

**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.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Judiciary

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BILL: CS/SB 582

INTRODUCER: Judiciary Committee and Senators Rodrigues and Baxley

SUBJECT: Parental Rights

DATE: March 4, 2021

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Davis	Cibula	JU	Fav/CS
2.			ED	
3.			RC	

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**Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

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**I. Summary:**

CS/SB 582 establishes the “Parents’ Bill of Rights.” The bill provides that the state, its political subdivisions, any other governmental entity, or other institution may not infringe upon the fundamental rights of a parent to direct the upbringing, education, health care, and mental health of a minor child. If those entities infringe upon a parent’s fundamental right, they must demonstrate that the action is reasonable and necessary to achieve a compelling state interest, and the action must be narrowly tailored and not otherwise served by less restrictive means.

The bill enumerates a list of rights that a parent possesses in order to direct the education of his or her child and be informed about the child’s educational programs. The bill also requires the school district to promote parental involvement in the public school system by providing access to the child’s studies and instructional materials while also recognizing a parent’s right to withdraw the child from objectionable portions of the school’s curriculum.

The bill also requires a parent’s permission before a health care practitioner may provide services, prescribe medicine to the child, or perform a medical procedure, unless otherwise provided by law. The bill provides a misdemeanor penalty for a health care practitioner or similar person who violates the health care provisions and subjects these persons to disciplinary actions.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2021.

## II. Present Situation:

### Constitutional Rights of Parents

#### *Parental Guarantees in the United States Constitution*

The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides that no State shall:

[D]eprive any person of life, *liberty*, or property, without due process of law.

The U.S. Supreme Court has recognized that the Due Process Clause guarantees more than simply fair process. The Due Process Clause contains an additional component that provides a heightened level of protection against any government interference when certain fundamental rights and liberty interests are involved. In *Troxel v. Granville*,<sup>1</sup> a case to determine the scope of grandparent visitation rights when pitted against a parent's rights, the Court noted that the Fourteenth Amendment "liberty interest" at issue – the interest that parents had in the care, custody, and control over their children – was perhaps the oldest of any fundamental liberty interest that the Court had recognized.

The Court reflected back to a 1923 decision,<sup>2</sup> when it determined that the "liberty" interest protected by the Due Process Clause included the right of parents to "establish a home and bring up children" and "to control the education of their own."

The Court also noted as early as 1925<sup>3</sup> that a child was not simply the creature of the State and that the people who nurture the child and direct the child's destiny have the right, and the high duty, to recognize and prepare the child for additional obligations. In 1944, the Court confirmed the right of parents to direct the upbringing of their children when it stated:

It is cardinal with us that the custody, care and nurture of the child reside first in the parents, whose primary function and freedom include preparation for obligations the state can neither supply nor hinder.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, in recounting the history of parental authority in 1979, the Court stated, "We have recognized on numerous occasions that the relationship between parent and child is constitutionally protected."<sup>5</sup>

#### *Parental Guarantees in the State Constitution*

Similarly, the Florida Supreme Court has determined that the fundamental liberty interest in parenting one's child "is protected by both the Florida and federal constitutions. In Florida, it is specifically protected by our privacy provision."<sup>6</sup> The Court also noted that the state

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<sup>1</sup> *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57 (2000).

<sup>2</sup> *Troxel* quoting *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390, 399, 401 (1923).

<sup>3</sup> *Troxel* quoting *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510, 534-535 (1925).

<sup>4</sup> *Troxel* quoting *Prince v. Massachusetts*, 321 U.S. 158, 166 (1944).

<sup>5</sup> *Troxel* quoting *Parham v. J.R.* 442 U.S. 584, 602 (1979).

<sup>6</sup> *Beagle v. Beagle*, 678 So. 2d 1271, 1275 (Fla. 1996).

constitutional privacy provision contained in article I, section 23 affords greater protection than that of the federal constitution.

The Court wrote in *Winfield v. Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering*<sup>7</sup> that the standard of review that must be used to evaluate whether a state has intruded into a citizen's private life is the "compelling state interest standard." Under that test, the burden of proof is on the state to justify its intrusion on privacy. The burden can be met by the state if it demonstrates that the regulation being challenged serves a compelling state interest and the regulation accomplishes its goal by using the least intrusive means.<sup>8</sup>

## **Statutory Rights of Parents of Students**

### ***Mandatory Attendance***

All children who turn 6 years by February 1 of any school year and have not attained the age of 16 years are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term.<sup>9</sup> Parents have the option to comply with school attendance laws by enrolling the student in a public school; a parochial, religious, or denominational school; a private school; a home education program; or a private tutoring program.<sup>10</sup> The district school superintendent may authorize certificates of exemptions from school attendance requirements in certain situations.<sup>11</sup> A student who holds a valid certificate of exemption is exempt from attending school although the certificate expires at the end of the school year.<sup>12</sup>

### ***School District Obligations***

A parent of a K-12 public school student is afforded many statutory rights.<sup>13</sup> Each school district is required to:

- Provide a parent with specific information about his or her child's educational progress, comprehensive information about opportunities for involvement in the child's education, and a framework for building and strengthening partnerships among parents and school district personnel.<sup>14</sup>
- Afford a parent the opportunity to enroll his or her child in instruction for exceptional students or challenge a district school board's determination of the child's eligibility for a gifted or special education program.<sup>15</sup>
- Establish a policy enabling a parent to object to and contest specific instructional materials.<sup>16</sup>
- Notify a parent and obtain his or her consent before a public school student may be referred to or offered contraceptive services at school facilities or travel in a privately owned motor vehicle to a school function.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Winfield v. Division of Pari-Mutual Wagering*, 477 So. 2d 544, 548 (Fla. 1985).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Section 1003.21(1)(a)1, F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Section 1002.20(2)(b), F.S.

<sup>11</sup> Section 1003.21(3), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> Section 1002.20, F.S.

<sup>14</sup> Section 1002.23, F.S.

<sup>15</sup> Section 1003.57, F.S.

<sup>16</sup> Section 1006.28(2)(a)2. and 3., F.S.

<sup>17</sup> Sections 1002.20(3)(e) and (22)(c), F.S.

### ***Parents' Rights to Exempt Their Child from Activities***

No educational agency or institution may collect, obtain, or retain information on the political affiliation, voting history, religious affiliation, or biometric information of a student, parent, or sibling of the student.<sup>18</sup> In addition, a parent has the right to exempt his or her child from:

- A health examination on religious grounds.<sup>19</sup>
- School immunization requirements on religious or certain health grounds.<sup>20</sup>
- Performing surgery or dissection in a biological science class.<sup>21</sup>
- Receiving instruction on reproductive health or any disease, including HIV/AIDS.<sup>22</sup>
- Reciting the pledge of allegiance.<sup>23</sup>
- Reciting the Declaration of Independence.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Access to Records and Information***

The rights of students and their parents with respect to education records created, maintained, or used by public educational institutions and agencies are protected under federal law.<sup>25</sup>

Specifically, a parent of a K-12 student has the right to:<sup>26</sup>

- Receive accurate and timely information regarding the student's academic progress and must be informed of ways a parent can help a student succeed in school.
- Access the student's education records, including the right to inspect and review those records.
- Challenge the content of education records in order to ensure that the records are not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise a violation of privacy or other rights.
- Privacy with respect to the student's records and reports.
- Receive annual notice of the parent's rights with respect to education records.
- Receive report cards on a regular basis that clearly depict and grade the student's academic performance in each class or course, the student's conduct, and the student's attendance.<sup>27</sup>
- Receive reports at regular intervals of the academic progress and other needed information regarding the student.
- Receive timely notification of any verified report of a substance abuse violation by the student.<sup>28</sup>
- Access information relating to the school district's policies for promotion or retention, including high school graduation requirements.<sup>29</sup>
- Access information relating to student eligibility to participate in extra-curricular activities.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Section 1002.222(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>19</sup> Section 1002.20(3)(a), F.S.

<sup>20</sup> Section 1002.20(3)(b), F.S.

<sup>21</sup> Section 1002.20(3)(c), F.S.

<sup>22</sup> Section 1002.20(3)(d), F.S.

<sup>23</sup> Section 1002.20(12), F.S.

<sup>24</sup> Section 1003.421(4), F.S.

<sup>25</sup> Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. s. 1232g; and s. 1002.22, F.S.

<sup>26</sup> Sections 1002.20, 1002.22(2), and 1006.28, F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Section 1002.20(14), F.S.

<sup>28</sup> Section 1002.20(3)(g).

<sup>29</sup> Section 1008.25, F.S.

<sup>30</sup> Section 1006.195(1), F.S.

- Access information relating to the state public education system, standards, and requirements.<sup>31</sup>
- Access, review, object to, and challenge instructional and supplemental education materials.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Parental Consent for Health Care***

Any medical decision made to address a student's needs is a matter between the student, the student's parent, and a competent health care professional chosen by the parent.<sup>33</sup> The right to consent to medical treatment for a child resides with a parent who has the legal responsibility to maintain and support the child.<sup>34</sup> District school boards may adopt policies to ensure an appropriate response in emergency situations and the provision of first aid and emergency medical care.<sup>35</sup>

When parental consent cannot be obtained, a licensed physician or osteopathic physician may render emergency medical care or treatment to an injured minor or a minor who is suffering from an acute illness, disease or condition if delay would endanger the minor's health or physical well-being. This provision only applies when parental consent cannot be obtained because:

- The minor's condition has rendered him or her unable to identify his or her parents, guardian, or legal custodian and the information is not known to the person accompanying the minor to the hospital; or
- The parents, guardian, or legal custodian cannot be immediately located by telephone at their residence or business.

The hospital must notify the parent or legal guardian as soon as possible after the emergency medical care or treatment is rendered. The hospital records must contain the reason why the consent was not initially obtained and must contain a statement by the attending physician that the emergency care was necessary the minor's health or physical well-being.<sup>36</sup>

The statutes provide a list of people, in order of priority, who may consent to the medical care or treatment of a minor when, after a reasonable attempt, a person with the authority to give consent cannot be contacted by a medical provider and notice to the contrary has not been given to the provider. In order of priority those people are:

- A health care surrogate.
- The stepparent.
- The grandparent of the minor.
- An adult brother or sister of the minor.
- An adult aunt or uncle of the minor.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Section 1002.23, F.S.

<sup>32</sup> Sections 1002.20(19) and 1006.28, F.S.

<sup>33</sup> Section 1006.0625, F.S.

<sup>34</sup> *O'Keefe v. Orea*, 731 So. 2d 680, 686 (Fla. 1st DCA 1998).

<sup>35</sup> Section 1001.43, F.S.

<sup>36</sup> Section 743.064, F.S.

<sup>37</sup> Section 743.0645, F.S. This section does not apply to a minor who has been committed to the Department of Children and Families or the Department of Juvenile Justice.

The treating provider's records must contain documentation that a reasonable attempt was made to contact the person who has the authority to consent to the minor's care.<sup>38</sup>

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

#### **Sections 1 and 2 – The Parents' Bill of Rights**

The bill creates a new chapter in the Florida Statutes, chapter 1014, which is entitled "Parents' Bill of Rights" and contains sections 1014.01 – 1014.06, F.S.

#### **Section 3 – Legislative Findings and Definition of "Parent"**

Section 3 contains the legislative findings and a definition. In these provisions, the Legislature finds that:

- It is a fundamental right of parents to direct the upbringing, education, and care of their minor children;
- Important information relating to a minor child should not be withheld, either inadvertently or purposefully, from a parent, including information regarding the minor child's health, well-being, and education, while the child is in the custody of the school district; and
- It is necessary to establish a consistent mechanism for parents to be notified of information relating to the health and well-being of their minor children.

A parent is defined to be a person who has legal custody of a minor child as a natural or adoptive parent or a legal guardian.

#### **Section 4 – Prohibiting Actions that Infringe on Parental Rights**

The bill provides that the following entities may not infringe on the fundamental rights of a parent to direct the upbringing, education, health care, and mental health of a parent's minor child:

- The state;
- State political subdivisions;
- Any other governmental entity; or
- Any other institution.

If any of these entities infringes on a parent's fundamental right, it must demonstrate that the action is reasonable and necessary to achieve a compelling state interest and the action is narrowly tailored and is not otherwise served by a less restrictive means. This "compelling interest" standard is the highest standard of review and is discussed above in the Present Situation under "Parental Guarantees in the State Constitution."

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<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

## Section 5 – Parental Rights

### *Rights Reserved to the Parent of a Minor Child*

This section establishes that all parental rights are reserved to the parent of a minor child “without obstruction or interference” by any of the above-referenced governmental entities. Those rights include, but are not limited to the right to:

- Direct the education and care of the minor child.
- Direct the upbringing and the moral or religious training of the minor child.
- Apply to enroll the minor child in a public school or, as an alternative to public education, a private school, religious school, a home education program, or other available option as authorized by law.
- Access and review all school records relating to the minor child.
- Make health care decisions for the minor child, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
- Access and review all medical records of the minor child, unless prohibited by law or if the parent is the subject of an investigation of a crime committed against the minor child and a law enforcement agency or official requests that the information not be released.
- Consent in writing before a biometric scan of the minor child is made, shared, or stored.
- Consent in writing before any record of the minor child’s blood or deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is created, stored, or shared, except as required by general law or authorized pursuant to a court order.
- Consent in writing before the state or any of its political subdivisions makes a video or voice recording of the minor child unless the recording is made during or as part of a court proceeding, or is made as part of a forensic interview in a criminal or Department of Children and Families investigation, or is to be used solely for the following purposes:
  - A safety demonstration, including the maintenance of order and discipline in the common areas of a school or on student transportation vehicles;
  - A purpose related to a legitimate academic or extracurricular activity;
  - A purpose related to regular classroom instruction;
  - Security or surveillance of buildings or grounds; or
  - A photo identification card.
- Be notified promptly if an employee of the state, any of its political subdivisions, any other governmental entity, or any other institution suspects that a criminal offense has been committed against his or her minor child, unless the incident has first been reported to a law enforcement agency or the Department of Children and Families and notifying the parent would impede the investigation.
- Consent in writing before his or her minor child’s grades are released to a law enforcement officer of law enforcement agency by an agency or institution as defined in s. 1002.22, F.S., unless the release is authorized by s. 1002.221, F.S., and in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. s. 1232g.

The bill clarifies that the rights expressed in this section do not:

- Authorize a parent of a minor child to engage in conduct that is unlawful or to abuse or neglect his or her minor child in violation of general law;
- Condone, authorize, approve, or apply to a parental action or decision that would end life;

- Prohibit a court of competent jurisdiction, law enforcement officer, or employee of a government agency that is responsible for child welfare from acting in his or her official capacity within the reasonable and prudent scope of his or her authority; or
- Prohibit a court of competent jurisdiction from issuing an order that is otherwise permitted by law.

### ***Discipline***

Any employee of any of the above-referenced entities who encourages or coerces, or attempts to encourage or coerce a minor child to withhold information from his or her parent may be subject to disciplinary action.

### ***Inalienable Rights***

The final subsection states that a parent of a minor child has inalienable rights that are more comprehensive than those enumerated in this section, unless those rights have been legally waived or terminated. The bill also provides that the chapter does not prescribe all of a parent's rights and unless required by law, a parent's rights may not be limited or denied. Additionally, the chapter may not be construed to apply to a parental action or decision that would end life.

## **Section 6 – School District Notifications on Parental Rights**

The bill requires each school board, in consultation with parents, teachers, and administrators, to develop and then adopt a policy that promotes parental involvement in the public school system. The policy must include:

- A plan, pursuant to s. 1002.23, F.S., for parental participation to improve parent and teach cooperation in areas such as homework, school attendance, and discipline.
- A program, pursuant to s. 1002.20(19)(b), F.S., for a parent to learn about the minor child's course of study, including the source of any supplemental education materials.
- Procedures for a parent to object to instructional materials and other materials used in the classroom. The objections may be based on beliefs regarding morality, sex, or religion or the belief that the materials or activities are harmful. Instructional materials are defined in s. 1006.28(2), F.S.,<sup>39</sup> and may include other materials used in the classroom, but are not limited to, textbooks, workbooks and worksheets, handouts, software, applications, and any digital media available to students.
- Procedures, pursuant to s. 1002.20(3)(d), F.S. for a parent to withdraw the minor child from any portion of the school district's plan as required under s. 1003.42(2)(n), F.S., which relates to sex education or instruction in acquired immune deficiency syndrome education or any instruction regarding sexuality if the parent provides a written objection to the child's participation. The procedures must provide for a parent to be notified in advance of the course content so that he or she may withdraw the child from those portions of the course.

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<sup>39</sup> "Instructional materials" means items having intellectual content that by design serve as a major tool for assisting in the instruction of a subject or course. These items may be available in bound, unbound, kit, or package form and may consist of hardbacked or softbacked textbooks, electronic content, consumables, learning laboratories, manipulatives, electronic media, and computer courseware or software. A publisher or manufacturer providing instructional materials as a single bundle shall also make the instructional materials available as separate and unbundled items, each priced individually. A publisher may also offer sections of state-adopted instructional materials in digital or electronic versions at reduced rates to districts, schools, and teachers. Section 1006.29(2), F.S.



- Procedures, pursuant to s. 1006.195(1)(a), F.S., for a parent to learn about the nature and purpose of clubs and activities at the child's school, including those that are extracurricular or part of the school curriculum.
- Procedures for a parent to learn about parental rights and responsibilities under general law, including all of the following:
  - The right to opt the minor child out of any portion of the school district's comprehensive health education required by statute that relates to sex education instruction in acquired immune deficiency syndrome education or any instruction regarding sexuality.
  - A plan to disseminate information about school choice options, including open enrollment.
  - The right of a parent to exempt the minor child from immunizations.
  - The right of a parent to review statewide, standardized assessment results.
  - The right to enroll the minor child in gifted or special education programs.
  - The right of a parent to inspect school district instructional materials.
  - The right to of a parent to access information relating to the school district's policies for promotion or retention, including high school graduation requirements.
  - The right of a parent to receive a school report card and be informed of the child's attendance requirements.
  - The right of a parent to access information relating to the state public education system, state standards, report card requirements, attendance requirements, and instructional materials requirements.
  - The right of a parent to participate in parent-teacher association and organizations sanctioned by a district school board or the Department of Education.
  - The right of a parent to opt out of any district-level data collection relating to the minor child that is not required by law.

The information required in this section may be provided by the district school board electronically or posted on its website.

A parent may request, in writing, from the district school superintendent, the information required under this section. The superintendent must provide the information to the parent within 10 days. If the superintendent denies a parent's request for information or does not respond to the parent's request within 10 days, the parent may appeal the denial to the district school board. The parent's appeal must be placed on the agenda for the board's next public meeting. If it is too late for a parent's appeal to be placed on the agenda at the next meeting, it must be included on the agenda for the following meeting.

### **Section 7 – Parental Consent for Health Care Services**

Unless the law provides otherwise a health care practitioner, as defined in s. 456.001, F.S., or someone employed by a health care practitioner, may not provide, solicit, or arrange to provide health care services or prescribe medicine to the minor child without first obtaining written consent from the parent.

A provider,<sup>40</sup> as defined in s. 408.803, F.S., may not allow a medical procedure to be performed on a minor child in its facility without first obtaining written consent from the parent.

This section does not apply to services provided by a clinical laboratory unless the services are delivered through a direct encounter with the minor at the clinical laboratory facility.

***Exception***

The provisions of this section which addresses parental consent for health care services do not apply to abortion, which is governed by chapter 390.

***Penalties***

A health care practitioner or other person who violates this section is subject to disciplinary action pursuant to s. 408.813 or s. 456.072, F.S., sections 8 and 9 of the bill, and commits a first degree misdemeanor which is punishable by up to 1 year imprisonment and a fine not to exceed \$1,000.<sup>41</sup>

**Section 8 – Administrative Fines and Violations**

The Agency for Health Care Administration may impose an administrative fine for a violation of the provisions regarding the parental consent for health care services. The violation is an unclassified violation and the fine may not exceed \$500 for each violation.

**Section 9 – Grounds for Discipline**

The Department of Health may take disciplinary action against someone who fails to comply with the parental consent requirements for health care services. The disciplinary actions range from refusing to certify a license or certify the license with restrictions, suspending or permanently revoking a license, restricting a license, imposing an administrative fine not to exceed \$10,000 for each offense, issuing a reprimand or letter of concern, placing the licensee on probation, taking corrective action, imposing an administrative fine for violations of patient rights, requiring the refund of fees billed and collected, and requiring that the practitioner to undergo remedial education.<sup>42</sup>

**Section 10 – Effective Date**

The act takes effect July 1, 2021.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

<sup>40</sup> Section 408.803(11), F.S., defines a provider to mean any activity, service, agency, or facility regulated by the agency and listed in s. 408.802, F.S.

<sup>41</sup> Sections 775.082(4)(a) and 775.083(1)(d), F.S.

<sup>42</sup> Section 456.072(2), F.S.

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None identified.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

None.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

The Legislature may wish to revise the bill to clarify the intent of newly added s. 1014.04 (1)(k), F.S. The new provision prohibits releasing a minor student's grades to a law enforcement officer or agency without prior parental consent unless authorized by s. 1002.221, F.S. Existing s. 1002.221(2)(c), F.S., however, permits the release of a student's education records without the written consent of the student or parent to parties to an interagency agreement among the Department of Juvenile Justice, the school, law enforcement authorities, and others.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 408.813 and 456.072.

This bill creates the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1014.01, 1014.02, 1014.03, 1014.04, 1014.05, and 1014.06.

**IX. Additional Information:**

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**  
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

**CS by Judiciary Committee on March 2, 2021:**

An additional provision is added to the parental rights section of the bill. A parent must consent in writing before his or her minor child's grades may be released to a law enforcement officer or law enforcement agency unless that release is authorized in accordance with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.