

STORAGE NAME: h0577.ei.doc
DATE: March 13, 2001

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION INNOVATION
ANALYSIS**

BILL #: HB 577
RELATING TO: High School Grades
SPONSOR(S): Representative(s) Atwater, Jordan, Garcia, Negron, and Weissman
TIED BILL(S): None

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COUNCIL(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:

- (1) EDUCATION INNOVATION
 - (2) EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS
 - (3) COUNCIL FOR LIFELONG LEARNING
 - (4)
 - (5)
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I. SUMMARY:

HB 577 amends the statewide grading scale to lower the required ranges of percentage grades that equate to letter grades and grade points. The current statewide public high school grading scale is:

- Grade "A" is equivalent to 94% through 100%
- Grade "B" is equivalent to 85% through 93%
- Grade "C" is equivalent to 77% through 84%
- Grade "D" is equivalent to 70% through 76%
- Grade "F" is equivalent to 0% through 69%
- Grade "I" is equivalent to 0%

The new statewide public high school grading scale proposed by this bill is based on the 10 percentage point scale that follows:

- Grade "A" is equivalent to 90 through 100%
- Grade "B" is equivalent to 80 through 89%
- Grade "C" is equivalent to 70 through 79%
- Grade "D" is equivalent to 60 through 69%
- Grade "F" is equivalent to 0 through 59%
- Grade "I" is equivalent to 0%

This bill may increase the number of students eligible for state-funded merit based financial assistance programs. Should the number of students eligible for these programs increase, the state may have to increase funding for these programs or reduce the award amount per student.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. DOES THE BILL SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. <u>Less Government</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. <u>Lower Taxes</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. <u>Individual Freedom</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. <u>Personal Responsibility</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. <u>Family Empowerment</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

For any principle that received a "no" above, please explain:

B. PRESENT SITUATION:

The 1987 Legislature established a statewide grading scale for all public high schools (Chapter 87-329, Laws of Florida). The legislation was motivated by a perception of unfairness caused by school districts using different grading scales; therefore, students graduating from one district might receive an "A" that was based on a higher percentage than the "A" received by students graduating from another district in Florida. The 1987 Legislature established the following grading scale:

- Grade "A" was equivalent to 94% through 100%
- Grade "B" was equivalent to 85% through 93%
- Grade "C" was equivalent to 75% through 84%
- Grade "D" was equivalent to 65% through 74%
- Grade "F" was equivalent to 0% through 64%
- Grade "I" was equivalent to 0%

The 1997 Legislature amended the statewide grading scale by raising the minimum for a "C" grade from 75 percent to 77 percent, raising the minimum for a "D" grade from 65 percent to 70 percent, raising the maximum for a "D" grade from 74% to 76%, and raising the maximum for an "F" grade from 64 percent to 69 percent. Presently, Section 232.2463, Florida Statutes, reflects the 1997 changes to the statewide grading scale:

- Grade "A" is equivalent to 94% through 100%
- Grade "B" is equivalent to 85% through 93%
- Grade "C" is equivalent to 77% through 84%
- Grade "D" is equivalent to 70% through 76%
- Grade "F" is equivalent to 0% through 69%
- Grade "I" is equivalent to 0%

According to the Department of Education, most community colleges and universities in Florida use the scale proposed by HB 577.

C. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

This bill amends Section 232.2463, Florida Statutes, to provide a spread of 10 percentage points for each letter grade and, therefore, lowers the percentages for each letter grade. While the lowering of the percentage points, in effect, lowers the standards for each letter grade, this spread of 10 points appears to bring Florida's grading scale in line with the grading scale used by state universities and community colleges. This bill provides for a new statewide grading scale for public high schools as follows:

- Grade "A" is equivalent to 90% through 100%
- Grade "B" is equivalent to 80% through 89%
- Grade "C" is equivalent to 70% through 79%
- Grade "D" is equivalent to 60% through 69%
- Grade "F" is equivalent to 0% through 59%
- Grade "I" is equivalent to 0%

According to the Department of Education, proponents say this revision would make the high school grading scale equitable with the postsecondary scale in Florida and the high school grading scale used in other states. Thus, Florida high school students might be able to compete more equitably with students in other states for out-of-state university admission and scholarships. Changing the grading scale to a spread of 10 percentage points could be perceived as lowering standards.

D. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

Section 1: Amends Section 232.2463, Florida Statutes, relating to high school grades, to alter the required ranges of percentage grades that equate to letter grades and grade point averages, and to use a 10 point grading scale.

Section 2: Provides an effective date of July 1, 2001.

III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state revenues.

2. Expenditures:

See fiscal comments.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on local government expenditures.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

See fiscal comments.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

This bill may increase the number of students eligible for state-funded merit based financial assistance programs. Should the number of students eligible for these programs increase, the state may have to increase funding for these programs or reduce the award amount per student.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to expend funds to take action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

This bill does not reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

This bill does not appear to violate any constitutional authority.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not necessitate additional rulemaking authority.

C. OTHER COMMENTS:

This bill contains similar language to SB 990, which passed the Legislature during the 2000 Legislative Session, but was subsequently vetoed by the Governor. In his veto message, the Governor objected to the bill because it lowered grading standards and because the bill contained permissive language that allowed school districts to interpret percentage grades when teachers did not assign letter grades. The permissive language, thus, took Florida back to the problem that existed prior to the 1987 establishment of the statewide grading scale and back to the possibility that each school board could set its own grading scale. HB 577 does not contain the permissive language of SB 990. However, HB 577 does change the grading scale to a 10 point scale and appears to make Florida's grading scale similar to the grading scale used by universities and community colleges in Florida and similar to the grading scale used by other states.

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

None

STORAGE NAME: h0577.ei.doc

DATE: March 13, 2001

PAGE: 5

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION INNOVATION:

Prepared by:

Staff Director:

Elsie J. Rogers

Daniel Furman