By Senator Benacquisto

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to microfinance; creating Part XIV of ch. 288, F.S., consisting of ss. 288.993-288.9937, relating to microfinance programs; creating s. 288.993, F.S.; providing a short title; creating s. 288.9931, F.S.; providing legislative findings and intent; creating s. 288.9932, F.S.; defining terms; creating s. 288.9933, F.S.; authorizing the Department of Economic Opportunity to adopt rules to implement this part; creating s. 288.9934, F.S.; establishing the Microfinance Loan Program; providing a purpose; defining the term "lender"; requiring the Department of Economic Opportunity to contract with at least one entity to administer the program; requiring the lender to contract with the department to receive an award of funds; providing other terms and conditions to receiving funds; specifying fees authorized to be charged by the department and the lender; requiring the lender to remit the microloan principal collected from all microloans made with funds awarded to the lender; providing for contract termination; providing for auditing and reporting; requiring applicants for funds from the Microfinance Loan Program to meet certain qualifications; requiring the department to be quided by the 5-year statewide strategic plan and to advertise and promote the loan program; requiring the department to perform a study on methods and best practices to increase the availability of and access to credit in this state; prohibiting the pledging of

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the credit of the state; authorizing the department to adopt rules; creating s. 288.9935, F.S.; establishing the Microfinance Guarantee Program; defining the term "lender"; requiring the department to contract with Enterprise Florida, Inc., to administer the program; prohibiting Enterprise Florida, Inc., from guaranteeing certain loans; requiring borrowers to meet certain conditions before receiving a loan guarantee; requiring Enterprise Florida, Inc., to submit an annual report to the department; prohibiting the pledging of the credit of the state or Enterprise Florida, Inc.; creating s. 288.9936, F.S.; requiring the department to report annually on the Microfinance Loan Program; requiring the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to report on the effectiveness of the State Small Business Credit Initiative; creating s. 288.9937, F.S.; requiring the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to evaluate and report on the Microfinance Loan Program and the Microfinance Guarantee Program by a specified date; authorizing the executive director of the Department of Economic Opportunity to adopt emergency rules; providing an effective date.

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Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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Section 1. Part XIV of ch. 288, Florida Statutes, consisting of ss. 288.993-288.9937, is created and entitled

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"Microfinance Programs."

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Section 2. Section 288.993, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

288.993 Short title.—This part may be cited as the "Florida Microfinance Act."

Section 3. Section 288.9931, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

288.9931 Legislative findings and intent.-The Legislature finds that the ability of entrepreneurs and small businesses to access capital is vital to the overall health and growth of this state's economy; however, access to capital is limited by the lack of available credit for entrepreneurs and small businesses in this state. The Legislature further finds that entrepreneurs and small businesses could be assisted through the creation of a program that will provide an avenue for entrepreneurs and small businesses in this state to access credit. Additionally, the Legislature finds that business management training, business development training, and technical assistance are necessary to ensure that entrepreneurs and small businesses that receive credit develop the skills necessary to grow and achieve longterm financial stability. The Legislature intends to expand job opportunities for this state's workforce by expanding access to credit to entrepreneurs and small businesses. Furthermore, the Legislature intends to avoid duplicating existing programs and to coordinate, assist, augment, and improve access to those programs for entrepreneurs and small businesses in this state.

Section 4. Section 288.9932, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

288.9932 Definitions.—As used in this part, the term:

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(1) "Applicant" means an entrepreneur or small business requesting the assistance of a lender for services through the microloan program.

- (2) "Domiciled in this state" means authorized to do business in this state and located in this state.
- (3) "Entrepreneur" means an individual residing in this state who desires to assume the risk of organizing, managing, and operating a small business in this state.
- (4) "Network" means the Florida Small Business Development Center Network.
- (5) "Small business" means a business, regardless of corporate structure, domiciled in this state which employs 25 or fewer people and generated average annual gross revenues of \$1.5 million or less per year for the preceding 2 years. For the purposes of this part, the identity of a small business is not affected by name changes or changes in personnel.
- Section 5. Section 288.9933, Florida Statutes, is created to read:
- 288.9933 Rulemaking authority.—The department may adopt rules to implement this part.
- Section 6. Section 288.9934, Florida Statutes, is created to read:
  - 288.9934 Microfinance Loan Program. -
- (1) PURPOSE.—The Microfinance Loan Program is established in the department to make short-term, fixed-rate microloans in conjunction with business management training, business development training, and technical assistance to entrepreneurs and newly established or growing small businesses for start-up costs, working capital, and the acquisition of materials,

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supplies, furniture, fixtures, and equipment. Participation in
the loan program is intended to enable entrepreneurs and small
businesses to access private financing upon completing the loan
program.

- (2) DEFINITION.—As used in this section, the term "lender" means an entity that enters into a contract with the department pursuant to this section to administer the loan program.
  - (3) REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL.—
- (a) By December 1, 2014, the department shall contract with at least one but not more than three entities to administer the loan program for a term of 3 years. The department shall award the contract in accordance with the request for proposal requirements in s. 287.057 to an entity that:
  - 1. Is a corporation registered in this state;
  - 2. Does not offer checking accounts or savings accounts;
- 3. Demonstrates that its board of directors and managers are experienced in microlending and small business finance and development;
- 4. Demonstrates that it has the technical skills and sufficient resources and expertise to:
- <u>a. Analyze and evaluate applications by entrepreneurs and</u> small businesses applying for microloans;
- b. Underwrite and service microloans provided pursuant to this part; and
- <u>c. Coordinate the provision of such business management training, business development training, and technical assistance as required by this part.</u>
- 5. Demonstrates that it has established viable, existing partnerships with public and private, nonstate funding sources,

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economic development agencies, and workforce development and job referral networks; and

- 6. Demonstrates that it has a plan that includes proposed microlending activities under the loan program, including, but not limited to, the types of entrepreneurs and businesses to be assisted and the size and range of loans the lender intends to make.
- (b) To ensure that prospective lenders meet the requirements of subparagraphs (a) 2.-6., the request for proposal must require submission of the following information:
- 1. A description of the types of entrepreneurs and small businesses the lender has assisted in the past, and the average size and terms of loans made in the past to such entities;
- 2. A description of the experience of members of the board of directors and managers in the areas of microlending and small business finance and development;
- 3. A description of the lender's underwriting and credit policies and procedures, credit decisionmaking process, monitoring policies and procedures, and collection practices, and samples of any currently used loan documentation;
- 4. A description of the nonstate funding sources that will be used by the lender in conjunction with the awarded funds to make microloans pursuant to this section;
- 5. The lender's three most recent financial audits or, if no prior audits have been completed, the lender's three most recent unaudited financial statements; and
- 6. A conflict of interest statement from the lender's governing board certifying that no board member, employee, agent, or other person connected to or affiliated with the

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lender is receiving or will receive any type of compensation or remuneration from an entrepreneur or small business that has received or will receive funds from the loan program. The department may waive this requirement for good cause shown.

- (4) CONTRACT AND AWARD OF FUNDS.-
- (a) The selected lender must enter into a contract with the department for a term of 3 years to receive loan program funds.

  The amount of state funds used in any microloan made pursuant to this part may not exceed 50 percent of the total microloan amount. The department shall establish financial performance measures and objectives for the loan program and for the lender in order to maximize state funds.
- (b) Funds awarded may be used only to provide direct microloans to entrepreneurs and small businesses according to the limitations, terms, and conditions provided in this part.

  Except as provided in subsection (5), funds awarded may not be used to pay administrative costs, underwriting costs, servicing costs, or any other costs associated with providing microloans, business management training, business development training, or technical assistance.
- (c) The lender shall reserve 10 percent of the total award amount from the department to provide microloans pursuant to this part to entrepreneurs and small businesses that employ no more than five people and generate annual gross revenues averaging no more than \$250,000 per year for the last 2 years.
- (d)1. If the loan program is appropriated funding in a fiscal year, the department shall distribute such funds to the lender within 30 days of the execution of the contract by the department and the lender.

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2. The total amount of funding allocated to the lender in a fiscal year may not exceed the amount appropriated for the loan program in the same fiscal year. If the funds appropriated to the loan program in a fiscal year exceed the amount of funds awarded to the lender, such excess funds shall revert to the General Revenue Fund.

- (e) Within 30 days of executing its contract with the department, the lender must enter into a memorandum of understanding with the network:
- 1. For the provision of business management training, business development training, and technical assistance to entrepreneurs and small businesses that receive microloans under this part; and
- 2. To promote the program to underserved entrepreneurs and small businesses.
- (f) By September 1, 2014, the department shall review industry best practices and determine the minimum business management training, business development training, and technical assistance that must be provided by the network to achieve the goals of this part.
- (g) The lender must meet the requirements of this section, the terms of its contract with the department, and any other applicable state or federal laws to be eligible to receive funds in any fiscal year. The contract with the lender must specify any sanctions for the lender's failure to comply with the contract or this part.
  - (5) FEES.—
- (a) Except as provided in this section, the department may not charge fees or interest or require collateral from the

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lender. The department may charge a fee or interest of no greater than 80 percent of the Federal Funds Rate as of the date specified in the contract for funds awarded under the loan program. The department shall require as collateral an assignment of the notes receivable of the microloans made by the lender under the loan program.

- (b) The lender is entitled to retain a one-time administrative servicing fee of 1 percent of the total award amount to offset the administrative costs of underwriting and servicing microloans made pursuant to this part. This fee may not be charged to or paid by microloan borrowers participating in the loan program. Except as provided in subsection (7)(c), the lender may not be required to return this fee to the department. The lender may not charge fees or costs except as authorized in this paragraph.
  - (6) REPAYMENT OF AWARD FUNDS.—
- (a) After collecting interest and any fees or costs
  permitted under this part in satisfaction of all microloans made
  pursuant to this part, the lender shall remit to the department
  the microloan principal collected from all microloans made with
  funds awarded under this part. Repayment of microloan principal
  to the department may be deferred by the department for a period
  not to exceed 6 months; however, the lender may not provide a
  microloan under this part after the contract with the department
  expires.
- (b) If for any reason the lender is unable to make repayments to the department in accordance with the contract, the department may accelerate maturity of the awarded funds and demand repayment in full. In this event, or if a lender violates

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this part or the terms of its contract, the lender shall surrender to the department possession of all collateral required pursuant to subsection (5). Any loss or deficiency greater than the value of the collateral may be recovered by the department from the lender.

- (c) In the event of a default as specified in the contract, termination of the contract, or violation of this section, the state may, in addition to any other remedy provided by law, bring suit to enforce its interest.
- (d) A microloan borrower's default does not relieve the lender of its obligation to repay an award to the department.
  - (7) CONTRACT TERMINATION.—
- (a) The lender's contract with the department may be terminated by the department, and the lender required to immediately return all state funds, including any fees it would otherwise be entitled to retain pursuant to subsection (5) for that fiscal year, upon a finding by the department that:
- 1. The lender has, within the previous 5 years, participated in a state-funded economic development program in this or any other state and was found to have failed to comply with the requirements of that program;
- 2. The lender is currently in material noncompliance with any statute, rule, or program administered by the department;
- 3. The lender or any member of its board of directors, officers, partners, managers, or shareholders has pled no contest or been found guilty, regardless of whether adjudication was withheld, of any felony or any misdemeanor involving fraud, misrepresentation, or dishonesty;
  - 4. The lender failed to meet or agree to the terms of the

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contract with the department or failed to meet this part; or

- 5. The department finds that the lender provided fraudulent or misleading information to the department.
- (b) The lender's contract with the department may be terminated by the department at any time for any reason upon 30 days' notice by the department. In such a circumstance, the lender shall return all awarded funds to the department within 60 days of the termination. However, the lender may retain any fees it has collected pursuant to subsection (5).
- (c) The lender's contract with the department may be terminated by the lender at any time for any reason upon 30 days' notice by the lender. In such a circumstance, the lender shall return all awarded funds to the department, including any fees it has retained or would otherwise be entitled to retain pursuant to subsection (5), within 30 days of the termination.
  - (8) AUDITS AND REPORTING. -
- (a) The lender shall annually submit to the department a financial audit performed by an independent certified public accountant and an operational performance audit for the most recently completed fiscal year. Both audits must indicate whether any material weakness or instances of material noncompliance are indicated in the audit.
- (b) The lender shall submit quarterly reports to the department as required by s. 288.9935(3).
- (c) The lender shall make its books and records related to the loan program available to the department or its designee for inspection upon reasonable notice.
  - (9) ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION.—
  - (a) To be eligible for a microloan, an applicant must, at a

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minimum, be an entrepreneur or small business located in this state.

- (b) Microloans may not be made if the direct or indirect purpose or result of granting the microloan would be to:
- 1. Pay off any creditors of the applicant, including the refund of a debt owed to a small business investment company organized pursuant to 15 U.S.C. s. 681;
- 2. Provide funds, directly or indirectly, for payment, distribution, or as a microloan to owners, partners, or shareholders of the applicant's business, except as ordinary compensation for services rendered;
- 3. Finance the acquisition, construction, improvement, or operation of real property which is, or will be, held primarily for sale or investment;
  - 4. Pay for lobbying activities; or
- 5. Replenish funds used for any of the purposes specified in subparagraphs 1.-4.
- (c) A microloan applicant shall submit a written application in the format prescribed by the lender and shall pay an application fee not to exceed \$50 to the lender.
- (d) The following minimum terms apply to a microloan made by the lender:
  - 1. The amount of a microloan may not exceed \$50,000;
- 2. A borrower may not receive more than \$75,000 per year in total microloans;
- 3. A borrower may not receive more than two microloans per year and may not receive more than five microloans in any 3-year period;
  - 4. The proceeds of the microloan may be used only for

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349 startup costs, working capital, and the acquisition of
350 materials, supplies, furniture, fixtures, and equipment;

- 5. The period of any microloan may not exceed 1 year;
- 6. The interest rate may not exceed the prime rate published in the Wall Street Journal as of the date specified in the microloan, plus 1000 basis points;
  - 7. All microloans must be personally guaranteed;
- 8. The borrower must participate in business management training, business development training, and technical assistance as determined by the lender in the microloan agreement;
- 9. The borrower shall provide such information as required by the lender, including monthly job creation and financial data, in the manner prescribed by the lender; and
- 10. The lender may collect fees for late payments which are consistent with standard business lending practices and may recover costs and fees incurred for any collection efforts necessitated by a borrower's default.
- (e) The department may not review microloans made by the lender pursuant to this part prior to approval by the lender.
- (10) STATEWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN.—In implementing this section, the department shall be guided by the 5-year statewide strategic plan adopted pursuant to s. 20.60(5). The department shall promote and advertise the loan program by, among other things, cooperating with government, nonprofit, and private industry to organize, host, or participate in seminars and other forums for entrepreneurs and small businesses.
- (11) STUDY.—By December 31, 2014, the department shall commence or commission a study to identify methods and best

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practices that will increase access to credit to entrepreneurs
and small businesses in this state. The study must also explore
the ability of, and limitations on, Florida nonprofit
organizations and private financial institutions to expand
access to credit to entrepreneurs and small businesses in this
state.

(12) CREDIT OF THE STATE.—With the exception of funds appropriated to the loan program by the Legislature, the credit of the state may not be pledged. The state is not liable or obligated in any way for claims on the loan program or against the lender or the department.

Section 7. Section 288.9935, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

## 288.9935 Microfinance Guarantee Program. -

- (1) The Microfinance Guarantee Program is established in the department. The purpose of the program is to stimulate access to credit for entrepreneurs and small businesses in this state by providing targeted guarantees to loans made to such entrepreneurs and small businesses. Funds appropriated to the program must be reinvested and maintained as a long-term and stable source of funding for the program.
- (2) As used in this section, the term "lender" means a financial institution as defined in s. 655.005.
- (3) The department must enter into a contract with Enterprise Florida, Inc., to administer the Microfinance Guarantee Program. In administering the program, Enterprise Florida, Inc., must, at a minimum:
- (a) Establish lender and borrower eligibility requirements in addition to those provided in this section;

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(b) Determine a reasonable leverage ratio of loan amounts guaranteed to state funds; however, the leverage ratio may not exceed 3 to 1;

- (c) Establish reasonable fees and interest;
- (d) Promote the program to financial institutions that provide loans to entrepreneurs and small businesses in order to maximize the number of lenders throughout the state which participate in the program;
- (e) Enter into a memorandum of understanding with the network to promote the program to underserved entrepreneurs and small businesses;
- (f) Establish limits on the total amount of loan guarantees a single lender can receive;
- (g) Establish an average loan guarantee amount for loans guaranteed under this section;
- (h) Establish a risk-sharing strategy to be employed in the event of a loan failure; and
- (i) Establish financial performance measures and objectives for the program in order to maximize state funds.
- (4) Enterprise Florida, Inc., is limited to providing loan guarantees for loans with total loan amounts of at least \$50,000 and not more than \$250,000. A loan guarantee may not exceed 50 percent of the total loan amount.
- (5) Enterprise Florida, Inc., may not guarantee a loan if the direct or indirect purpose or result of the loan would be to:
- (a) Pay off any creditors of the applicant, including the refund of a debt owed to a small business investment company organized pursuant to 15 U.S.C. s. 681;

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(b) Provide funds, directly or indirectly, for payment, distribution, or as a loan to owners, partners, or shareholders of the applicant's business, except as ordinary compensation for services rendered;

- (c) Finance the acquisition, construction, improvement, or operation of real property which is, or will be, held primarily for sale or investment;
  - (d) Pay for lobbying activities; or
- (e) Replenish funds used for any of the purposes specified in paragraphs (a) through (d).
- (6) To be eligible to receive a loan guarantee under the Microfinance Guarantee Program, a borrower must, at a minimum:
- (a) Be an entrepreneur or small business located in this state;
  - (b) Employ 25 or fewer people;
- (c) Generate average annual gross revenues of \$1.5 million or less per year for the last 2 years; and
- (d) Meet any additional requirements established by Enterprise Florida, Inc.
- (7) By October 1 of each year, Enterprise Florida, Inc., shall submit a complete and detailed annual report to the department for inclusion in the department's report required under s. 288.9935. The report must, at a minimum, provide:
- (a) A comprehensive description of the program, including an evaluation of its application and guarantee activities, recommendations for change, and identification of any other state programs that overlap with the program;
- (b) An assessment of the current availability of and access to credit for entrepreneurs and small businesses in this state;

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(c) A summary of the financial and employment results of the entrepreneurs and small businesses receiving loan guarantees, including the number of full-time equivalent jobs created as a result of the guaranteed loans and the amount of wages paid to employees in the newly created jobs;

- (d) Industry data about the borrowers, including the six-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code;
- (e) The name and location of lenders that receive loan quarantees;
- (f) The amount of state funds received by Enterprise
  Florida, Inc.;
  - (g) The number of loan guarantee applications received;
- (h) The number, duration, location, and amount of guarantees made;
- (i) The number and amount of guaranteed loans outstanding,
  if any;
- (j) The number and amount of guaranteed loans with payments
  overdue, if any;
- (k) The number and amount of guaranteed loans in default, if any;
  - (1) The repayment history of the guaranteed loans made; and
- (m) An evaluation of the program's ability to meet the
  financial performance measures and objectives specified in
  subsection (3).
- (8) The credit of the state or Enterprise Florida, Inc., may not be pledged except for funds appropriated by law to the Microfinance Guarantee Program. The state is not liable or obligated in any way for claims on the program or against

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any;

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494 Enterprise Florida, Inc., or the department. 495 Section 8. Section 288.9936, Florida Statutes, is created 496 to read: 497 288.9936 Annual report of the Microfinance Loan Program.-498 (1) The department shall include in the report required by 499 s. 20.60(10) a complete and detailed annual report on the 500 Microfinance Loan Program. The report must include: 501 (a) A comprehensive description of the program, including 502 an evaluation of its application and funding activities, 503 recommendations for change, and identification of any other 504 state programs that overlap with the program; 505 (b) The financial institutions and the public and private organizations and individuals participating in the program; 506 507 (c) An assessment of the current availability of and access 508 to credit for entrepreneurs and small businesses in this state; 509 (d) A summary of the financial and employment results of 510 the entities receiving microloans; 511 (e) The number of full-time equivalent jobs created as a 512 result of the guaranteed loans and the amount of wages paid to 513 employees in the newly created jobs; 514 (f) The number and location of prospective lenders that 515 responded to the department request for proposals; (q) The amount of funds awarded to the lender; 516 517 (h) The number of microloan applications received by the 518 lender; 519 (i) The number, duration, and location of microloans made 520 by the lender; 521 (j) The number and amount of microloans outstanding, if

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(k) The number and amount of microloans with payments overdue, if any;

- (1) The number and amount of microloans in default, if any;
- (m) The repayment history of the microloans made;
- (n) The repayment history and performance of funding awards;
- (o) An evaluation of the program's ability to meet the financial performance measures and objectives specified in s. 288.9934; and
- (p) A description and evaluation of the technical assistance and business management and development training provided by the network pursuant to its memorandum of understanding with the lender.
- (2) The department shall submit the report provided to the department from Enterprise Florida, Inc., pursuant to 288.9935(7) for inclusion in the department's annual report required under s. 20.60(10).
- (3) The department shall require at least quarterly reports from the lender. The lender's report must include, at a minimum, information required by the department as specified in subsection (1). The report must also include the number of microloan applications received, the number of microloans made, the amount and interest rate of each microloan made, the amount of technical assistance or business development and management training provided, the number of full-time equivalent jobs created as a result of the microloans, the amount of wages paid to employees in the newly created jobs, the six-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code associated with the borrower's business, and the borrower's locations.

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Accountability shall conduct a study to evaluate the effectiveness and return on investment of the State Small

Business Credit Initiative operated in this state pursuant to 12

U.S.C. ss. 5701 et seq. The office shall submit a report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by January 1, 2015.

Section 9. Section 288.9937, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

288.9937 Evaluation of programs.—The Office of Program
Policy Analysis and Government Accountability shall analyze,
evaluate, and determine the economic benefits, as defined in s.
288.005, of the first 3 years of the Microfinance Loan Program
and the Microfinance Guarantee Program. The analysis must also
evaluate the number of jobs created, the increase or decrease in
personal income, and the impact on state gross domestic product
from the direct, indirect, and induced effects of the state's
investment. The analysis must also identify any inefficiencies
in the programs and provide recommendations for changes to the
programs. The office shall submit a report to the President of
the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by
January 1, 2018. This section expires January 31, 2018.

Section 10. (1) The executive director of the Department of Economic Opportunity is authorized, and all conditions are deemed to be met, to adopt emergency rules pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54(4), Florida Statutes, for the purpose of implementing this act.

(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the emergency rules adopted pursuant to subsection (1) remain in

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<u>e</u> f	fect for 6 months after adoption and may be renewed	during the
pe	endency of procedures to adopt permanent rules addres	ssing the
	bject of the emergency rules.	
su	(3) This section shall expire October 1, 2015.	
	Section 11. This act shall take effect July 1, 20	11/1
	section ii. inis act shall take effect outy i, 20	) 1 4 •
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