

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education

BILL: SB 252

INTRODUCER: Senator Steube

SUBJECT: State Employee Higher Education Fee Waivers

DATE: January 12, 2018

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Bouck	Graf	ED	Pre-meeting
2.			AHE	
3.			AP	

I. Summary:

SB 252 modifies the tuition and fee waiver benefit that is extended to the employees of the State of Florida. Specifically, the bill modifies from 6 credit hours per term to 18 credit hours per calendar year the requirement that state universities and Florida College System institutions waive tuition and fees for state employees, on a space-available basis.

The bill takes effect May 1, 2018.

II. Present Situation:

Florida law¹ requires each state university and Florida College System institution to waive tuition and fees for state employees to enroll for up to 6 credit hours of courses per term on a space-available basis, subject to approval by an employee's agency head or the equivalent.

Employees of the state include employees of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government, except for persons employed by a state university.²

¹ Section 1009.265(1), F.S. The state employee fee waivers program is also known as the State Employee Tuition Waiver Program or the State of Florida Employee Educational Assistance Program. Department of Management Services, *State Employee Tuition Waiver Program, Frequently Asked Questions* (Sept. 2016), available at https://www.dms.myflorida.com/content/download/129121/803063/2016-008_-_State_Employee_Tuition_Waiver_QandA_09-28-16.pdf, at 2.

² Section 1009.265(5), F.S. Only full time employees of the state are eligible to receive the tuition and fee waiver. Section 8(3)(a)1., ch. 2017-70, L.O.F.

Guidelines for the state employee tuition waiver program³ clarify that the maximum educational assistance available under the program is 18 credit hours per plan year. A plan year is defined as the calendar year (i.e., January 1 – December 31).⁴

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 252 modifies the tuition and fee waiver benefit that is extended to the employees of the State of Florida. Specifically, the bill modifies from 6 credit hours per term to 18 credit hours per calendar year, the requirement that state universities and Florida College System institutions waive tuition and fees for state employees, on a space-available basis. Such modification may provide flexibility to state employees to enroll in more than 6 credit hours per term, still within the current 18 credit hour maximum for the calendar year.

Accordingly, state employees who are close to meeting their graduation requirements may be able to accelerate their time to degree by increasing their course workload per academic term or terms, as applicable, subject to space availability.⁵

The bill also provides that the modification to 18 credit hours per calendar year applies to any academic term beginning on or after May 1, 2018. However, for a state employee with tuition and fees waived for an academic term beginning on or after January 1, 2018, through April 20, 2018, those credit hours count toward the 18 credit hour maximum for the 2018 calendar year.

The bill takes effect May 1, 2018.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

³ Department of Management Services, *State Employee Tuition Waiver Program, Frequently Asked Questions* (Sept. 2016), available at https://www.dms.myflorida.com/content/download/129121/803063/2016-008_-_State_Employee_Tuition_Waiver_QandA_09-28-16.pdf, at 3.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Board of Governors, *2018 Agency Bill Analysis for SB 252* (Oct. 24, 2017), at 2.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 1009.265 of the Florida Statutes.

This bill creates one undesignated section of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.