1	A bill to be entitled
2	An act relating to the Certified Peer Specialist
3	Gateway Pilot Program; creating the pilot program
4	within the Department of Corrections; providing
5	purpose of and requirements for the pilot program;
6	authorizing inmates at participating facilities to
7	apply to participate in the pilot program; requiring
8	the department to develop certain criteria for
9	selecting qualified applicants; exempting persons who
10	complete the pilot program's requirements from
11	specified background screening requirements for peer
12	specialists; requiring the pilot program to assist
13	potential employers with acquiring specified bonds;
14	authorizing the pilot program to offer funding to
15	potential employers to cover specified costs under
16	certain circumstances; requiring persons who have
17	completed the pilot program's requirements to provide
18	prospective employers with incarceration records;
19	requiring such persons to receive a signed informed
20	consent form from any potential clients; providing
21	requirements for such form; requiring the department
22	to adopt rules; providing for expiration of the pilot
23	program; providing an effective date.
24	
25	Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
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27	Section 1. The Certified Peer Specialist Gateway Pilot
28	Program is created within the Department of Corrections. The
29	purpose of the pilot program is to provide participating inmates
30	with a path to becoming certified peer specialists under s.
31	397.417, Florida Statutes, upon release by offering such inmates
32	while incarcerated the necessary training hours and experience
33	needed for certification and to assist inmates who complete the
34	pilot program's requirements with post-incarceration employment.
35	(1) The pilot program shall:
36	(a) Recruit and enroll inmates who have completed certain
37	treatment programs while incarcerated into certified peer
38	specialist training programs approved under s. 397.417, Florida
39	Statutes.
40	(b) Provide core educational training and on-the-job work
41	experience during each participant's incarceration which meets
42	all of the requirements for peer specialist certification.
43	(c) Assist participants with completing any examinations
44	required to become a certified peer specialist under s. 397.417,
45	Florida Statutes.
46	(d) Assist in placing participants in employment as
47	certified peer specialist professionals upon their release.
48	(2) Inmates at participating facilities may apply to
49	participate in the pilot program. The Department of Corrections
50	shall develop criteria for selecting qualified applicants for
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51	the pilot program including, but not limited to, requiring that
52	applicants:
53	(a) Have the appropriate custody classification.
54	(b) Meet certain discipline criteria.
55	(c) Have an expected release date within a specified
56	timeframe.
57	(d) Be housed at the facility providing training.
58	(e) Have served as a positive role model during their
59	incarceration.
60	(f) Express a desire to work in the behavioral health
61	treatment field after release.
62	(g) Not have been found guilty of, regardless of
63	adjudication, or entered a plea of nolo contendere or guilty to,
64	or have been adjudicated delinquent and the record has not been
65	sealed or expunged for, any offense that would prohibit them
66	from becoming a certified peer specialist under s.
67	<u>397.417(4)(e), Florida Statutes.</u>
68	(3) A person who completes the pilot program's
69	requirements is exempt from the background screening
70	requirements for peer specialists under s. $397.417(4)(a)-(d)$,
71	Florida Statutes.
72	(4) In assisting persons who have completed the pilot
73	program's requirements with post-incarceration employment, the
74	pilot program:
75	(a) Shall assist potential employers with acquiring bonds
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76 from the United States Department of Labor's Federal Bonding 77 Program, if applicable. 78 (b) May offer funding to a potential employer to cover the 79 initial costs of hiring and retaining such persons, if the pilot 80 program secures applicable grant funds for such purpose. 81 (5) After a person who has completed the pilot program's 82 requirements has been released, he or she must provide each 83 prospective employer with a copy of his or her incarceration 84 record before the employer may hire the person. The person must 85 also receive a signed informed consent form from any potential client seeking treatment from him or her. Such consent form must 86 87 specify that the person has completed the pilot program's requirements and is certified as a peer specialist under s. 88 89 397.417, Florida Statutes. 90 (6) The Department of Corrections shall adopt rules to 91 implement this act. 92 (7) The pilot program expires June 30, 2026. 93 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023. Page 4 of 4

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