

By Senator Soto

14-00578-16

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1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to the Language Education Assistance
3 Program; creating s. 1009.894, F.S.; establishing the
4 Language Education Assistance Program within the
5 Department of Education; requiring the program to
6 provide grants up to a specified amount to certain
7 participating institutions to provide free English
8 classes to certain students; specifying student
9 eligibility requirements; requiring students to
10 maintain a specified grade point average to retain
11 eligibility in the program; requiring a participating
12 institution to report certain information to the
13 department by specified dates; providing an effective
14 date.

15
16 WHEREAS, Florida has recently experienced a large influx of
17 legal immigrants from Cuba and Puerto Rico, among other regions,
18 and

19 WHEREAS, Florida's official language is English, and
20 WHEREAS, Florida's society and economy will greatly benefit
21 if these recent legal immigrants receive help in becoming
22 proficient in English, NOW, THEREFORE,

23
24 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

25
26 Section 1. Section 1009.894, Florida Statutes, is created
27 to read:

28 1009.894 Language Education Assistance Program.-

29 (1) The Language Education Assistance Program (LEAP) is
30 established within the Department of Education and shall be
31 administered pursuant to this section and the rules of the State
32 Board of Education.

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33 (2) LEAP shall assist recent legal immigrants to this state
34 in learning English by awarding \$30 million in grants, as
35 provided in the General Appropriations Act, to participating
36 state universities, Florida College System institutions, or
37 nonpublic colleges or universities to provide free English
38 classes to students who meet all of the following requirements:

39 (a) Must have arrived in this state within the preceding 3
40 years.

41 (b) Must have a low proficiency in English.

42 (c) Must be a citizen or legal resident of the United
43 States.

44 (d) Must be 18 years of age or older.

45 (e) Must be accepted at a state university, a Florida
46 College System institution, or a nonpublic college or university
47 that participates in the program.

48 (3) To retain program eligibility, a student must maintain
49 a grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in all
50 English classes taken at the institution.

51 (4) A participating institution shall report passage rates
52 and any other information requested by the department by January
53 15 and June 15 of each year to assess the success of the
54 program.

55 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2016.