

HB 533

2016

1                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to the Arthur G. Dozier School for  
3           Boys; directing the Department of State to preserve  
4           historical resources, records, archives, and  
5           artifacts, to create and maintain a memorial to  
6           victims, and to continue research into events that  
7           occurred and development of evidence of abuse at the  
8           school; authorizing payments to families of children  
9           buried at the school for specified purposes; providing  
10          an appropriation; providing for the carryforward and  
11          use of unexpended appropriations; providing an  
12          effective date.

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14          WHEREAS, the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys operated from  
15          1900 until its closing in 2011 by the state after allegations of  
16          abuse were confirmed by separate investigations by the  
17          Department of Law Enforcement in 2010 and the Civil Rights  
18          Division of the United States Department of Justice in 2011, and  
19          WHEREAS, official records indicated that 32 graves at the  
20          facility had been dug between 1914 and 1952, and

21          WHEREAS, a University of South Florida forensic  
22          investigation found that there were no records of where those  
23          who died there are buried, and that a second cemetery is likely  
24          to exist, and

25 WHEREAS, exhumations of bodies began in August 2013, and  
 26 the excavations yielded remains of 55 bodies, which is almost  
 27 twice the number official records had indicated, and

28 WHEREAS, one of the bodies exhumed during the forensic  
 29 investigation was that of a child who the Arthur G. Dozier  
 30 School for Boys had reported missing since 1940, and

31 WHEREAS, representatives of children formerly held at the  
 32 Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys have estimated that there could  
 33 be 100 more bodies buried on the school grounds, and

34 WHEREAS, the families of many children whose bodies have  
 35 been exhumed lack the resources to properly reinter those  
 36 children near their own families, and

37 WHEREAS, the State of Florida recognizes an equitable  
 38 obligation to help the families of children formerly buried at  
 39 the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys to reinter the bodies of  
 40 those children, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

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44 Section 1. The Department of State is directed to preserve  
 45 historical resources, records, archives, and artifacts, to  
 46 create and maintain a memorial to victims, and to continue  
 47 research into events at the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys and  
 48 development of evidence of abuse that may have taken place  
 49 there.

50 Section 2. The Department of State is authorized and

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51 directed to pay \$5,000 to the family of each child buried at the  
52 Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys for the purpose of reintering  
53 the bodies of said children in a cemetery of each family's  
54 choice. The Department of State shall identify and locate  
55 eligible families within 6 months after the effective date of  
56 this act and shall provide the burial funding to the eligible  
57 families no later than December 31, 2017.

58 Section 3. For fiscal year 2016-2017, \$1.5 million is  
59 appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to implement this  
60 act. Funds appropriated to the Department of State that are not  
61 used by the department during fiscal year 2016-2017 shall be  
62 carried forward by the department for the purpose of reintering  
63 the bodies of children as provided in this act until the period  
64 for locating eligible families under this act has expired.

65 Section 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.