrolled in the Florida Scholars Academy. The Florida Scholars Academy may receive all federal funds for which it is eligible.
- The Secretary shall prepare and submit a legislative budget request on behalf of the Florida Scholars Academy as part of the DJJ's legislative budget request. The request of funds may be for operation and fixed capital outlay, in accordance with ch. 216, F.S.
- The credit of the state may not be pledged under any circumstances on behalf of the Florida Scholars Academy.
- The Florida Scholars Academy shall have an annual financial audit of its accounts and records conducted by an independent auditor who is a certified public accountant licensed under ch. 473, F.S.

The bill amends s. 20.316, F.S., to provide that the Secretary of Juvenile Justice must oversee the establishment of the Florida Scholars Academy pursuant to s. 985.619, F.S. Additionally, the Secretary must identify the need for and recommend the funding and implementation of career and technical education programs and services.

The bill amends s. 1000.04, F.S., providing that the Florida Scholars Academy is a component of the delivery of public education within Florida's Early Learning-20 education system.

The bill provides that a recurring sum of \$12 million is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the DJJ for the Florida Scholars Academy.

These provisions were approved by the Governor and take effect July 1, 2023.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 118-0