

**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 Governmental Oversight and Accountability

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BILL: SB 758

INTRODUCER: Senator Diaz

SUBJECT: Fiduciary Duty of Care for Appointed Public Officials and Executive Officers

DATE: March 2, 2021

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

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Ponder	McVaney	GO	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			CA	
3.			AP	

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**I. Summary:**

SB 758 creates part IX of chapter 112, F.S., to establish an express fiduciary duty of care for appointed public officials and executive officers acting on behalf of governmental entities.

The bill makes a statement of legislative findings providing that:

- Appointed public officials and executive officers acting on behalf of governmental entities owe a fiduciary duty to the entities they serve; and
- Codifying a fiduciary duty of care will require that appointed public officials and executive officers stay adequately informed of affairs, perform due diligence, perform reasonable oversight, and practice fiscal responsibility regarding decisions involving corporate and proprietary commitments on behalf of a governmental entity.

The bill provides definitions for relevant terms including, but not limited to, “appointed public official,” “executive officer,” “general counsel” and “governmental entity.”

The bill establishes training requirements for each appointed public official and executive officer to begin on January 1, 2022. The bill specifies that a minimum of five hours of board governance training must be completed for each term served. The bill requires the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR), by January 1, 2022, to either (1) contract for or approve a board governance training program that includes an affordable web-based electronic media option; or (2) publish a list of approved training providers. The bill grants rulemaking authority to the DBPR.

The bill allows governmental entities with annual revenues of less than \$300,000 to use in-house counsel or the in-house counsel for the unit of government that created the entity, to provide the training as long as it comports with the minimum course content established by DBPR rule. The bill provides three exceptions to the training requirement for (1) appointed public officials and executive officers of governmental entities whose annual revenues are less than \$100,000; (2)

appointed officials who hold elected office in another capacity; or (3) appointed public officials or executive officers who complete board governance training involving fiduciary duties or responsibilities which is required under any other state law. The bill requires appointed public officials and executive officers to provide written certification of compliance with the board governance training.

The bill requires the appointment of an executive officer or general counsel to be subject to approval by a majority vote of the governing body of the governmental entity. The bill specifies that all legal counsel employed by a governmental entity must represent the legal interests and positions of the governmental entity and not the interest of any individual or employee of the governmental entity, unless such representation is directed by the governmental entity.

The bill will have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the private sector to the extent entities are selected by DBPR to provide training. The bill will have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the local and state government. The DPBR may experience a slightly negative impact in complying with the bill's board governance training program requirements. Additionally, local governments will experience an indeterminate negative impact to the extent its appointed public officials and executive officers are subject to the training requirement.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2021.

## II. Present Situation:

### Chapter 112, F.S.

Chapter 112, F.S., contains general provisions governing public officers and employees. Part III of ch. 112, F.S., establishes a Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees that sets forth standards of conduct required for public officers and employees in the performance of their official duties.<sup>1</sup> To enforce the Code of Ethics, the legislature created the Commission on Ethics (Commission).<sup>2</sup>

Section 112.3145, F.S., requires state and local officers and specified state employees to file a statement of financial interest with the Commission. This section defines a "local officer" to include persons elected to office in any political subdivision of the state and every person who is appointed to fill a vacancy for an unexpired term in such an elective office.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, the term includes *appointed* members of specified boards. Specifically, s. 112.3145(1)(a)2., F.S., provides that "public officer" means:

- Any appointed member of any of the following boards, councils, commissions, authorities, or other bodies of any county, municipality, school district, independent special district, or other political subdivision of the state:
  - a. The governing body of the political subdivision, if appointed;
  - b. A community college or junior college district board of trustees;

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<sup>1</sup> Sections 112.311-112.3261, F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 112.320, F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Section 112.3145(1)(a)1., F.S.

- c. A board having the power to enforce local code provisions;
- d. A planning or zoning board, board of adjustment, board of appeals, community redevelopment agency board, or other board having the power to recommend, create, or modify land planning or zoning within the political subdivision, except for citizen advisory committees, technical coordinating committees, and such other groups who only have the power to make recommendations to planning or zoning boards;
- e. A pension board or retirement board having the power to invest pension or retirement funds or the power to make a binding determination of one's entitlement to or amount of a pension or other retirement benefit; or
- f. Any other appointed member of a local government board who is required to file a statement of financial interests by the appointing authority or the enabling legislation, ordinance, or resolution creating the board.

A “state officer” is defined to mean:

- Any elected public officer, excluding those elected to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, not covered elsewhere in this part and any person who is appointed to fill a vacancy for an unexpired term in such an elective office;
- An *appointed* member of each board, commission, authority, or council having statewide jurisdiction, excluding a member of an advisory body;
- A member of the Board of Governors of the State University System or a state university board of trustees, in Chancellor and Vice Chancellors of the State University System, and the president of a state university; or
- A member of the judicial nominating commission for any district court of appeal or any judicial circuit.<sup>4</sup>

## **Fiduciary Duty of Care**

### ***A Fiduciary Relationship and Breach of Fiduciary Duty***

Black’s Law Dictionary defines “fiduciary relationship” as:

A relationship in which one person is under a duty to act for the benefit of another on matters within the scope of the relationship. Fiduciary relationships—*such as...principal-agent...*—require an unusually high degree of care. Fiduciary relationships usu[ally] arise in one of four situations: (1) when one person places trust in the faithful integrity of another, who as a result gains superiority or influence over the first, (2) when one person assumes control and responsibility over another, (3) *when one person has a duty to act for or give advice to another on matters falling within the scope of the relationship*, or (4) *when there is a specific relationship that has traditionally been recognized as involving fiduciary duties*, as with a lawyer and a client or a stockbroker and a customer.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Section 112.3145(1)(c), F.S.

<sup>5</sup> BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY, 744 (10th ed. 2014).

As explained by the Florida Supreme Court, a fiduciary relationship exists “where confidence is reposed by one party and trust is accepted by the other, or where confidence has been acquired or abused.”<sup>6</sup> In Florida, a breach of fiduciary duty is considered a tort.<sup>7</sup> To state a claim for breach of fiduciary duty, a plaintiff must show three elements: (1) the existence of a fiduciary duty, (2) the breach of that duty, and (3) damages resulting from the breach.<sup>8</sup>

A fiduciary relationship may be either express or implied.<sup>9</sup> “Express fiduciary relationships are created by contract, such as principal/agent or can be created by legal proceedings, as in the case of a guardian/ward.”<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, an implied in law fiduciary relationship may be found based on the “specific factual situation surrounding the transaction and the relationship of the parties.”<sup>11</sup> Under Florida law, for an implied fiduciary relationship to exist, “there must be substantial evidence showing some dependency by one party and some undertaking by the other party to advise, counsel, and protect the weaker party.”<sup>12</sup>

The most basic duty of a fiduciary is the duty of loyalty, which obligates the fiduciary to put the interests of the beneficiary first, ahead of the fiduciary’s self-interest, and to refrain from exploiting the relationship for the fiduciary’s personal benefit.<sup>13</sup> In addition to a duty of loyalty, a fiduciary also owes a duty of care to carry out responsibilities in an informed and considered manner and to act as an ordinary prudent person would act in the management of his own affairs. For example, under s. 518.11(1)(a), F.S., a trustee has the duty to invest or manage assets of an estate prudently – “as a prudent investor would considering the purposes, terms, distribution requirements, and other circumstances of the trust.”<sup>14</sup>

### ***Fiduciary Obligations owed by Public Officials***

The origins of fiduciary duty for public or political officials dates back to English common law. At first, common law did not distinguish among associations; English common law did not treat the City of London different from the East India Company.<sup>15</sup> Both were considered creatures of

<sup>6</sup> *Doe v. Evans*, 814 So. 2d 370 (Fla. 2002).

<sup>7</sup> *Doe v. Evans*, 814 So.2d 370, 374 (Fla. 2002)(“ [a] fiduciary who commits a breach of his duty as a fiduciary is guilty of tortious conduct to the person for whom he should act. . . [t]he liability is not dependent solely upon an agreement or contractual relation between the fiduciary and the beneficiary but results from the relation.”) (quoting Restatement (Second) of Torts § 874 cmt. B(1979)).

<sup>8</sup> *Gracey v. Eaker*, 837 So.2d 348, 353 (Fla.2002).

<sup>9</sup> *Capital Bank v. MVB, Inc.*, 644 So.2d 515, 518 (Fla. 3d DCA 1994).

<sup>10</sup> *MediaXposure Ltd. v. Harrington*, No. 8:11-CV-410-T-TGW, 2012 WL 1805493, at \*6 (M.D.Fla.2012)

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* See e.g., *Fla. Software Svs., Inc. v. Columbia/HCA Healthcare Corp.*, 46 F.Supp.2d 1276, 1286 (M.D.Fla.1999) (stating that “Florida law recognizes fiduciary relationships arising out of joint ventures.”); *Askew v. Allstate Title & Abstract Co., Inc.*, 603 So.2d 29, 31 (Fla. 2d DCA 1992) (stating that “the title agent has a fiduciary duty to both the buyer and the seller ....”); *Cohen v. Hattaway*, 595 So.2d 105, 107 (Fla. 5th DCA 1992) (stating that “[c]orporate directors and officers owe a fiduciary obligation to the corporation and its shareholders and must act in good faith and in the best interest of the corporation.”).

<sup>12</sup> *Lanz v. Resolution Trust Corp.*, 764 F.Supp. 176, 179 (S.D.Fla.1991); See *Maszal v. City of Miami*, 971 So.2d 803, 809 (Fla. 3d DCA 2007).

<sup>13</sup> See Restatement (Third) of Agency §8.01 (2006); see also *Capital Bank*, 644 So. 2d at 520.

<sup>14</sup> See *United States v. White Mountain Apache Tribe*, 537 U.S. 465, 475 (2003) (a fiduciary administering trust property owes a fundamental common law duty as trustee to preserve and maintain trust assets; “the standard of responsibility is ‘such care and skill as a man of ordinary prudence would exercise in dealing with his own property’”) (citations omitted).

<sup>15</sup> William Blackstone famously grouped together as “lay corporations” towns, the “trading companies of London,” and colleges and universities. See 1 WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, COMMENTARIES ON THE LAWS OF ENGLAND \*470-71.

associational or corporate law, and were referred to as bodies politic, bodies corporate, or corporations.<sup>16</sup> This English common law viewpoint was brought to the New World, and cities, like the Virginia Company of London, were established with this concept in mind.<sup>17</sup> Since these English common law origins, U.S. association law has increasingly divided private and public associations and the concept of fiduciary duty, where the corporation is now deemed private (having more fiduciary duties) and the governmental entity public (having less fiduciary duty).<sup>18</sup>

Today, “[p]ublic officials inherently owe a fiduciary duty to the public to make governmental decisions in the public’s best interest.”<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, a public official’s fiduciary duty is a general one rather than a specific one.<sup>20</sup> Stated differently, a public official owes a fiduciary duty to the constituents he or she serves generally, but not to each individual constituents he or she serves.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, Florida recognizes that public officials occupy a fiduciary relationship with respect to public property in that such property is held in trust.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Proprietary/Corporate Functions vs. Governmental/Policy Functions***

Public officials acting on behalf of governmental entities have two distinct categories of functions when serving residents in their official capacity. Propriety functions encompass actions when a governmental entity is behaving as a property owner or conducting commercial transactions. For example, Florida courts hold that the construction, maintenance, and repair of streets in a municipality is a corporate or proprietary function because the governmental entity is operating as a property owner.<sup>23</sup>

Alternatively, when a governmental entity exercises powers regarding the location and installation of traffic control devices such as stop signs, automatic traffic lights, etc., courts hold that public officials are performing a governmental function by making a particular decision on traffic policy.<sup>24</sup> The difference between proprietary and governmental functions is important because the common law fiduciary duty of care does not arise from governmental functions. Policy decisions by public officials are largely shielded from judicial review through sovereign immunity.<sup>25</sup> Whereas, proprietary decisions in governmental entity management have historically been subject to due care considerations<sup>26</sup> and requirements that officials act “as prudent persons ought to allow themselves in the management of their own affairs.”<sup>27</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at 467.

<sup>17</sup> See Judith M. Diamondstone, Philadelphia’s Municipal Corporation, 1701-1776, 90 PA. MAG.

HIST. & BIOGRAPHY 183, 183 (1966).

<sup>18</sup> See *People v. Morris*, 13 Wend. 325, 337 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1835) (“The distinction between public and private corporations is strongly marked, and, as to all essential purposes, they correspond only in name.”).

<sup>19</sup> *U.S. v. deVegter*, 198 F.3d 1324, 1328 (11<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1999).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> See *Maryelin Albertov v. Housing Authority of the City of Fort Lauderdale et al.*, 2018 WL 7108227 (Fla.Cir.Ct.) See also *Nussbaum v. Weeks*, 214 Cal. App. 3d 1580, 1598-99 (1990) (holding that the general manager of a water district, as a public official, owed a fiduciary duty to the residents of the water district generally, but not to each resident specifically).

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., *City of Coral Gables v. Hepkins*, 144 So. 385(Fla. 1932).

<sup>23</sup> See *Gordon v. City of West Palm Beach*, 321 So.2d 78 (Fla. 4th DCA 1975).

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> See OSBORNE M. REYNOLDS, JR., LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAW 815-16 (3d ed. 2009); *id.* at 816 n.11 (collecting cases).

<sup>26</sup> See 2 RESTATEMENT (THIRD) OF AGENCY § 8.08 (AM. LAW INST. 2006).

<sup>27</sup> *Tuggle v. Mayor of Atlanta*, 57 Ga. 114, 117 (1876).

### ***Taxpayer Standing to Bring a Claim against a Governmental Entity***

It is well settled in Florida that – absent a constitutional challenge – a taxpayer may bring suit against a governmental entity only upon a showing of special injury,<sup>28</sup> which is distinct from that suffered by other taxpayers.<sup>29</sup> Thus, a private citizen is precluded from filing a taxpayer complaint to challenge government action unless the private citizen alleges and proves a “special injury,” which is an injury that is different from that of the general public.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Florida law permits a very limited – if nonexistent – remedy for a breach of a duty of care in the public official context as opposed to private law. Even if a plaintiff could establish that a public official owed them a special fiduciary duty, they would still have to prove that the official caused them to suffer a special injury – that is the essence of the current breach of fiduciary duty claims for public officials.

### ***Fiduciary Obligations owed by Private Trustees and Corporate Officials***

The Uniform Trust Code stipulates that trustees must “administer the trust as a prudent person would.”<sup>31</sup> Trust law defines prudence as “reasonable care, skill, and caution.”<sup>32</sup> This requirement has been interpreted as a traditional negligence standard in tort law.<sup>33</sup> While reviewing the actions of a trustee, the prudence analysis prioritizes whether the decision-making processes used by a trustee are reasonable and whether the overall substance of the decision is reasonable as a whole.<sup>34</sup>

Corporations and other business entities utilize a lower fiduciary duty of care than trust law. In the corporate context, as prescribed by the Model Business Corporation Act (MBCA)<sup>35</sup> (which Florida’s Business Corporation Act<sup>36</sup> mirrors), a breach of the fiduciary duty of care occurs when a corporate official acts with bad-faith, gross negligence, or recklessness.<sup>37</sup> This relaxed standard of care is largely due to the application of the business judgment rule. Under this doctrine, courts will not review decisions of corporate officials as being right or wrong, good or bad, because business operations and market transactions are inherently risky, and corporate officials are obligated to engage in this risk on behalf of a corporation to provide benefits to stakeholders.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>28</sup> This has been termed the “Special injury rule” or “Rickman rule.”

<sup>29</sup> [Dep’t of Rev. v. Markham](#), 396 So. 2d 1120, 1121 (Fla. 1981); see also [Rickman v. Whitehurst](#), 74 So. 205, 207 (Fla. 1917) (Generally, for a taxpayer to have standing to challenge a government’s compliance with the law, the taxpayer must establish a “special damage to his individual interests, distinct from that of every other inhabitant”); [School Bd. of Volusia Co. v. Clayton](#), 691 So. 2d 1066, 1068 (Fla. 1997) (requirement of special injury for taxpayer standing is “consistent with long established precedent”).

<sup>30</sup> [N. Broward Hosp. Dist. v. Fornes](#), 476 So.2d 154 (Fla.1985); [Rickman v. Whitehurst](#), 73 Fla. 152, 74 So. 205 (1917).

<sup>31</sup> UNIF.TR.CODE § 804 (UNIF. LAW COMM’N 2000).

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> See John H. Langbein, *The Contractarian Basis of the Law of Trusts*, 105 YALE L.J. 625, 656 (1995)

<sup>34</sup> 3 RESTATEMENT (THIRD) OF TRS. § 87 cmt. c (AM. LAW INST. 2007).

<sup>35</sup> MODEL BUS. CORP. ACT (AM. BAR ASS’N 2016); see also *Corp. Laws Comm., Am. Bar Ass’n Bus. Law Section, Model Business Corporation Act* (2016 Revision), 72 BUS. LAW. 421, 421 (2017) (reporting that the model act has been “substantially adopted by a majority of the states”).

<sup>36</sup> Chapter 607, F.S.

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., [AmeriFirst Bank v. Bomar](#), 757 F. Supp. 1365, 1376 (S.D. Fla. 1991) (requiring a showing of “abuse of discretion, fraud, bad faith or illegality” to rebut the presumption of good faith).

<sup>38</sup> WILLIAM T. ALLEN ET AL., COMMENTARIES AND CASES ON THE LAW OF BUSINESS ORGANIZATION 263 (2d ed. 2007).

Instead, the fiduciary duty of care in the corporate decision-making context is reviewed for the processes utilized, and the degree of diligence exercised by officials in coming to and effectuating a decision.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Department of Business and Professional Regulation**

The DBPR, through various divisions, regulates and licenses businesses and professionals in Florida. The divisions established under DBPR include:

- The Division of Administration;
- The Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco;
- The Division of Certified Public Accounting;
- The Division of Drugs, Devices, and Cosmetics;
- The Division of Florida Condominiums, Timeshares, and Mobile Homes;
- The Division of Hotels and Restaurants;
- The Division of Pari-mutuel Wagering;
- The Division of Professions;
- The Division of Real Estate;
- The Division of Regulation;
- The Division of Technology; and
- The Division of Service Operations.<sup>40</sup>

The Department, through its various divisions, oversees and administers certain training programs related to the professions it regulates. Additionally, under the Condominium Act, Chapter 718, and the Cooperative Act, Chapter 719, F.S., require the Division of Florida Condominiums, Timeshares and Mobile Homes (Division) to provide training and educational programs for condominium and cooperative association board members and unit owners.<sup>41</sup> The training may include web-based electronic media and live training seminars in various locations throughout the state. The Division is permitted to review and approve education and training programs for board members and unit owners offered by providers and must maintain and make available a current list of approved programs and providers.<sup>42</sup>

Elected and appointed members and directors of the board of a residential condominium association must certify in writing, within 90 days after being elected or appointed, to the secretary of the association that he or she:

- Has read the association's declaration of condominium, articles of incorporation, bylaws and current written policies;
- Will work to uphold such documents and policies to the best of his or ability; and

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<sup>39</sup> See *Smith v. Van Gorkom*, 488 A.2d 858 (Del. Supr. 2009); “[i]n the famous case *Smith v. Van Gorkom*, a corporate board approved a sale of the corporation after a two-hour meeting, relying “solely upon” the oral presentations of three board members, an internal study of the merger, a legal opinion, and the board’s own experience. The Supreme Court of Delaware held that by not considering all material information reasonably available, the board had violated its fiduciary duty of care in that ‘specific context of a proposed merger.’” Max Schanzbach and Nadav Shoked, *Reclaiming Fiduciary Law for the City*, 70 Stan. L. Rev. 565, 615, 616 (February 2018).

<sup>40</sup> Section 20.165, F.S.

<sup>41</sup> See Sections 718.501 and 719.501, F.S.

<sup>42</sup> Section 718.501(1)(j), F.S.

- Will faithfully discharge his or her fiduciary responsibility to the association’s members.<sup>43</sup>

To meet the requirements of an educational curriculum for a condominium education program under s. 718.112(2)(d)4.b., F.S., the program must cover at least four of the following topics:

- Budgets and reserves.
- Elections.
- Financial reporting.
- Condominium operations.
- Records maintenance, including unit owner access to records.
- Dispute resolution.
- Bids and contracts.<sup>44</sup>

Each condominium association which operates more than two units must pay the Division an annual fee of \$4 for each residential unit in the condominiums operated by the association.<sup>45</sup> The association is assessed a penalty of 10 percent of the amount due, if the fee is not paid by March 1.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, until the amount due, plus any penalty, is paid, the association will not have legal standing to maintain or defend any action in the courts.<sup>47</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

**Section 1** creates part IX of chapter 112, F.S., consisting of s. 112.89, F.S., to be entitled “Fiduciary Duty of Care for Appointed Public Officials and Executive Officers.”

**Section 2** creates s. 112.89, F.S., to establish a fiduciary duty of care for appointed public officials and executive officers acting to the applicable entity in accordance with law he or she serves. The bill makes a statement of legislative findings providing that:

- Appointed public officials and executive officers acting on behalf of governmental entities owe a fiduciary duty to the entities they serve; and
- Codifying a fiduciary duty of care will require that appointed public officials and executive officers stay adequately informed of affairs, perform due diligence, perform reasonable oversight, and practice fiscal responsibility regarding decisions involving corporate and proprietary commitments on behalf of a governmental entity.

The bill includes the following definitions:

- “Appointed public official” means either a “local officer” as defined in s. 112.3145(1)(a)2., F.S., or a “state officer” as defined in ss. 112.3145(1)(c)2. and 3., F.S.,<sup>48</sup>
- “Department” means the DBPR;

<sup>43</sup> Section 718.112(2)(d)4.b., F.S.

<sup>44</sup> Rule 61B-19.001, F.A.C.

<sup>45</sup> Section 718.501(2)(a), F.S.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*

<sup>48</sup> Approximately 16,602 individuals report under these provisions (approximately 15,250 reporting under subsection (1)(a)2.; approximately 1,139 reporting under subsection (1)(c)2., and approximately 213 under subsection (1)(c)3.) Email from Kerrie Stillman, Deputy Executive Director, Florida Commission on Ethics (February 26, 2021)(on file with the Senate Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee).



- “Executive officer” means the chief executive officer of a governmental entity to which an appointed public official is appointed;
- “General counsel” means the chief legal counsel of a governmental entity to which an appointed public official or an executive officer is appointed or hired.
- “Governmental entity” means the entity, or a board, a council, a commission, an authority, or other body thereof, to which an appointed public official or an executive officer is appointed or hired.

The bill establishes an express fiduciary duty of care for each appointed public official and executive officer to the applicable entity he or she serves in accordance with law. The bill specifies that each appointed public official and executive officer has the duty to:

- Act in accordance with the laws, ordinances, rules, policies, and terms governing his or her office or employment;
- Act with the care, competence, and diligence normally exercised by reasonably prudent persons in similar corporate and proprietary circumstances;
- Act only within the scope of his or her authority;
- Refrain from conduct that is likely to damage the financial or economic interests of the governmental entity;
- Use reasonable efforts to maintain documentation in accordance with applicable laws; and
- Maintain reasonable oversight of any delegated authority and discharge his or her duties with the care that a reasonably prudent person in a like business position would believe appropriate under the circumstances.

The bill provides that the duty to maintain reasonable oversight includes (1) becoming reasonably informed in connection with any decision-making function; (2) becoming reasonably informed when devoting attention to any oversight function; (3) keeping reasonably informed concerning the affairs of the governmental entity; and (4) keeping reasonably informed concerning the performance of the governmental entity’s executive officers or other officers, agents, or employees. While this provision creates express fiduciary duties for appointed public officials and state officers, it does not create a private cause of action or enforcement mechanism.

This section also establishes training requirements. Each appointed public official and executive officer, beginning January 1, 2022, must complete a minimum of 5 hours of board governance training (Governance Training) for each term served. For those holding office or employed by a governmental entity on January 1, 2022, he or she is required to complete 5 hours of Governance Training before the expiration of his or her term of service. If the appointed public official or appointed executive officer is employed under a contract that does not specify a termination date for employment, the he or she must complete the 5 hours of Governance Training by January 1, 2023, and once every 4 years thereafter for the duration of their employment. An appointed public official or executive officer who is appointed, reappointed, or hired after January 1, 2022, must complete the 5 hours of Governance Training within 180 days after date of his or her appointment, reappointment or hire.

The bill requires the DBPR, by January 1, 2022, to either (1) contract for or approve a Governance Training program that includes an affordable web-based electronic media option; or

(2) publish a list of approved training providers. A provider may include (1) a Florida College System institution; (2) a state university; (3) a nationally recognized entity deemed qualified by the department as capable of providing the specified minimum Governance Training requirements.

The bill provides that the Governance Training programs, at a minimum, must include education materials and instruction related to:

- Generally accepted corporate board governance principles and best practices;
- Corporate board fiduciary duty of care legal analyses;
- Corporate board oversight and evaluation procedures;
- Governmental entity responsibilities;
- Executive officer responsibilities;
- Executive officer performance evaluations;
- Selecting, monitoring, and evaluating an executive management team;
- Reviewing and approving proposed investments, expenditures, and budget plans;
- Financial accounting and capital allocation principles and practices;
- New governmental entity member orientation; and
- The fiduciary duty of care and obligations imposed upon appointed public officials and executive officers pursuant to this section.

A governmental entity complies with the Governance Training by providing a DBPR-approved program or contracting with a provider listed by DBPR. The bill allows governmental entities with annual revenues of less than \$300,000 to use in-house counsel or the in-house counsel for the unit of government that created the entity, to provide Governance Training as long as it comports with the minimum course content established by DBPR rule.

The bill sets forth Governance Training compliance requirements. Each appointed public official and the executive officer must certify, in writing or electronic form and under oath to DBPR that she or he:

- Has completed the Governance Training;
- Has read the laws and relevant policies applicable to his or her position;
- Will work to uphold such laws and policies to the best of his or her ability; and
- Will faithfully discharge his or her fiduciary responsibility.

This certification must be submitted within 30 days of completing the Governance Training.

The bill provides three exceptions to the Governance Training requirement for (1) appointed public officials and executive officers of governmental entities whose annual revenues are less than \$100,000; (2) appointed officials who hold elected office in another capacity; or (3) appointed public officials or executive officers who complete board governance training involving fiduciary duties or responsibilities which is required under any other state law.

The bill grants rulemaking authority to the DBPR.

The bill requires approval by a majority vote of the governing body of the governmental entity for the appointment of any executive officer or general counsel.

The bill provides standards for legal counsel requiring all legal counsel employed by a governmental entity must represent the legal interests and positions of the governmental entity and not the interest of any individual or employee of the governmental entity, unless such representation is directed by the governmental entity.

**Section 3** provides that the bill will take effect on July 1, 2021.

#### IV. Constitutional Issues:

##### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

Article VII, subsection (a) of section 18 of the State Constitution provides that cities and counties are not bound by general laws requiring them to spend funds or take action that requires the expenditure of funds unless certain specified exemptions or exceptions are met.

Under this bill, there is a possibility cities and counties may incur costs relating to the board governance training. However, to the extent the bill applies to counties and municipalities, the mandate requirements do not apply to laws having an insignificant impact which, for Fiscal Year 2020-2021, is forecast at \$2.2 million.<sup>49,50,51</sup> The fiscal impact of this bill on cities and counties is indeterminate. The bill's impact is largely dependent on the affordability of the DBPR training programs<sup>52</sup> and the number of individuals within county and municipal governments that fit within the scope of the bill.

If costs imposed by the bill are determined to exceed \$2.2 million in the aggregate, the bill may be binding on cities and counties if the bill contains a finding of important state interest and meets one of the exceptions specified in State Constitution (e.g., applies to all persons similarly situated (i.e., cities, counties, and all other state and local governing entities with appointed officials) or enactment by vote of two-thirds of the membership of each house).

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

None.

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<sup>49</sup> FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 18(d).

<sup>50</sup> An insignificant fiscal impact is the amount not greater than the average statewide population for the applicable fiscal year times \$0.10. See Florida Senate Committee on Community Affairs, Interim Report 2012-115: Insignificant Impact, (Sept. 2011), available at: <http://www.flsenate.gov/PublishedContent/Session/2012/InterimReports/2012-115ca.pdf> (last visited February 25, 2021).

<sup>51</sup> Based on the Florida Demographic Estimating Conference's November 3, 2020, population forecast for 2021 of 21,830,364. The conference packet is available at: <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/conferences/population/ConferenceResults.pdf> (last visited February 25, 2021).

<sup>52</sup> The majority of the approved providers for the DBPR condominium board member training courses are provided at no fee. See DBPR website, *Approved Providers*, available at: <http://www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/lsc/documents/CondoCOOPListofApprovedProviders2015.pdf> (last visited February 25, 2021).

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:

The private sector will experience an indeterminate positive fiscal impact to the extent of DBPR contracts with private entities for the required Governance Training.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The DBPR will experience a negative fiscal impact as it uses resources to implement the provisions of the bill related to training and processes the certification of completed training. Also, governmental entities meeting the bill's criteria may be required to expend funds in providing the training to its appointed public officials or executive officers.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill creates section 112.89 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.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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