

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 Fiscal Policy

BILL: CS/CS/SB 1618

INTRODUCER: Fiscal Policy Committee; Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education; and
Senator Calatayud

SUBJECT: Education

DATE: April 10, 2025

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Palazesi</u>	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
2.	<u>Gray</u>	<u>Elwell</u>	<u>AED</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
3.	<u>Jahnke/Palazesi</u>	<u>Siples</u>	<u>FP</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/CS/SB 1618 modifies Florida's prekindergarten through grade 12 education system related to early learning, academic standards and student achievement, instructional personnel, and student discipline, and modifies provisions related to higher education, workforce development, and regulation which focuses on tuition and fee policies, educational programs, workforce training, and institutional operations.

For the Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program, the bill:

- Removes the 70 percent cap on the hours authorized to be reported for funding prior to withdrawing from a VPK program for good cause and reenrolling in another VPK program.
- Repeals the Council for Early Grades Success.
- Removes authorization for the Department of Education (DOE) to recommend to the State Board of Education (SBE) that a provider be permitted to maintain its Gold Seal Quality Care status in certain circumstances.

For state academic standards and required instruction, the bill:

- Requires the state academic standards documents to contain only standards and benchmarks.
- Requires the DOE, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, to revise the state agricultural standards.

For reading instruction, the bill:

- Specifies requirements for personnel who provide intensive reading interventions and requires reading interventions to incorporate evidence-based strategies identified by Just Read, Florida!
- Requires that districts provide a description of how the district prioritizes the assignment of highly effective teachers to kindergarten to grade two.
- Authorizes the use of unpaid or paid hours that a high school student devotes to tutoring in the Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence can count toward meeting community service requirements for high school graduation and the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

For instructional personnel, the bill:

- Authorizes the use of a valid certificate issued by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) as a direct pathway to a professional certificate.
- Authorizes lab schools and charter school consortia who meet certain criteria to the entities eligible to submit to the DOE a nominee for the Teacher of the Year award.

For higher education workforce development and regulation, the bill:

- Expands the duties of The Office of Ocean Economy at Florida Atlantic University, include collaboration with career centers and the College of the Florida Keys and with education and industry to strengthen Florida's maritime industry, and requires a catalog of ocean economy programs, credentialing opportunities, and training providers.
- Authorizes schools administering The Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program, to partner with online providers, modifies the age limit, removes a simultaneous enrollment requirement for secondary and career education, and expands uses of the GATE Startup Fund to support marketing and outreach efforts.
- Shifts a Florida College System institution allocation of financial aid fees to assist underrepresented students instead of targeted gender or ethnic minorities.
- Provides tuition and fee waivers for active Florida State Guard members.
- Modifies the out-of-state fee waiver for nonresident students with a Florida resident grandparent.

For higher education governance and institutional changes, the bill:

- Renames Hillsborough Community College to Hillsborough College.
- Removes the Board of Governors requirement to provide electronic access to degree job placement and earnings rankings.
- Expands preeminent state research university eligibility by adding the Classical Learning Test (CLT) as an alternative to the SAT and ACT.
- Eliminates reporting requirements on student open access resources and the performance of the annual host entity.
- Modifies licensure exemption requirements for nonpublic religious postsecondary institutions and establishes requirements related to an institution affidavit.

Additionally, the bill:

- Revises the definition and requirements for emergency opioid antagonists.
- Specifies that school board policy on corporal punishment must include parent permission.

- Prohibits public schools, charter schools, school districts, charter school administrators, or direct-support organizations from using funds on certain items.
- Repeals the Florida School for Competitive Academics.
- Removes the Commissioner of Education's authority to determine if schools have maximized their efforts to include minority persons and persons of lower socioeconomic status on their school advisory councils.
- Adds requirements relating to the costs of postsecondary education to the one-half credit of financial literacy credit required for high school graduation.
- Authorizes the SBE to join or establish a national consortium to develop advanced courses.
- Specifies only certain instructional personnel can qualify for bonuses under the School Recognition award.
- Clarifies that an owner or operator of a private scholarship school is subject to state screening requirements for employment in positions that may require direct contact with students.
- Clarifies that general background screening exemptions do not apply to public school and private scholarship school employees in positions that may require direct contact with a student.
- Authorizes a private school located in a county with four incorporated municipalities to construct new facilities on property, under the facility's preexisting zoning and land use designations and without having to implement any mitigation requirements or conditions, subject to specified limitations.
- Adds the Classic Learning Test (CLT) 10 assessment as an approved assessment for students in grade 10 under the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement.

The bill is effective July 1, 2025, except as otherwise specified.

This bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact. **See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.**

II. Present Situation:

The present situation for the relevant portions of the bill is discussed under the Effect of Proposed Changes section of this bill analysis.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program

Present Situation

Florida's Voluntary PreKindergarten (VPK) Program

The VPK program prepares children for success in school and in life. Implemented in 2005, the program is a free, high-quality, education program available to all four-year-old children residing in the state.¹ Each child who resides in Florida who attains the age of four years on or before September 1 of the school year is eligible for the VPK Program during either that school year or the following school year. Parents of four-year-olds with birthdays from February 2 through

¹ FLA. CONST., Art. IX, s. 1.

September 1 may wait to enroll their child the following year when they are five.² The child remains eligible until the child is admitted to kindergarten, or unless the child has attained the age of six years by February 1 of any school year.³ In 2023-2024, there were 155,275 children enrolled with 6,247 providers in Florida's VPK program.⁴

Parents of each child eligible for a VPK program in Florida may enroll their child in one of the following programs:

- A school-year prekindergarten program delivered by an approved private prekindergarten provider.
- A school-year prekindergarten program delivered by a public school.
- A summer prekindergarten program delivered by a public school or private prekindergarten provider.
- A specialized instructional services program for children who have disabilities, if the child has been evaluated and determined as eligible and has a current individual educational plan developed by the local school board.⁵

Funding for Florida's VPK Program

A full-time equivalent student in the VPK program is calculated as follows:

- For a student in a school-year prekindergarten program delivered by a private prekindergarten provider: 540 instructional hours.
- For a student in a school-year prekindergarten program delivered by a public school: 540 instructional hours.
- For a student in a summer prekindergarten program delivered by a public school or private prekindergarten provider: 300 instructional hours.⁶

A child who, for any of the prekindergarten programs, has not completed more than 70 percent of the hours authorized to be reported for funding may withdraw from the program for good cause and reenroll in one of the programs. The total funding for a child who reenrolls in one of the programs for good cause may not exceed one full-time equivalent student. A child who has not substantially completed any of the prekindergarten programs may withdraw from the program due to an extreme hardship that is beyond the child's or parent's control, reenroll in one of the summer programs, and be reported for funding purposes as a full-time equivalent student in the summer program.⁷

A child may be granted a good cause exemption if:

- The illness of the child, an individual living in the child's household, an individual which the child's parent is responsible for caring for, or the child's parent, sibling, grandparent, stepparent, step-sibling, or step-grandparent.

² Florida Department of Education, *Division of Early Learning, Annual Report 2023-2024*, available at: <https://www.fldoe.org/file/20628/2324-DEL-AnnualReport.pdf> (last visited Mar. 15, 2025).

³ Section 1002.53(2), F.S.

⁴ Florida Department of Education, *Division of Early Learning, Annual Report 2023-2024*, available at: <https://www.fldoe.org/file/20628/2324-DEL-AnnualReport.pdf> (last visited Mar. 15, 2025).

⁵ Section 1002.53(3), F.S.

⁶ Section 1002.71(2), F.S.

⁷ Section 1002.71(4), F.S.

- A disagreement between the parent and the provider concerning policies, practices, or procedures at the provider's VPK program.
- A change in the child's residence.
- A change in the employment schedule or place of employment of the child's parent.
- The VPK program provider's inability to meet the child's health, behavioral, or educational needs.
- The termination of the child's class before 70 percent of the VPK program instructional hours are delivered.
- The child is dismissed by a VPK program provider for failure to comply with the provider's attendance policy.
- The VPK program provider's designation as a provider on probation.

A child may be granted an exemption for an extreme hardship if:

- The illness of the child, a family member which the child's parent is responsible for caring for, or of the child's parent, as documented in writing by a licensed physician if it would result in the child being absent for more than 30 percent of the number of hours in the program type in which the child is enrolled.
- The termination of the child's VPK program class as a result of the VPK program provider's removal from eligibility to offer the VPK program, as documented by the early learning coalition.
- The parent's inability to meet the basic needs of the child, including, but not limited to, a lack of food, shelter, clothing, or transportation, as documented in writing by a federal, state, or local governmental official.
- The VPK program provider's inability to meet the child's educational needs due to the child's learning or developmental disability, as documented by a federal, state, or local governmental official.
- The VPK program provider's inability to meet the child's health needs as documented by a licensed or a federal, state, or local governmental official.
- Displacement of the child from his or her place of residence, or closure of the child's VPK program provider as a result of a state of emergency as declared by a federal, state, or local government official.
- A temporary or permanent change in parent custody or guardianship, supported by legal documentation such as a court order or official documentation from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or DCF contracted agency. This includes an at-risk childcare authorization that documents the guardianship change.⁸

Gold Seal Quality Care Program

The Department of Education (DOE) administers the Gold Seal Quality Care program (Gold Seal program). Established in 1996,⁹ the Gold Seal program recognizes childcare facilities and family day care homes that have gone above the required minimum licensing standards to become accredited by recognized agencies whose standards reflect quality in the level of care and supervision provided to children. The Gold Seal program is not an accreditation, but a designation. The Gold Seal program offers various advantages to participating providers,

⁸ Rule 6M-8.210, F.A.C.

⁹ Ch. 96-175, s. 72, L.O.F.

including tax exemptions on certain educational materials and property taxes, as well as increased reimbursement rates for School Readiness (SR) providers.¹⁰ To obtain and maintain a designation as a Gold Seal program provider, a childcare facility, large family childcare home, or family day care home must have:

- No class I¹¹ violations within preceding two years.
- Less than three class II¹² violations within the preceding two years.
- Less than three class III¹³ violations within the preceding two years that were not corrected within one year.
- If the DOE determines through a formal process that a provider has been in business for at least five years and has no other class I violations recorded, the DOE may recommend to the State Board of Education (SBE) that the provider maintain its Gold Seal Quality Care status.¹⁴

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year:¹⁵

- There were 16 Gold Seal approved accrediting associations.
- There were 1,861 Gold Seal designated childcare providers, of which 1,519 were contracted for SR and 1,591 were contracted for VPK.
- There were 23 providers removed from the Gold Seal program due to licensing regulation violations.

The Council for Early Grades Success

The Council for Early Grades Success (Council) was created in 2021 within the DOE.¹⁶ The Council is responsible for reviewing the implementation of training for and outcomes from the coordinated screening and progress monitoring program to provide recommendations to the DOE that support grade three students reading at or above grade level. The Council, at a minimum, is responsible for:

- Providing recommendations on the implementation of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring program, including reviewing any procurement solicitation documents and criteria before being published.
- Developing training plans and timelines for such training.
- Identifying appropriate personnel, processes, and procedures required for the administration of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring program.

¹⁰ Florida Department of Education, *Division of Early Learning, Annual Report 2023-2024*, available at: <https://www.fldoe.org/file/20628/2324-DEL-AnnualReport.pdf> (last visited Mar. 15, 2025).

¹¹ Class “I” violations are those conditions or occurrences related to the operation and maintenance of a provider or to the care of clients which the agency determines present an imminent danger to the clients of the provider or a substantial probability that death or serious physical or emotional harm would result therefrom. Section 408.813, F.S.

¹² Class “II” violations are those conditions or occurrences related to the operation and maintenance of a provider or to the care of clients which the agency determines directly threaten the physical or emotional health, safety, or security of the clients, other than class I violations. *Id.*

¹³ Class “III” violations are those conditions or occurrences related to the operation and maintenance of a provider or to the care of clients which the agency determines indirectly or potentially threaten the physical or emotional health, safety, or security of clients, other than class I or class II violations. *Id.*

¹⁴ Section 1002.945 (4), F.S.

¹⁵ Florida Department of Education, *Division of Early Learning, Annual Report 2023-2024*, available at: <https://www.fldoe.org/file/20628/2324-DEL-AnnualReport.pdf> (last visited March 15, 2025).

¹⁶ Section 65, ch. 2021-10, L.O.F.

- Providing input on the methodology for calculating the VPK accountability program.¹⁷
- Working with the department to review the methodology for determining a child's kindergarten readiness.
- Reviewing data on age-appropriate learning gains by grade level that a student would need to attain to demonstrate proficiency in reading by grade three.
- Continually reviewing anonymized data from the results of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring program for students in the VPK Program through grade three to help inform recommendations to the department that support practices that will enable grade three students to read at or above grade level.¹⁸

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1002.71, F.S., to remove the 70 percent cap on the hours authorized to be reported for funding for a child who withdraws from a VPK program for good cause and reenrolls in another VPK program. The bill maintains that the total funding for a VPK student who reenrolls in one of the programs for good cause may not exceed one full-time equivalent student. Similarly, the bill also specifies that a child who has not completed any portion of the program, no matter the number of hours, of a VPK program may withdraw from the program due to an extreme hardship that is beyond the child's or parent's control, reenroll in one of the summer programs, and be reported for funding purposes as a full-time equivalent student in the summer program for which the child is reenrolled.

The bill amends s. 1002.945, F.S., to remove the authority of the DOE to determine through a formal process that because a provider has been in business for at least five years and has no other class I violations recorded, the DOE may recommend to the SBE that the provider maintain its Gold Seal Quality Care status.

The bill repeals s. 1008.2125, F.S., to remove the Council for Early Grades Success. The bill also amends s. 1002.68, F.S., to remove the requirement that the DOE consult with the Council for Early Grades Success prior to adopting, in SBE rule, the methodology related to the VPK accountability system and differential payments.

Student Academic Standards

Present Situation

State Academic Standards

Florida's state academic standards establish the core content of the curricula to be taught and specify the core content knowledge and skills that K-12 public school students are expected to acquire. Standards must be rigorous and relevant and provide for the logical, sequential progression of core curricular content that incrementally increases a student's core content knowledge and skills over time.¹⁹

¹⁷ Rule 6M-8.622, Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Provider Performance Metric and Designation, was adopted by the State Board of Education on August 21, 2024 and went into effect September 9, 2024.

¹⁸ Section 1008.2125(1)(a), F.S.

¹⁹ Section 1003.41(1), F.S.

The Commissioner of Education (commissioner) is required to develop and submit proposed revisions to the standards for review and comment by Florida educators, school administrators, representatives of the Florida College System institutions and state universities who have expertise in the content knowledge and skills necessary to prepare a student for postsecondary education and careers, a representative from the Department of Commerce, business and industry leaders for in-demand careers, and the public.²⁰ The state academic standards are required to meet the following requirements:

- English Language Arts standards are required to establish specific curricular content for, at a minimum, reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language.
- Science standards are required to establish specific curricular content for, at a minimum, the nature of science, earth and space science, physical science, and life science.
- Mathematics standards are required to establish specific curricular content for, at a minimum, algebra, geometry, statistics and probability, number and quantity, functions, and modeling.
- Social Studies standards are required to establish specific curricular content for, at a minimum, geography, United States and world history, government, civics, humanities, economics, and financial literacy.
- Visual and performing arts, physical education, health, and foreign language standards are required to establish specific curricular content and include distinct grade-level expectations for the core content knowledge.²¹

Florida uses a unique coding scheme that is defined by five-character positions in alphanumeric code: The subject, grade level, strand, standard and benchmark. The strand is a focal group of related standard, standards are overarching criteria for the grade level or grade band, and the benchmark is a specific expectation for the grade level or grade band that falls within the standard. An example of a standard is provided below:²²

K-8 Example

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>Strand</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Benchmark</i>
SC.	4.	CO.	1.	2
Science	Grade 4	Computing Components	Introduce foundational computer literacy skills.	Create and edit multimedia artifacts using digital tools.

Within the approved state academic standards documents, the Department of Education includes clarifications that are added to standards to guide teachers in the integration of those standards within instruction. For example, in the Computational Thinking and Reasoning Standards for the Computer Science Standards, there are seven standards, and each of the seven standards has a clarification for how that standard should be integrated into instruction.²³

²⁰ Section 1003.41(3), F.S.

²¹ Section 1003.41(2), F.S.

²² Florida Department of Education, *Florida’s State Academic Standards Computer Science 2024* (2024), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/20758/urlt/7-3.pdf> (last visited Mar. 17, 2025),

²³ Florida Department of Education, *Florida’s State Academic Standards Computer Science 2024* (2024), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/20758/urlt/7-3.pdf> (last visited Mar. 17, 2025),

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1003.41, F.S., to require that new and revised standards documents submitted to the State Board of Education must only consist of academic standards and benchmarks. The bill also requires the commissioner to submit all revised standards documents to the SBE for approval no later than July 1, 2026. By removing the benchmark clarifications statements, educators will have more flexibility in how they incorporate the standards into their instruction.

Agricultural Education***Present Situation*****Required Instruction**

The mission of Florida's Early Learning-20 education system is to allow its students to increase their proficiency by allowing them the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through rigorous and relevant learning opportunities.²⁴ Each district school board must provide appropriate instruction to ensure that students meet State Board of Education (SBE) adopted standards in the following subject areas: reading and other language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign languages, health and physical education, and the arts.²⁵

Instructional staff of public schools, subject to the rules of the SBE and the district school board, must provide instruction in:

- The history and content of the Declaration of Independence.
- The history, meaning, significance, and effect of the provisions of the Constitution of the United States.
- The arguments in support of adopting our republican form of government.
- Flag education, including proper flag display and flag salute.
- The elements of civil government.
- The history of the United States.
- The history of the Holocaust.
- The history of African Americans.
- The history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.
- The elementary principles of agriculture.
- The effects of alcoholic and intoxicating liquors and beverages and narcotics.
- Kindness to animals.
- The history of the state.
- The conservation of natural resources.
- Comprehensive age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate K-12 instruction on health education and life skills.
- The study of Hispanic contributions to the United States.
- The study of women's contributions to the United States.
- The nature and importance of free enterprise to the United States economy.
- Civic and character education.

²⁴ Section 1000.03(4), F.S.

²⁵ Section 1003.42(1), F.S.

- The sacrifices that veterans and Medal of Honor recipients have made serving the country.²⁶

Agricultural Education in Florida

To help support students interested in the agricultural industry in Florida, the Florida Department of Education (DOE) created nine middle school courses focused on careers in the agricultural field, ranging from the “Exploration of Agriscience” to the “Introduction to Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.” At the secondary level, the DOE created 18 courses and programs ranging from “Agricultural Biotechnology” to “Food Science Applications.”²⁷ In the 2022-2023 school year, there were 640 Secondary CTE Programs in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. Additionally, there are several benchmarks related to the impact agriculture has had on society:

- Compare the lifestyles of hunter-gatherers with those of settlers of early agricultural communities.²⁸
- Explain how the physical landscape has affected the development of agriculture and industry in the ancient world.²⁹
- Describe how the developments of agriculture and metallurgy related to settlement, population growth, and the emergence of civilization.³⁰
- Describe the agricultural and technological innovations that led to industrialization in Great Britain and its subsequent spread to continental Europe, the United States, and Japan.³¹

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1003.42, F.S., to expand the requirements of the elementary principles of agriculture to include the history of agriculture both nationally and specifically in Florida, the economic and societal impact of agriculture, and the various agricultural industry sectors. The change expands the current instruction of how agriculture impacts Florida, our economy, and society. The bill also requires the DOE, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Science to prepare and offer standards and a curriculum and may seek input from state or nationally recognized agricultural educational organizations. The bill also authorizes the DOE to contract with state or nationally recognized agricultural educational organizations to develop training for

²⁶ Section 1003.42(2), F.S.

²⁷ Florida Department of Education, *2024-25 CTE Curriculum Frameworks: Agriculture Food & Natural Resources*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/career-tech-edu/curriculum-frameworks/2024-25-frameworks/agriculture-food-natural-resources.stml>, (last visited Mar. 17, 2025).

²⁸ Florida Department of Education, *Florida’s State Academic Standards Social Studies 2024* (2024) at 56, available at https://cpalmsmediaproduct.blob.core.windows.net/uploads/docs/standards/best/ss/ss_standardsbook_bc_240417_finalada.pdf, (last visited Mar. 17, 2025). This standard is included in Grade 6 World History.

²⁹ Florida Department of Education, *Florida’s State Academic Standards Social Studies 2024* (2024) at 64, available at https://cpalmsmediaproduct.blob.core.windows.net/uploads/docs/standards/best/ss/ss_standardsbook_bc_240417_finalada.pdf, (last visited Mar. 17, 2025). This standard is included in Grade 6 Geography.

³⁰ Florida Department of Education, *Florida’s State Academic Standards Social Studies 2024* (2024) at 56, available at https://cpalmsmediaproduct.blob.core.windows.net/uploads/docs/standards/best/ss/ss_standardsbook_bc_240417_finalada.pdf, (last visited Mar. 17, 2025). This standard is included in Grade 6 World History.

³¹ Florida Department of Education, *Florida’s State Academic Standards Social Studies 2024* (2024) at 132, available at https://cpalmsmediaproduct.blob.core.windows.net/uploads/docs/standards/best/ss/ss_standardsbook_bc_240417_finalada.pdf, (last visited Mar. 17, 2025). This standard is included in Grades 9-12 World History.

instructional personnel and grade-appropriate classroom resources to support the developed curriculum.

Reading

Present Situation

Comprehensive System of Reading Intervention

Each school district is required to implement a system of comprehensive reading instruction for students enrolled in prekindergarten through grade 12 and certain students who exhibit a substantial deficiency in early literacy.³² Students with a substantial deficiency are defined as:

- A voluntary prekindergarten student in early literacy skills who scores below the tenth (10th) percentile or is unable to complete the practice items at the middle or end of the year test administration of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system.
- A kindergarten through grade three student in reading if:
 - The student is identified as in need of Tier 3 interventions³³. or
 - For kindergarten, the student scores below the tenth (10th) percentile or is unable to complete the practice items on the designated grade-level assessment at the beginning, middle, or end of the year test administration of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system.
 - b. For grades one and two, the student scores below the tenth (10th) percentile or is unable to complete the practice items on the designated grade-level assessment for the specified test administration of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system. or
 - c. For grade three, the student scores below the twentieth (20th) percentile at the beginning or middle of the year test administration of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system.
 - A student in grade three scores a Level 1 on the end-of-year statewide, standardized English Language Arts (ELA) assessment.³⁴

The comprehensive reading instruction plan may include all district schools, including charter schools, unless a charter school elects to submit a plan independently from the school district.³⁵

The plan may include the following components:

- Additional time per day of evidence-based intensive reading instruction for kindergarten through grade 12 students, which may be delivered during or outside of the regular school day.
- Highly qualified reading coaches, who must be endorsed in reading, to specifically support classroom teachers in making instructional decisions based on progress monitoring data and improve classroom teacher delivery of effective reading instruction, reading intervention, and reading in the content areas based on student need.

³² Section 1003.4201, F.S.

³³ Intensive, Individualized Instruction/Interventions (Tier 3): provides explicit, systematic, individualized instruction based on student need, one-on-one or very small group instruction with more guided practice, immediate corrective feedback, and frequent progress monitoring; and occurs in addition to core instruction and Tier 2 interventions.

³⁴ Rule 6A-6.053, F.A.C.

³⁵ Section 1003.4201(1), F.S.

- Professional learning to help instructional personnel and certified prekindergarten teachers funded in the Florida Education Finance Program earn a certification, a credential, an endorsement, or an advanced degree in scientifically researched and evidence-based reading instruction.
- Summer reading camps, using only classroom teachers or other district personnel who possess a micro-credential³⁶ in reading or are certified or endorsed in reading consistent for all students in kindergarten through grade five exhibiting a reading deficiency as determined by district and state assessments.
- Incentives for instructional personnel and certified prekindergarten teachers funded in the Florida Education Finance Program who possess a reading certification or endorsement or micro-credential and provide educational support to improve student literacy.
- Tutoring in reading.³⁷

Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence Act

In 2021, the Florida Legislature established the Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence (RAISE) program within the DOE.³⁸ The RAISE program provides instructional supports to school districts, school administrators, and instructional personnel in implementing evidence-based reading instruction and interventions in order to improve student reading achievement.³⁹

Under the RAISE program, the DOE must establish 20 literacy support regions and regional support teams in Florida to assist schools in improving low reading scores.⁴⁰ Eligible schools include:

- Schools serving students in kindergarten through grade five where 50 percent of the students score below a Level 3 on the statewide, standardized ELA assessment for any grade level. and
- Schools where 50 percent or more of students in kindergarten through grade three are not on track to pass the grade three ELA assessment based on data from the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system.⁴¹

As part of the RAISE program, the DOE must establish a tutoring program and develop training to prepare eligible high school students to tutor students in kindergarten through grade three. If high school students serve as a tutor in the RAISE program, they:

- May earn up to three elective credits for high school graduation based on the verified number of hours the student spends tutoring under the program.

³⁶ To earn an early literacy micro-credential a teacher must demonstrate competency in diagnosing literacy difficulties and determining the appropriate range of literacy interventions based upon the age and literacy deficiency of the student and how use evidence-based instructional and intervention practices grounded in the science of reading, including strategies identified by the Just Read, Florida! Office.

³⁷ Section 1003.4201(2), F.S.

³⁸ Section 1008.365, F.S.

³⁹ Section 1008.365(2), F.S.

⁴⁰ Section 1008.365(3), F.S.

⁴¹ Section 1008.365(4), F.S.

- May use unpaid hours devoted to tutoring may be counted toward meeting community service requirements for high school graduation and community service requirements for participation in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.⁴²

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1003.4201, F.S., to authorize school districts to include in their comprehensive reading instruction plan intensive reading interventions, which must be delivered by instructional personnel who possess an early literacy micro-credential or personnel certified or endorsed in reading, and which must include specified evidence-based strategies. The bill also requires that instructional personnel who possess an early literacy micro-credential and who deliver intensive reading interventions are supervised by an educator who is certified or endorsed in reading. The bill defines “supervised” as able, through telecommunication or in person, to communicate and consult with, and receive direction from. The bill also authorizes districts to include a description of how the district prioritizes the assignment of highly effective teachers in grades kindergarten through grade two.

The bill amends s. 1008.365, F.S., to allow high school students who are tutors in the RAISE program to use either paid or unpaid hours, to count towards the volunteer service or paid work hours requirements for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship program.

Private Schools

Present Situation

A private school is a nonpublic school defined as an individual, association, copartnership, or corporation, or department, division, or section of such organizations, that designates itself as an educational center that includes kindergarten through grade 12 or higher.⁴³ A private school that participates in the scholarship program must also:

- Comply with 42 U.S.C. s. 2000d which prohibits excluding a person from participating in federally assisted programs on the grounds of race, color, or national origin.
- Notify the Department of Education (DOE) of its intent to participate in the scholarship program.
- Notify the DOE of any changes in the school’s name, director, mailing address, or physical location within 15 days of change.
- Provide to the DOE or the scholarship funding organization (SFO) all required documentation for student registration and payment.
- Provide to the SFO the school’s fee schedule.
- Annually complete and submit to the DOE a notarized scholarship compliance statement verifying compliance with the background screening requirements.
- Demonstrate fiscal soundness in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Meet applicable state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules.
- Employ or contract with teachers that meet specified requirements.
- Maintain a physical location in the state at which each student has regular and direct contact with teachers.

⁴² Section 1008.365(8), F.S.

⁴³ Section 1002.01(3), F.S.

- Provide to parents information regarding the school's programs, services, classroom teacher qualifications, and a statement that a private school student with a disability does not have a right to all of the services that the student would receive if enrolled in a public school under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Provide the parent, at least on a quarterly basis, a written report of the student's progress.
- Cooperate with a parent who wants a student to participate in Florida's statewide standardized assessments.
- Adopt policies establishing standards of ethical conduct for educational support employees, instructional personnel, and school administrators.
- Not to be owned or operated by a person or an entity domiciled in, owned by, or in any way controlled by a foreign country of concern or foreign principal, as identified in law.⁴⁴

Private schools that participate in a state scholarship program must, complete a Scholarship Program Compliance form, which includes the following questions related to the school facility:

- Does the school facility meet the prescribed minimum requirements and standards of sanitation and safety for K-12 private schools, with current Florida law?
- If the school facility possesses a well, is it licensed or permitted pursuant to the Florida Safe Drinking Water Act?
- If the school facility stores, prepares, or serves food to students, does the school possess a current, food service establishment sanitation certificate in accordance with Florida law?
- If the school facility is located in a non-exempt county, does the school possess a current and acceptable Mandatory Measurements Nonresidential Radon Measurement Report in accordance with current Florida Law?
- Does the school facility possess a current, violation free or satisfactory Fire Code inspection and compliance report in accordance with current Florida law and county and/or municipal ordinance?⁴⁵

After a new private school applies to participate in a state scholarship program, the Department of Education (DOE) schedules and conducts a site visit at the school's physical location. A private school is ineligible to receive scholarship payments until a satisfactory site visit has been conducted by the DOE.⁴⁶

A private school may use facilities on property that is owned or leased by, or purchased from a library, community service organization, museum, performing arts venue, theatre, cinema, or church facility⁴⁷, which is or was actively used as such within five years of any executed agreement with a private school to use the facilities; any facility or land owned by a Florida College System institution or university; any similar public institutional facilities; and any facility recently used to house a school or child care facility,⁴⁸ under any such facility's

⁴⁴ Section 1002.421(1), F.S.; *see also* Rule 6A-6.03315, F.A.C.

⁴⁵ Rule 6A-6.03315, F.A.C.

⁴⁶ Rule 6A-6.03315, F.A.C.

⁴⁷ Section 170.201(2), F.S. defines a "religious institution" as any church, synagogue, or other established physical place for worship at which nonprofit religious services and activities are regularly conducted and carried on

⁴⁸ Section 402.305, F.S. provides for the licensing requirements for child care facilities.

preexisting zoning and land use designations without rezoning or obtaining a special exception or a land use change, and without complying with any mitigation requirements or conditions.⁴⁹

The facility must be located on property used solely as one of the designated facilities and meet applicable state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules, including fire safety and building safety.⁵⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1002.40, F.S., to authorize a private school located in a county with four incorporated municipalities⁵¹ to construct new facilities on property that is:

- Purchased or leased from a library, community service organization, museum, performing arts venue, theater, cinema, or church that is or was actively used as such within five years of any executed agreement with the private school;
- Owned by a Florida College System institution or state university; or
- Recently used to house a school or childcare facility licensed under s. 402.305, Florida Statutes.

The bill authorizes the new facilities may be constructed under the property's preexisting zoning and land use designations, without the need for rezoning, a special exception, a land use change, or compliance with mitigation requirements or conditions.

The bill also requires that the new facility be used solely as a private school and comply with all applicable state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules, including those related to fire safety and building safety.

High School Graduation Requirements

Present Situation

To earn a standard high school diploma a student must complete 24 credits, an International Baccalaureate curriculum, or an Advanced International Certificate of Education curriculum.⁵²

The 24-credit option for a standard diploma includes:

- Four credits in ELA I, II, III, and IV.
- Four credits in mathematics, including one in Algebra I and one in Geometry.
- Three credits in science, two of which must have a laboratory component and one of which must include Biology I.
- Three credits in social studies including one credit in United States History, one credit in World History, one-half credit in economics, and one-half credit in United States Government.

⁴⁹ Section 1002.40, (19), F.S.

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ Florida League of Cities, *Florida Cities by County with form of Government & Population*, available at https://www.floridaleagueofcities.com/docs/default-source/research-institute-reports/2020alphabycountywithgovtpopulation.pdf?sfvrsn=4009d6d5_0. (last visited Mar. 25, 2025) There are three counties that have four municipalities, Bradford County, Clay County and Sarasota County.

⁵² Section 1003.4282(1), F.S.

- One credit in fine or performing arts, speech and debate, or career and technical education.
- One credit in physical education which includes the integration of health.
- Seven and one-half credits in electives.
- One-half credit in personal financial literacy.

The one-half credit in personal financial literacy must include instruction in all of the following:

- Types of bank accounts offered, opening and managing a bank account, and assessing the quality of a depository institution's services.
- Balancing a checkbook.
- Basic principles of money management, such as spending, credit, credit scores, and managing debt, including retail and credit card debt.
- Completing a loan application.
- Receiving an inheritance and related implications.
- Basic principles of personal insurance policies.
- Computing federal income taxes.
- Local tax assessments.
- Computing interest rates by various mechanisms.
- Simple contracts.
- Contesting an incorrect billing statement.
- Types of savings and investments.
- State and federal laws concerning finance.⁵³

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1003.4282, F.S., to require that the one-half credit in financial literacy instruction includes the costs of postsecondary education, cost of attendance, completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, scholarships and grants, and student loans.

Articulated Accelerated Mechanisms

Present Situation

High school students in Florida have a variety of avenues by which they can earn college credit. These opportunities, known as articulated acceleration mechanisms, shorten the time necessary for a student to complete the requirements for a high school diploma and a postsecondary degree. These mechanisms also allow Florida schools to increase the depth of study in a particular subject and expand available curricular options.⁵⁴

Programs that provide high school students with the opportunity to earn college credit include, but are not limited to, dual enrollment and early admission, credit by examination, advanced placement, the IB Program, and the AICE Program. Credit earned through the Florida Virtual School also provides additional opportunities for early graduation and acceleration.⁵⁵

⁵³ Section 1003.4282(3), F.S.

⁵⁴ Section 1007.27(1), F.S.

⁵⁵ *Id.*

The Department of Education (DOE) annually identifies and publishes the minimum scores, maximum credit, and course or courses for which credit is to be awarded for each College Level Examination Program (CLEP) subject examination, College Board Advanced Placement Program examination, AICE examination, IB examination, Excelsior College subject examination, Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) subject standardized test, and Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT). In addition, the DOE also identifies courses in the general education core curriculum of each state university and FCS institution for which credit is to be granted. The DOE is also authorized to partner with an independent third-party testing or assessment organization to develop assessments that measure competencies consistent with general education core courses.⁵⁶

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1007.27, F.S., to authorize the SBE and the Board of Governors to join or establish a national consortium as an alternative method to develop courses for secondary students that align with general education core course competencies, and to implement advanced placement courses.

The bill also makes conforming provisions to s. 1007.27, F.S., related to changes in the bill related to teacher training under the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement.

The Florida School for Competitive Academics

Present Situation

Established in 2023, The Florida School for Competitive Academics (FSCA) was scheduled to open in the 2024-2025 school year to students in grades six through 12 and located in Alachua County.⁵⁷ The FSCA was created for the primary purpose of providing a rigorous academic curriculum, and the secondary purpose was to prepare students for regional, state, and national academic competitions in all areas of study, including, but not limited to, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The FSCA's mission was to provide students who met selective admissions requirements with an environment that would foster high academic engagement and advanced understanding of subject areas, develop productive work habits, build resiliency, connect students with industry leaders, and promote civic leadership.⁵⁸

The FSCA was to be operated by a board of trustees composed of seven members appointed by the Governor to four-year terms and confirmed by the Senate. The FSCA Board of Trustees had full power and authority to:

- Adopt rules to implement provisions of the law relating to the operation of the FSCA. The rules had to be submitted to the State Board of Education for approval or disapproval.
- Appoint a principal, administrators, teachers, and other employees.
- Remove principals, administrators, teachers, and other employees at the discretion of the board.

⁵⁶ Section 1007.27(2), F.S.

⁵⁷ Ch. 2023-245, Laws of Fla.

⁵⁸ Section 1002.351(2), F.S.

- Determine eligibility of students and procedures for admission.
- Provide for the proper keeping of accounts and records and for budgeting funds.
- Receive gifts, donations, and bequests of money or property, real or personal, tangible or intangible, from any person, firm, corporation, or other legal entity for the use and benefit of the school.
- Recommend to the Legislature that the school become a residential public school.
- Perform every other matter requisite to the proper management, maintenance, support, and control of the school at the highest efficiency economically possible.
- Prepare and submit legislative budget requests.⁵⁹

The FSCA was a public school but, like charter schools, was exempt from all statutes in the education code except:

- Statutes pertaining to the student assessment program and school grading system.
- Statutes pertaining to the provision of services to students with disabilities.
- Statutes pertaining to civil rights, including, but not limited to, statutes relating to discrimination.
- Statutes pertaining to student health, safety, and welfare.⁶⁰

The FSCA was scheduled to open beginning in the 2024-2025 school year; however, the school was never officially opened.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill repeals ss.1002.351, 1011.58, and 1011.59, F.S., to remove the Florida School for Competitive Academics.

The bill also conforms cross-references related to FSCA activities and requirements in ss. 11.45, 216.251, 447.203, 1004.04, 1001.20, 1002.394, and 1002.395, F.S.

District and School Advisory Councils

Present Situation

Each district school board must establish an advisory council for each school in the district and develop procedures for the election and appointment of advisory council members. The school advisory council is the sole body responsible for final decision-making at the school relating to the implementation of school improvement and education accountability.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Section 1002.351(3), F.S.

⁶⁰ Section 1002.351(8), F.S.

⁶¹ Section 1001.452(1), F.S.

The advisory councils must consist of the principal and an appropriately balanced number of teachers,⁶² education support employees,⁶³ students, parents, and other business and community citizens who are representative of the ethnic, racial, and economic community served by the school. Career center and high school advisory councils must include students, and middle and junior high school advisory councils may include students. School advisory councils of career centers and adult education centers are not required to include parents as members. Council members representing teachers, education support employees, students, and parents must be elected by their respective peer groups at the school in a fair and equitable manner.⁶⁴

The district school board must review the membership composition of each advisory council. If the district school board determines that the membership elected by the school is not representative of the ethnic, racial, and economic community served by the school, the district school board must appoint additional members to achieve proper representation. The Commissioner of Education must determine if schools have maximized their efforts to include minority persons and persons of lower socioeconomic status on their advisory council.⁶⁵

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1001.452, F.S., to remove the authority of the Commissioner of Education to determine if schools have maximized their efforts to include minorities and persons of lower socioeconomic status on their advisory council. The bill maintains the requirement that the district school board review the membership composition of each advisory council and appoint additional members if the elected school advisory council is not representative of the ethnic, racial, and economic community served by the school.

Parental Rights

Present Situation

K-12 Student and Parent Rights

Parents of public school students are required to receive from school districts accurate and timely information regarding their child's academic progress and must be informed of ways they can help their child to succeed in school. Students and parents are afforded numerous statutory rights, including, but not limited to:

- A high-quality system of education, one that allows students the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education;
- Attendance;
- Issues surrounding health;
- Discipline;
- Safety;

⁶² Section 1001.452(1), F.S. (flush left provision at the end of the paragraph). For the purposes of school advisory councils and district advisory councils, the term "teacher" includes classroom teachers, certified student services personnel, and media specialists.

⁶³ *Id.* For the purposes of school advisory councils and district advisory councils, "education support employee" means any person employed by a school who is not defined as instructional or administrative personnel and whose duties require 20 or more hours in each normal working week.

⁶⁴ Section 1001.452(1), F.S.

⁶⁵ *Id.* (flush left provision at the end of the paragraph).

- Educational Choice;
- Issues relating to Students with Disabilities and Blind Students;
- Issues relating to Limited English Proficient Students;
- Students with deficiencies in Math and Reading;
- Pledge of Allegiance;
- Student Records, Report Cards and Student Progress Reports;
- School Accountability and Improvement Rating Reports;
- Athletics and Extracurricular Activities;
- Instructional Materials;
- Juvenile Justice Programs;
- Parental Input and Meetings; and
- Transportation.⁶⁶

Opioid Antagonists

In 2022, public schools were authorized to purchase a supply of the opioid antagonist, naloxone, from an approved wholesale distributor, in the event of a student opioid overdose.⁶⁷ School districts are required to maintain the naloxone in a secure location and the school district employee who administers the opioid antagonist in compliance with state law is immune from civil liability.

Opioid receptor antagonists block one or more of the opioid receptors in the central or peripheral nervous system. The two most commonly used centrally acting opioid receptor antagonists are naloxone and naltrexone. Naloxone comes in intravenous, intramuscular, and intranasal formulations and is FDA-approved for the use in an opioid overdose and the reversal of respiratory depression associated with opioid use. Naltrexone is available in both oral and long-acting injectable formulations and is FDA-approved for the treatment of opioid and/or alcohol maintenance treatment. The most commonly used peripheral opioid receptor antagonist is methylnaltrexone, which is a potent competitive antagonist acting at the digestive tract and is also FDA-approved for the treatment of opioid-induced constipation.⁶⁸

Corporal Punishment

District school boards have the option of administering corporal punishment and must establish a policy authorizing the use of corporal punishment as a form of discipline, which must be reviewed every three years. The district school board is required to take public testimony in establishing or reviewing the policy authorizing corporal punishment.⁶⁹ If the school board has a corporal punishment policy it must incorporate that:

- The use of corporal punishment must be approved by the principal before it is used, but approval is not necessary for each specific instance in which it is used. The principal is

⁶⁶ Section 1002.20, F.S.

⁶⁷ Ch. 2022-28, L.O.F. A wholesale distributor means a person, other than a manufacturer, a manufacturer's co-licensed partner, a third-party logistics provider, or a repackager, who is engaged in wholesale distribution.

⁶⁸ *Opioid Antagonists*, Theriot, Jonathan, et. al., (last updated July 23, 2023), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK537079/#:~:text=3%5D%5B4%5D-.The%20two%20most%20commonly%20used%20centrally%20acting%20opioid%20receptor%20antagonists,depression%20associated%20with%20opioid%20use>. (last visited Mar 17, 2025).

⁶⁹ Section 1002.20(4), F.S.

required to prepare guidelines for administering such punishment that must identify the types of punishable offenses, the conditions under which the punishment is administered, and the specific personnel on the school staff authorized to administer the punishment.

- A teacher or principal may administer corporal punishment only in the presence of another adult who is informed beforehand, and in the student's presence, of the reason for the punishment.
- A teacher or principal who has administered corporal punishment shall, upon request, provide the student's parent with a written explanation of the reason for the punishment and the name of the other adult who was present.⁷⁰

In the 2023-2024 school year, there were 516 incidents of corporal punishment in 17 school districts.⁷¹

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1002.20, F.S., to modify provisions related to opioid antagonists and corporal punishment in schools. The bill expands the opioid antagonist for purchase by district school boards to specify any emergency opioid antagonist approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), rather than only naloxone.

The bill also requires that if a district school board has a policy authorizing corporal punishment, the policy must include a requirement for parental consent. The policy may specify that parent consent is provided for the entire school year or before each administration of corporal punishment.

The bill amends s. 1002.33, F.S., to require charter schools to comply with the requirements of corporal punishment.

Prohibited Expenditures

Present Situation

Florida Educational Equity Act

The "Florida Educational Equity Act" (FEEA) prohibits discrimination in any program or employment condition on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status against a student or an employee in the state system of public K-20 education.

The FEEA specifies, in part, that:

- No individual may, on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any public K-20 education program or activity, or in any employment conditions or practices, conducted by a public educational institution that receives or benefits from federal or state financial assistance.

⁷⁰ Section 1003.32(1), F.S.

⁷¹ Florida Department of Education, *Discipline Data, 2023-24*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/18612/2324DisciplineReport.xlsx>, (last visited Mar. 17, 2025)

- The criteria for admission to a program or course may not have the effect of restricting access by persons of a particular race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status.⁷²

Included in the prohibition on discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex is subjecting any student or employee to training or instruction that espouses, promotes, advances, inculcates, or compels such student or employee to believe any of the following concepts:

- Members of one race, color, national origin, or sex are morally superior to members of another race, color, national origin, or sex.
- A person, by virtue of his or her race, color, national origin, or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously.
- A person's moral character or status as either privileged or oppressed is necessarily determined by his or her race, color, national origin, or sex.
- Members of one race, color, national origin, or sex cannot and should not attempt to treat others without respect to race, color, national origin, or sex.
- A person, by virtue of his or her race, color, national origin, or sex, bears responsibility for, or should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment because of, actions committed in the past by other members of the same race, color, national origin, or sex.
- A person, by virtue of his or her race, color, national origin, or sex, should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment to achieve diversity, equity, or inclusion.
- A person, by virtue of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin, bears personal responsibility for and must feel guilt, anguish, or other forms of psychological distress because of actions, in which the person played no part, committed in the past by other members of the same race, color, national origin, or sex.⁷³

Florida College System institution and State University System Prohibited Expenditures

A Florida College System (FCS) institution, state university, FCS institution direct-support organization, or state university direct-support organization may not expend any funds, regardless of source, to purchase membership in, or goods and services from, any organization that discriminates on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or religion.⁷⁴

An FCS institution, state university, FCS institution direct-support organization, or state university direct-support organization may not expend any state or federal funds to promote, support, or maintain any programs or campus activities that:

- Violate Florida's Educational Equity Act
- Advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion, or promote or engage in political or social activism, as defined by rules of the State Board of Education and regulations of the Board of Governors.⁷⁵

The requirements for prohibited expenditures do not apply to student fees to support student-led organizations regardless of any speech or expressive activity by such organizations, but the

⁷² Section 1000.05(2), F.S.

⁷³ Section 1005.05(4), F.S.

⁷⁴ Section 1004.06(1), F.S.

⁷⁵ Section 1004.06(2), F.S.

public funds must be allocated to student-led organizations pursuant to written policies or regulations of each FCS institution or state university.⁷⁶ The requirements also do not apply to programs, campus activities, or functions required for compliance with general or federal laws or regulations; for obtaining or retaining institutional or discipline-specific accreditation; or for access programs for military veterans, Pell Grant recipients, first generation college students, nontraditional students, "2+2" transfer students from the FCS, students from low-income families, or students with unique abilities.⁷⁷

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill creates s. 1001.325, F.S., to align the expenditure restrictions across different educational institutions. Specifically, it aligns the existing limitations on prohibited expenditures for Florida College System (FCS) institutions and state universities with the purchasing requirements for schools and school districts. The bill specifies that a public school, charter school, school district, charter school administrator, or direct-support organization may not expend any funds, regardless of source, to purchase membership in, or goods and services from, any organization that discriminates on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or religion. The bill also prohibits a public school, charter school, school district, charter school administrator, or direct-support organization from expending any state or federal funds to promote, support, or maintain any programs or campus activities that:

- Violate Florida's Educational Equity Act; or
- Advocate for or promote or engage in political or social activism, as defined by rules of the State Board of Education (SBE).

The bill exempts from prohibited expenditure requirements student fees to support student-led organizations regardless of any speech or expressive activity by such organizations that would otherwise violate the above provisions, but the public funds must be allocated to student-led organizations pursuant to written policies or regulations of the school or district in which the student is enrolled, as applicable. The bill does not prohibit programs, campus activities or functions required for compliance with general or federal laws or regulations, for obtaining or retaining accreditation, or for continuing to receive state funds with the approval of either the SBE or the department.

The bill requires the SBE to adopt rules to implement these requirements.

Florida School Recognition Funding

Present Situation

The Florida School Recognition Program provides public recognition and financial awards to faculty and staff at schools sustaining high student performance by receiving a school grade of "A" or showing substantial improvement in student performance by improving a letter grade.

Schools that receive financial awards depend on the availability of funds appropriated and the number and size of schools selected to receive an award. The school recognition funds must be

⁷⁶ Section 1004.06(2), F.S. (Flush left)

⁷⁷ Section 1004.06(3)

distributed to the school's fiscal agent and placed in the school's account and must be used for purposes listed in statute as determined jointly by the school's staff and school advisory council. If school staff and the school advisory council cannot reach agreement by February 1, the awards must be equally distributed to all classroom teachers currently teaching in the school.

The school recognition award funding must be used for the following:

- Nonrecurring bonuses to the faculty and staff.
- Nonrecurring expenditures for educational equipment or materials to assist in maintaining and improving student performance.
- Temporary personnel for the school to assist in maintaining and improving student performance.⁷⁸

The 2024-2025 General Appropriations Act allocated \$200,000,000 to schools in the School Recognition program.⁷⁹

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1008.36, F.S., to clarify that only instructional personnel, which includes classroom teachers, individuals working in student personnel services, librarians/media specialists, education paraprofessionals, and other instructional staff, are eligible for nonrecurring bonuses through the School Recognition awards.

Postsecondary Feedback of Information to High Schools

Present Situation

The Commissioner of Education must annually report, by high school, to the State Board of Education, the Board of Governors, and the Legislature, by April 30, the number of prior year Florida high school graduates who enrolled for the first time in public postsecondary education in this state during the previous summer, fall, or spring term, indicating the number of students whose scores on the common placement test indicated the need for developmental education or for applied academics for adult education.⁸⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill revises the deadline from April 30 to May 31 for the annual reporting of postsecondary feedback information by the commissioner to specified entities. The bill also removes the requirement to include data on the number of students whose common placement test scores indicated a need for developmental education courses.

⁷⁸ Section 1008.36, F.S.

⁷⁹ Specific Appropriation 87, ch. 2024-231, L.O.F.

⁸⁰ Section 1008.37(2), F.S.

Instructional Personnel

Present Situation

Educator Certification

Educational personnel in public schools must possess appropriate skills in reading, writing, and mathematics; adequate pedagogical knowledge; and relevant subject matter competence to demonstrate an acceptable level of professional performance.⁸¹ For a person to serve as an educator in a traditional public school, charter school, virtual school, or other publicly operated school, the person must hold a certificate issued by the Department of Education (DOE).⁸²

A professional teaching certificate is valid for five school fiscal years and is renewable. A professional certificate is awarded to an applicant who meets the basic eligibility requirements for certification and demonstrates mastery of:

- General knowledge.
- Subject area knowledge. and
- Professional preparation and education competence.⁸³

Acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of general knowledge include:

- Achievement of passing scores on the general knowledge examination.
- Documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state.
- Documentation of a valid certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) or a national educator credentialing board approved by the State Board of Education (SBE).
- Documentation of two semesters of successful, full-time or part-time teaching in a Florida College System (FCS) institution, state university, or private college or university that meets certain criteria.
- Achievement of passing scores on national or international examinations with comparable verbal, writing, quantitative reasoning, and rigor as the general knowledge exam, including but not limited to Graduate Record Examination.
- Documentation of receipt of a master's or higher degree from an accredited postsecondary educational institution that the DOE has identified as having a quality program resulting in a baccalaureate degree or higher.⁸⁴

A school district that employs an individual who does not achieve passing scores on any subtest of the general knowledge examination must provide information regarding the availability of state-level and district-level supports and instruction to assist him or her in achieving a passing score. The requirement of mastery of general knowledge must be waived for an individual who has been provided three years of support and instruction and who has been rated effective or highly effective for each of the last three years.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Section 1012.54, F.S.

⁸² Sections 1012.55(1) and 1002.33(12), F.S.

⁸³ Section 1012.56(2), F.S.

⁸⁴ Section 1012.56(3), F.S.

⁸⁵ Section 1012.56(3), F.S. (flush left)

The acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of subject area knowledge include:

- Passing a subject area or other alternative examination as approved by the SBE.
- Having a valid teaching certificate from another state, having a valid certificate from the NBPTS.
- A passing score or program completion of a specified defense language proficiency test or program.⁸⁶

The acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of a professional preparation and education competence include:

- Successful completion of an approved teacher preparation program at a postsecondary educational institution within this state and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by state board rule.
- Successful completion of a teacher preparation program at a postsecondary educational institution outside Florida and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by state board rule.
- Documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state.
- Documentation of a valid certificate issued by the NBPTS or a national educator credentialing board approved by the SBE.
- Documentation of two semesters of successful, full-time or part-time teaching in an FCS institution, state university, or private college or university that awards an associate or higher degree and is an accredited institution or an institution of higher education identified by the DOE as having a quality program and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule.
- Successful completion of professional preparation courses as specified in state board rule,
- Successful completion of a professional education competence program and documentation of three years of being rated effective or highly effective while holding a temporary certificate.
- Successful completion of a professional learning certification program.
- Successful completion of a competency-based certification program and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule.⁸⁷

American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE)

The ABCTE is run by the nonprofit American Board program which is designed to offer a competency-based alternative path to teaching for career changers with a quick and affordable route to becoming a teacher.⁸⁸ The ABTCE is approved in 15 states to offer teacher certification programs.⁸⁹ In Florida, ABTCE is approved to offer certification programs in the following subject areas:

- Biology (6-12);
- Chemistry (6-12);

⁸⁶ Section 1012.56(5), F.S., and Rule 6A-4.002(4), F.A.C.

⁸⁷ Section 1012.56(6), F.S.

⁸⁸ Teach, *American Board About*, available at <https://www.teach.org/programs/american-board?programId=4918fb59-f054-492d-aad3-7e62061f68f0>, (last visited Mar. 17, 2025).

⁸⁹ American Board, *Online Teacher Certification*, available at <https://www.americanboard.org/>, (last visited Mar. 17, 2025). The 15 states include: Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, West Virginia, Wisconsin.

- Elementary Education (K-6);
- English (6-12);
- Math (6-12);
- Physics (9-12);
- Reading (K-6);
- Science (5-9); and
- Special Education (K-12).⁹⁰

Currently, the DOE allows a teaching candidate with a valid certificate issued by ABCTE to qualify for a temporary certificate. Additionally, the DOE allows a teaching candidate with a valid certificate issued by ABCTE to qualify for a professional certificate if they have completed the one of the requirements for demonstrating professional education competence in the classroom.⁹¹

Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education Program

The Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education Program was created in 2002⁹² to recognize that Florida continues to face teacher shortages, and that fewer young people consider teaching as a career. The Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education Program was established to provide salary, travel, and other related expenses annually for an outstanding Florida teacher (Teacher of the Year) to promote the positive aspects of teaching as a career. The goals of the program are to:

- Enhance the stature of teachers and the teaching profession.
- Promote the importance of quality education and teaching for our future.
- Inspire and attract talented people to become teachers.
- Provide information regarding Florida's scholarship and loan programs related to teaching.
- Promote the teaching profession within community and business groups.
- Provide information to retired military personnel and other individuals who might consider teaching as a second career.
- Work with and represent the Department of Education, as needed.
- Work with and encourage the efforts of school and district teachers of the year.
- Support the activities of the Florida Future Educator of America Program.
- Represent Florida teachers at business, trade, education, and other conferences and meetings.
- Promote the teaching profession in other ways related to the teaching responsibilities, background experiences, and aspirations of the Ambassador for Education.⁹³

The Teacher of the Year is required to serve as the Ambassador for Education for a year. Applications and selection criteria are distributed annually by the Department of Education to all school districts. The Commissioner of Education is required to establish a selection committee which assures representation from teacher organizations, administrators, and parents to select the

⁹⁰ American Board, *Florida Teacher Certification*, available at <https://www.americanboard.org/florida/>, (last visited Mar. 17, 2025)

⁹¹ Florida Department of Education, *Certificate Pathways & Routes*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/pathways-routes/#direct>, (last visited Mar. 17, 2025).

⁹² Ch. 2002-387, L.O.F.

⁹³ Section 1012.77(2), F.S.

Teacher of the Year and Ambassador for Education from among the school district teachers of the year.⁹⁴

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1012.56, F.S., to expand options for educators who hold a valid certificate issued by The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) to have a direct pathway to a professional teaching certificate in Florida. The bill specifies that ABCTE certification satisfies subject area, general knowledge, and professional preparation and educator competence requirements.

The bill amends s. 1012.77, F.S., to include charter school consortia with at least 30 member schools and an approved professional learning system on file with the DOE as eligible entities to nominate teacher-of-the-year candidates.

Background Screenings

Present Situation

In 2012, the Legislature created the Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse (clearinghouse) to create a single “program” of screening individuals and allow for the results of criminal history checks of persons acting as covered care providers to be shared among the specified agencies.⁹⁵ Designated agencies include:

- Agency for Health Care Administration (ACHA);
- Department of Health;
- Department of Children and Families;
- Department of Elder Affairs;
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities;
- Department of Education;
- Each school district;
- Developmental Research (Laboratory) Schools;
- Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind;
- Florida Virtual School;
- Virtual instruction programs;
- Charter schools;
- Charter school Hope Operators;
- Private schools participating in an educational scholarship program;
- Alternative schools;
- Regional workforce boards providing services; and
- Local licensing agencies when these agencies are conducting state and national criminal history background screening on persons who work with children or persons who are elderly or disabled.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Section 1012.77(3), F.S.

⁹⁵ Chapter 2012-73, L.O.F.

⁹⁶ Section 435.02, F.S. (definition of “specified agency”).

Once a person's screening record is in the clearinghouse, that person will avoid the need for any future state screens and related fees.⁹⁷ Final implementation of the clearinghouse by the designated state agencies was required by October 1, 2013. The clearinghouse was initially implemented by the AHCA on January 1, 2013.

Background Screening of Individuals at Schools

School districts, lab schools, the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, the Florida Virtual School, virtual instruction providers, charter schools, hope operators, early learning coalitions, and private schools participating in an educational scholarship program (education entities, collectively) currently using the Volunteer Employee Criminal Screening History System (VECHS) to conduct background screenings are required to use the clearinghouse beginning on January 1, 2023. Education entities must be fully implemented into the Clearinghouse by January 1, 2025, or by a date determined by the AHCA.⁹⁸

Individuals who work in or provide services to school districts, charter schools, alternative schools, and private schools participating in state school choice scholarship programs⁹⁹ must undergo a fingerprint based background screening before being permitted access to school grounds.¹⁰⁰ The individuals who must undergo background screening fall under three personnel classifications: instructional and noninstructional personnel;¹⁰¹ noninstructional school district employees and contracted personnel;¹⁰² and noninstructional contractors.¹⁰³ Candidates for educator certification must also undergo background screening.¹⁰⁴

Employees of each school district, lab schools, the Florida school for the Deaf and the Blind, the Florida Virtual school, virtual instruction programs, charter schools, private schools participating in the education scholarship program and alternative schools must be rescreened under the following schedule:¹⁰⁵

- Employees for whom the last screening was conducted on or before June 30, 2021, must be rescreened by June 30, 2025.
- Employees for whom the last screening was conducted between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022, must be rescreened by June 30, 2026.
- Employees for whom the last screening was conducted between July 1, 2022, and December 31, 2023, must be rescreened by June 30, 2027.

⁹⁷ Agency for Health Care Administration, *Clearinghouse Renewals*, available at https://ahca.myflorida.com/MCHQ/Central_Services/Background_Screening/Renewals.shtml (last visited on March 18, 2025).

⁹⁸ Section 435.12(1), F.S.

⁹⁹ The background screenings conducted by such private schools are conducted through the VECHS.

¹⁰⁰ Sections 1002.421, 1012.32(2), 1012.465(2), and 1012.467(2)(a), F.S.

¹⁰¹ Instructional and noninstructional personnel are individuals who are hired or contracted to fill positions that require direct contact with students in any public school. Section 1012.32(2), F.S.

¹⁰² Noninstructional school district employees and contracted personnel are individuals who are permitted access to school grounds when students are present; who have direct contact with students; or who have access to, or control of, school funds. Section 1012.465(1), F.S.

¹⁰³ Noninstructional contractors are vendors or contractors who are not school district employees, are permitted access to school grounds when students are present and have little or no direct contact with students. Section 1012.467(1), F.S.

¹⁰⁴ Sections 1012.315, 1012.32(2), and 1012.56, F.S.

¹⁰⁵ Section 435.12(3)(a), F.S.

The background screening requirements for each personnel classification vary depending upon the individual's duties, whether or not the individual is a school district employee, and the degree of contact the individual has with students.¹⁰⁶ Because they are more likely to have direct contact with students, candidates for educator certification, instructional and noninstructional personnel, and noninstructional school district employees and contracted personnel must be screened against a distinct list of 52 disqualifying offenses applicable to employment with public schools and school districts.¹⁰⁷

The Commissioner of Education is required to maintain a disqualification list that includes the following:

- The identity of each person who has been permanently denied an educator certificate or whose educator certificate has been permanently revoked and has been placed on the list as directed by the Education Practices Commission pursuant.
- The identity of each person who has been permanently disqualified by the commissioner from owning or operating a private school that participates in state scholarship programs.
- The identity of each person who has been terminated, or has resigned in lieu of termination, from employment as a result of sexual misconduct with a student.¹⁰⁸
- The identity of each person who is ineligible for educator certification or employment based on the following criteria:
 - Is on the disqualification list.
 - Is registered as a sex offender.
 - Is ineligible based on a Level 2 background screening requirements in law.¹⁰⁹
 - Is ineligible for an exemption under current law.¹¹⁰
 - Has been convicted or found guilty of, has had adjudication withheld for any criminal act in another state or under federal law that would count as a disqualifying offense in Florida.¹¹¹

The head of the appropriate agency or qualified entity may grant to any employee or person with an affiliation otherwise disqualified from employment an exemption from disqualification for:

- Felonies for which at least two years have elapsed since the applicant for the exemption has completed or been lawfully released from confinement, supervision, or nonmonetary condition imposed by the court for the disqualifying felony;
- Specified misdemeanors for which the applicant for the exemption has completed or been lawfully released from confinement, supervision, or nonmonetary condition imposed by the court;

¹⁰⁶ See ss. 1012.32(2), 1012.465(2), and 1012.467(2), F.S.

¹⁰⁷ Sections 1012.315, 1012.32, and 1012.465, F.S.

¹⁰⁸ Section 1001.10(4)(b), F.S.

¹⁰⁹ Section 435.04(2), F.S. provides the lists of ineligible criminal offenses a person must not have been arrested for and are awaiting final disposition of; have not been found guilty of, regardless of adjudication, or entered a plea of nolo contendere or guilty to; or have not been adjudicated delinquent and the record has not been sealed or expunged

¹¹⁰ Section 435.07, F.S. allows certain individuals disqualified from employment due to background screening results to seek an exemption if they demonstrate rehabilitation through clear and convincing evidence, provided they have completed sentencing requirements and paid all court-ordered costs. However, exemptions are prohibited for individuals convicted of severe crimes such as sexual offenses, murder, kidnapping, and certain child-related offenses, as well as registered sex offenders, sexual predators, and career offenders.

¹¹¹ Section 1012.315, F.S.

- Offenses that were felonies when committed but that are now misdemeanors and for which the applicant for the exemption has completed or been lawfully released from confinement, supervision, or nonmonetary condition imposed by the court; or
- Findings of delinquency. For offenses that would be felonies if committed by an adult and the record has not been sealed or expunged, the exemption may not be granted until at least three years have elapsed since the applicant for the exemption has completed or been lawfully released from confinement, supervision, or nonmonetary condition imposed by the court for the disqualifying offense.¹¹²

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1012.315, F.S., to clarify that the owner or operator of a private school must meet the same background screening requirements as an individual who has direct contact with students. The bill also clarifies that background screening exemptions do not apply to public and private school employees in positions that require direct contact with students. Finally, the bill specifies that persons who apply for certification or employment in positions that may require direct contact with a student are governed by the laws and rules in effect when the application was issued for initial certificate or employment, if continuity of certificates or employment are maintained.

The bill also amends s. 435.12, F.S., to extend the background rescreening deadlines for public and private school employees by approximately six months, moving compliance dates from June 30 to December 1 over the next three years. The new rescreening schedule will be as follows:

- Employees for whom the last screening was conducted on or before June 30, 2021, must be rescreened by December 1, 2025.
- Employees for whom the last screening was conducted between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022, must be rescreened by December 1, 2026.
- Employees for whom the last screening was conducted between July 1, 2022, and December 31, 2023, must be rescreened by December 1, 2027.

School Board Discretionary Millage Levy

Present Situation

Each district school board is authorized to levy 1.5 mills against the taxable value for public school purposes to fund specific needs as identified in law, including, for example:¹¹³

- New construction, remodeling projects, sites and site improvement or expansion to new sites, existing sites, auxiliary facilities, athletic facilities, or ancillary facilities.
- Payments for educational facilities and sites due under a lease-purchase agreement.
- Payment of costs of leasing relocatable educational facilities, of renting or leasing educational facilities and sites, or of renting or leasing buildings or space within existing buildings.

¹¹² Section 435.07(1), F.S.

¹¹³ Section 1011.71(2), F.S.

In addition, a district school board may expend up to \$200 per unweighted FTE student from the revenue generated by the millage levy to fund expenses for:¹¹⁴

- The purchase, lease-purchase, or lease of driver's education vehicles; motor vehicles used for the maintenance or operation of plants and equipment; security vehicles; or vehicles used in storing or distributing materials and equipment.
- Payment of the cost of premiums property and casualty insurance necessary to insure school district educational and ancillary plants.¹¹⁵

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 1011.71, F.S. to add liability insurance in the listed types of casualty insurance that a school district may use the revenue generated by their discretionary millage levy to pay for the cost of premiums.

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability

Present Situation

The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) is a research arm of the Florida Legislature. The OPPAGA was created by the Legislature in 1994 to help improve the performance and accountability of state government. The OPPAGA provides data, evaluative research, and objective analyses to assist legislative budget and policy deliberations. The OPPAGA conducts research as directed by state law, the presiding officers, or the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee.¹¹⁶

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 11.52, F.S., by authorizing the OPPAGA to develop contracts or agreements with State University System institutions to utilize the expertise of state university faculty and research staff to provide assistance in analysis and evaluative research.

Postsecondary Tuition and Fees

Present Situation

Residency Status for Tuition Purposes

Students must be classified as residents or nonresidents for the purpose of assessing tuition in postsecondary educational programs offered by public postsecondary institutions. Students pay differing tuition rates based on their status as a resident or nonresident of Florida.¹¹⁷

To qualify as a resident for tuition purposes, a person, or if that person is a dependent child, his or her parent or parents, must have established legal residence in Florida and must have

¹¹⁴ Section 1011.71(5), F.S.

¹¹⁵ The casualty insurance authorized is burglary and theft, glass, boiler and machinery, leakage and fire extinguisher equipment, and elevator. Section 624.605(1)(d), (f), (g), (h), and (m), F.S.

¹¹⁶ Office of Program Policy and Government Accountability, *About Us*, <https://oppaga.fl.gov/About> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

¹¹⁷ Section 1009.21, F.S.

maintained legal residence for at least 12 consecutive months immediately prior to his or her initial enrollment in the public postsecondary institution.¹¹⁸

Each public postsecondary institution must make a residency determination based on the submission of at least two forms of documentation specified in law. Documentation includes, but is not limited to, a Florida voter registration card, Florida driver's license, Florida vehicle registration, homestead exemption (which is a single, conclusive proof of residency), proof of full-time Florida employment, declaration of domicile, Florida incorporation, lease agreements, or utility bills.¹¹⁹

Additional Student Fees

Each FCS and SUS institution is authorized to charge additional student fees. Such fees may include activity, service, athletics, financial aid, technology, capital improvements, and other user fees and fines.¹²⁰

Specifically, each FCS institution's board of trustees is authorized to establish a separate fee for financial aid purposes in an additional amount up to, but not to exceed, five percent of the total student tuition or out-of-state fees collected. Up to 25 percent or \$600,000, whichever is greater, of the financial aid fees collected may be used to assist students who demonstrate academic merit; who participate in athletics, public service, cultural arts, and other extracurricular programs as determined by the institution; or who are identified as members of a targeted gender or ethnic minority population.¹²¹

Tuition and Fee Waivers

To support access to higher education, school districts, each FCS institution and state university is authorized to provide a variety of tuition and fee waivers for eligible students. These waivers support individuals based on employment, military service, financial need, and other specific circumstances.¹²² These waivers include, but are not limited to, the following:

- University Employees – Waiver for full-time employees of a state university for up to six credit hours per term on a space-available basis.
- Classroom Teachers – Waiver for full-time classroom teachers to enroll in up to six credit hours per term in undergraduate courses related to special education, mathematics, or science.
- Graduate Students in School Psychology Programs – Waiver for internship credit hours for graduate students completing internships in public schools under the supervision of a certified school psychologist.
- Dependents of Deceased First Responders – Waiver for spouses and children of first responders who died in the line of duty.
- Active-Duty Military Members – Waiver of out-of-state fees for active-duty service members residing or stationed outside Florida.

¹¹⁸ Section 1009.21(2), F.S. This section also specifies other circumstances that may classify a person as a resident for tuition purposes.

¹¹⁹ Section 1009.21(3), F.S.

¹²⁰ Sections 1009.23 and 1009.24, F.S.

¹²¹ Section 1009.23(8), F.S.

¹²² See Sections 1009.25, 1009.26, and 1009.265, F.S.

- Grandparent Waiver – Waiver of out-of-state fees for students with a grandparent who is a Florida resident, provided the student achieves an SAT combined score no lower than the 89th national percentile or the concordant score on the ACT or Classic Learning Test (CLT), and enrolls full-time in an undergraduate program.¹²³

Effect of Proposed Changes

Student Fees

The bill modifies s. 1009.23, F.S., by authorizing an FCS institution to allocate a portion of financial aid fees to assist underrepresented students rather than students who are members of a targeted gender or ethnic minority.

Tuition and Fee Waivers

The bill amends s. 251.001, F.S., by providing tuition and fee waivers for active members of the Florida State Guard to enroll in a state university or Florida College System institution for up to six credit hours of courses per term on a space-available basis. This waiver is similar to the existing tuition and fee waiver available to state employees.

The bill amends s. 1009.26, F.S., by revising the grandparent out-of-state fee waiver by replacing the legal residency requirement with a new standard requiring the grandparent to have established domicile in Florida for at least five years.

State College Regional Consortium Organization

Present Situation

School districts with 20,000 or fewer students, developmental research (laboratory) schools, and the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind may enter into cooperative agreements to form a regional consortium service organization (regional consortium).¹²⁴ Each regional consortium must provide, at a minimum, three of the following services:

- Exceptional student education.
- Teacher student centers.
- Environmental education.
- Federal grant procurement and coordination.
- Data processing.
- Health insurance.
- Risk management insurance.
- Staff development.
- Purchasing.
- Planning and accountability.¹²⁵

¹²³ Section 1009.26, F.S.

¹²⁴ Section 1001.451, F.S.

¹²⁵ *Id.*

The board of directors of a regional consortium may use various means to generate revenue in support of its activities, which may include patents, copyrights, and trademarks and licenses. Such funds must be used to support the organization's marketing and research development activities in order to improve and increase services to its member districts.¹²⁶

Effect of Proposed Changes

Creates s. 1001.68, F.S., to create the state college regional consortium service organizations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of small institutions in the Florida College System that serve rural communities. Colleges with 5,000 or fewer full-time equivalent students may enter into cooperative agreements to form a regional consortium service organization. Each organization must provide at least three of the following services:

- Grant procurement.
- Institutional research and reporting.
- Risk management.
- Professional development for faculty and staff.
- Leadership support.
- Information technology and cybersecurity training.
- Faculty and staff recruitment.
- Workforce development programs.
- Cooperative purchasing.
- Administrative services.
- Enrollment services.

Each state college regional consortium service organization must be governed by a board of directors composed of the presidents of the respective member colleges.

The Office of Ocean Economy

Present Situation

The maritime industry encompasses a wide range of interrelated activities such as shipping, shipbuilding, port operations, maritime logistics, fishing and aquaculture, offshore energy, and marine services. The maritime industry facilitates the movement of goods, connects markets, supports industries, and plays a vital role in sustainable development.

The U.S. marine economy plays a significant role in the national economy, contributing \$432 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) and supporting 2.3 million jobs across various industries. In 2021, the sector generated \$730 billion in sales, reflecting a 10.5 percent increase and demonstrating its substantial economic impact. Notably, the tourism and recreation sector experienced 27.3% growth (\$49.8 billion), underscoring the marine economy's vital role in driving business activity, sustaining employment, and supporting overall economic stability.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Section 1001.451(5), F.S.

¹²⁷ Office of Coastal Management, Fast Facts, *Marine Economy*, <https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/marine-economy.html> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

Florida's marine economy plays a vital role in the state's economic landscape, supporting numerous businesses, jobs, and wages. As of the most recent data:

- There are 24,588 marine-related businesses operating in the state, contributing to economic activity across various sectors.
- The industry employs 546,866 workers, reflecting its significant impact on Florida's job market.
- These jobs provide a total of \$20.6 billion in wages, supporting livelihoods across the coastal and marine sectors.
- Florida's marine economy contributes \$39.9 billion to the state's GDP, demonstrating its importance in driving statewide economic growth.¹²⁸

The Office of Ocean Economy (office) is created within the State University System and housed at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). The office is created to connect the state's ocean and coastal resources to economic development strategies that grow, enhance, or contribute to the ocean economy.¹²⁹

The duties of the office are to advance research, innovation, industry recruitment, funding, and workforce training to grow the ocean economy. The office is intended to foster collaboration among universities, colleges, and industry partners while maintaining an online inventory of research and resources. The office identifies economic challenges, supports commercialization, removes regulatory barriers, and expands financial opportunities. It also tracks job growth, wages, and business development while promoting Florida's role in the global ocean economy. Additionally, the office educates state and local entities on aligning economic growth with environmental sustainability.¹³⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 288.036, F.S., by revising the duties of the Office of Ocean Economy at FAU. The bill expands the collaboration and coordination between the office and institutions.

Specifically, the bill:

- Shifts from fostering relationships to actively collaborating and coordinating with institutions.
- Expands the scope of collaboration to include career centers and specifies collaboration with the College of the Florida Keys.

The bill adds "strengthening the workforce" as an explicit goal in identifying economic challenges and solutions within the ocean economy. This may broaden the office's role in addressing labor market demands alongside innovation, commercialization, and financial growth. Additionally, the bill expands the office's online reporting requirements by requiring an inventory of programs related to the ocean economy, an evaluation of additional credentialing opportunities, and a list of institutions or training providers offering these credentials.

¹²⁸ NOAA, 2024 Marine Economy Report: Florida (2021), available at <https://coast.noaa.gov/data/digitalcoast/pdf/marine-economy-florida.pdf>.

¹²⁹ Section 288.036(2), F.S.

¹³⁰ Section 288.036(3), F.S.

The bill requires the office to collaborate with public and private educational and industry organizations to make recommendations in:

- Strengthening employment opportunities in specific maritime sectors, including commercial fishing, fisheries and aquaculture, shipbuilding, and shipping.
- Expanding maritime education programs and launching a public awareness campaign.
- Increasing access to dual enrollment, preapprenticeship, apprenticeship, and work-study programs in both public and private institutions.
- Aligning regulatory frameworks for fishing and boat operations with workforce demand through coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Furthermore, the bill clarifies that the office must provide a detailed report on the economic benefits of its activities, and beginning August 1, 2026, the report must include recommendations related to workforce expansion and regulatory alignment.

Florida Center for Brain Tumor Research

Present Situation

In July 2006, the Florida legislature established the Florida Center for Brain Tumor Research (FCBTR), within the Evelyn F. and William L. McKnight Brain Institute of the University of Florida, in a coordinated effort among the state's public and private universities and hospitals and the biomedical industry to discover cures for brain tumor and develop brain tumor treatment modalities.¹³¹

The FCBTR serves as a collaborative, statewide resource, maintaining a biorepository of cancerous and non-cancerous brain tumor specimens, along with matched samples of DNA, plasma, serum, and cerebrospinal fluid. These samples are collected from patients who provide informed consent at various healthcare institutions across Florida. Professional research coordinators and tissue acquisition specialists facilitate the collection process, ensuring that valuable specimens and data are available for future research. The bank distributes materials to researchers both within Florida and beyond, supporting investigations into improved treatments and potential cures for brain tumors.¹³²

In addition to its biorepository functions, the FCBTR has awarded pilot funding to researchers throughout the state. This funding has led to the development of novel therapies currently being tested in clinical trials and has resulted in significant extramural funding and meaningful collaborations between public and private institutions in Florida.¹³³

The FCBTR operates under the guidance of a scientific advisory council, which includes biomedical researchers, physicians, clinicians, and representatives from public and private universities and hospitals. The council members are appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President of the Senate, and State Surgeon General. These members

¹³¹ Section 381.853, F.S.

¹³² Florida Center for Brain Tumor Research, College of Medicine, University of Florida, *About Us*, <https://fcbtr.ufl.edu/about-us/> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

¹³³ Florida Center for Brain Tumor Research, College of Medicine, University of Florida, *About Us*, <https://fcbtr.ufl.edu/about-us/> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

serve staggered 4-year terms and without compensation. The council meets at least annually to provide oversight and strategic direction.¹³⁴

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 381.853, F.S., to shift the appointment authority to the President of the University of Florida, in consultation with the dean of the University of Florida College of Medicine, to appoint the advisory council members for the Florida Center for Brain Tumor Research.

Assistive Technology Advisory Council

Present Situation

The Assistive Technology Advisory Council was established to ensure consumer involvement in the development, application, and distribution of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities. The council plays a critical role in statewide policy development, legislative advocacy, and the oversight of assistive technology programs to enhance accessibility and service delivery. Its responsibilities include reviewing consumer responsiveness, evaluating program effectiveness, and advising on resource allocation to improve assistive technology access across Florida.¹³⁵

The council is composed of members representing a diverse range of stakeholders, including individuals with disabilities, their family members, consumer advocacy organizations, business and industry representatives, and various state agencies involved in disability services. A majority of its members must be individuals with disabilities who are assistive technology consumers or their family members. Membership is also required to be geographically representative of the state and reflect diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, age, and disability type. Members are appointed by the Commissioner of Education and serve terms of up to three years, with a limit of two consecutive terms. A member who has served two terms may be reappointed after a three-year break, ensuring opportunities for new voices while maintaining institutional knowledge.¹³⁶

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 413.407, F.S., by removing diversity, race, ethnicity, gender, and age from the requirement that the Assistive Technology Advisory Council members be representative of the state's population. The bill also increases the term limit of council members from three to five years.

Apprenticeship Training Programs

Present Situation

Apprenticeship training provides educational opportunities for individuals to develop skills for trades, occupations, and professions that align with their abilities. These programs promote

¹³⁴ Section 381.853(4), F.S.

¹³⁵ Section 413.407, F.S.

¹³⁶ Section 413.407(1), F.S.

hands-on training in occupations requiring physical manipulative skills by expanding job training opportunities and strengthening coordination between academic programs, career programs, and registered apprenticeships. By combining on-the-job training with related classroom instruction, apprenticeship programs help individuals gain practical experience while enhancing their knowledge and expertise.

Efforts to support apprenticeship training include establishing preapprenticeship programs within the public school system, expanding existing registered programs, and developing new programs in occupations that are well-suited for apprenticeship. Oversight of these programs ensures the adoption of uniform minimum standards, assists educational institutions in developing preapprenticeship opportunities, and upholds the quality of training through program promotion, registration, monitoring, and enforcement of standards.¹³⁷

The established uniform minimum standards and policies governing apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs ensure training providers submit necessary performance data while maintaining quality training standards. These standards regulate apprentice employment and training conditions, including ratios of apprentices to journeymen, safety measures, related instruction, and on-the-job training. An annual report is published by September 1 detailing registered programs, expenditures, program completion rates, wage progression, and public engagement efforts. It also assists district school boards, Florida College System institutions, program sponsors, and workforce development boards in promoting apprenticeship opportunities to students, parents, and the community.¹³⁸

Apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs must meet established standards to be registered and maintained, ensuring compliance through monitoring and investigation of complaints. Programs that fail to adhere to standards or refuse to cooperate with oversight efforts may have their registration canceled. The development and expansion of apprenticeship opportunities are supported through outreach initiatives, including efforts to educate veterans on career pathways. Local apprenticeship sponsors receive assistance in developing training standards, and registered programs are encouraged to grant credit to individuals who have completed preapprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship programs must operate in compliance with all applicable standards, with minority and gender diversity considered in their administration.¹³⁹

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 446.032, F.S., by changing the required publishing date of the annual report on apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs from September 1 to November 30.

The bill amends s. 446.041, F.S., by removing the term “minority and gender diversity” and replacing it with “underrepresented groups” to be considered in the administration of apprenticeship and preapprenticeship training programs.

¹³⁷ Section 446.011, F.S.

¹³⁸ Section 446.032, F.S.

¹³⁹ Section 446.041, F.S.

Florida Educational Equity Act

Present Situation

The Florida Educational Equity Act¹⁴⁰ (FEEA) requires equal access to, and prohibits discrimination against, any student or employee of the state's K-20 public education system on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, national origin, disability, religion, or marital status. No individual may, on such bases, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any public K-20 education program or activity, or in any employment conditions or practices, conducted by a public educational institution that receives or benefits from federal or state financial assistance.¹⁴¹ Additionally, the prohibition on discrimination extends to participation in any interscholastic, intercollegiate, club, or intermural athletics offered by a public K-20 educational institution, and no K-20 education institution may provide athletics separately on such basis, except as provided by law.¹⁴² Further, the FEEA expressly requires that any discrimination motivated by anti-Semitic¹⁴³ intent be treated in an identical manner to discrimination motivated by race.¹⁴⁴

Public schools and Florida College System (FCS) institutions must develop and implement strategies to increase participation among students of a particular race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or marital status in programs where they have been traditionally underrepresented. These efforts apply to fields such as mathematics, science, computer technology, electronics, communications technology, engineering, and career education to promote greater diversity and inclusion.¹⁴⁵

The FEEA is implemented by the Board of Governors through regulations¹⁴⁶ and rules adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE).¹⁴⁷ Additionally, the Office of Equal Educational Opportunity (OEEO), within the Department of Education (DOE), serves implementation functions including, but not limited to, the following:

- Requiring all district school boards and FCS institution boards of trustees to develop and submit plans for the implementation of the FEEA to the DOE.
- Requiring all district school boards and Florida College System institution boards of trustees to submit data and information necessary to determine compliance with the FEEA.

¹⁴⁰ Section 1000.05(1), F.S.

¹⁴¹ Section 1000.05(2)(a), F.S. Students may be separated for permissible single gender programs, for portions of a class that deals with human reproduction, or during participation in bodily contact sports. Section 1000.05(2)(d), F.S. All K-20 public education classes and guidance services must be made available to students without regard to any of the bases described above. Section 1000.05(2)(c) and (e), F.S.

¹⁴² Section. 1000.05(3)(a), F.S. Public K-20 educational institutions are authorized to maintain separate teams for members of each gender or based on ability in certain circumstances. Section. 1000.05(3)(b)-(c), F.S. It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors and the Commissioner of Education to determine whether equal athletic opportunities are provided for both genders at state universities and in school districts and Florida College Systems, respectively. Section 1000.05(3)(d), F.S.

¹⁴³ For purposes of this section, the term "anti-Semitism" includes a certain perception of the Jewish people, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jewish people, rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism directed toward a person, his or her property, or toward Jewish community institutions or religious facilities. Section 1005.05(8), F.S. The FEEA also lists examples of anti-Semitism. Section 1000.05(7)(a)-(b), F.S.

¹⁴⁴ Section 1000.05(8), F.S.

¹⁴⁵ Section 1000.05(5), F.S.

¹⁴⁶ Board of Governors Regulation 2.003.

¹⁴⁷ Rule 6A-19.010, F.A.C.

- Developing and implementing enforcement mechanisms with appropriate penalties to ensure that public K-12 schools and Florida College System institutions comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the FEEA.
- Reporting to the Commissioner of Education any district school board or FCS institution board of trustees found to be out of compliance with the FEEA or the rules implementing the FEEA.¹⁴⁸

The SBE is responsible for ensuring compliance with its rules by district school boards and FCS institution boards of trustees. If a board is found to be out of compliance, the Commissioner of Education must report the violation, and the SBE may impose penalties, including declaring the institution ineligible for competitive state grants and directing the Chief Financial Officer to withhold general revenue funds until compliance is achieved. The institution remains ineligible for funding until it meets compliance requirements or the SBE approves a corrective plan.¹⁴⁹

The FEEA provides a cause of action for anyone aggrieved by a violation of the FEEA. Such an individual is authorized to seek equitable relief and, should he or she prevail, he or she may be awarded reasonable attorney fees and court costs.¹⁵⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1000.05, F.S., by renaming the “Florida Educational Equity Act” to the “Florida Educational Equality Act”. The bill changes the term “gender” to “sex” and removes the term “particular race, color, national origin, sex, disability or marital status” and replaces it with “underrepresented.”

Additionally, the bill removes the specific reporting duty of the OEEA and the penalties for non-compliance in favor of requiring the Commissioner of Education and State Board of Education to utilize their enforcement authority already specified in law.

Hillsborough Community College

Present Situation

Hillsborough Community College (HCC) opened in 1968 as “Hillsborough Junior College.” In 1970, the college’s name was changed to Hillsborough Community College to better reflect its community orientation and involvement.¹⁵¹ HCC is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS) to award associate and baccalaureate degrees.¹⁵² HCC offers a baccalaureate degree in nursing.

¹⁴⁸ Section 1000.05(6), F.S.

¹⁴⁹ Section 1000.05, F.S.

¹⁵⁰ S. 1000.05(9), F.S.

¹⁵¹ Hillsborough Community College, About Us, *History*, <https://news.hccfl.edu/about-us/history/default.aspx> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

¹⁵² Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges, *Hillsborough Community College*, https://sacscoc.org/institutions/?institution_name=hillsborough+community+college&results_per_page=25&curpage=1 (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

Florida College System Institution Name Change

With the approval of its board of trustees, a Florida College System (FCS) institution may change the institution's name and use the designation "college" or "state college" if it has been authorized by the SBE to grant baccalaureate degrees and has been accredited as a baccalaureate-degree-granting institution by an accrediting agency or association recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDOE).¹⁵³

With the approval of its board of trustees, an FCS institution that either has not been authorized to grant baccalaureate degrees or has not been accredited as a baccalaureate-degree-granting institution by an accrediting agency or association recognized by the USDOE may request approval from the SBE to change the institution's name and use the designation "college." The SBE may approve the request if the FCS institution enters into an agreement with the SBE to do the following:

- Maintain as its primary mission responsibility for responding to community needs for postsecondary academic education and career degree education.
- Maintain an open-door admissions policy for associate-level degree programs and workforce education programs.
- Continue to provide outreach to underserved populations.
- Continue to provide remedial education.
- Comply with all provisions of the statewide articulation agreement that relate to two-year and four-year public degree-granting institutions as adopted by the SBE.¹⁵⁴

A district board of trustees that approves a change to the name of an institution must seek statutory codification of such name change during the next regular legislative session.¹⁵⁵

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1000.21, F.S., to change the name of "Hillsborough Community College" to "Hillsborough College".

Board of Governors

Present Situation

The State University System (SUS) is composed of 12 public universities,¹⁵⁶ each administered by a board of trustees. The Board of Governors (BOG) is responsible for operating, regulating, and managing the entire SUS.¹⁵⁷ It also ensures compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws governing the institutions under its jurisdiction.¹⁵⁸

Additionally, the BOG oversees cost-effective policy decisions at each constituent university, ensuring alignment with institutional missions, the maintenance of high-quality education

¹⁵³ Section 1001.60(2)(b)1., F.S.

¹⁵⁴ Section 1001.60(2)(b)2., F.S.

¹⁵⁵ Section 1001.60(2)(c), F.S.

¹⁵⁶ See State University System of Florida, *Universities*, <https://www.flbog.edu/universities/> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025) (identifying 12 state universities).

¹⁵⁷ FLA. CONST., art. IX, s. 7(a)-(d).

¹⁵⁸ Section 1001.705(2), F.S.

programs, performance measurement, data reporting, and input on state policy, budgeting, and education standards.¹⁵⁹ To fulfill these responsibilities, the BOG carries out key functions, including:

- Developing strategic and accountability plans with performance metrics for universities.
- Requiring universities to provide students with employment and earnings data for degree programs.¹⁶⁰
- Maintaining an information system to track and report institutional performance.
- Investigating allegations of waste, fraud, or financial mismanagement at state universities.
- Authorizing regulatory flexibilities and waivers to support institutional priorities.
- Monitoring and improving four-year graduation rates through institutional proposals.
- Matching student data with state and federal employment records to assess program effectiveness.¹⁶¹

MyFloridaFuture is a free online tool, developed by the SUS, that helps students, parents, and policymakers make more informed decisions about college and career planning. This interactive tool allows users to explore data related to graduate salary, employment, and student debt by institution or major at both the statewide and individual institution levels.¹⁶²

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 1001.706, F.S., by removing the requirement for the Board of Governors to provide electronic access to data on the top 25 percent of degrees with the highest job placement and earnings and the bottom 10 percent of degrees with the lowest job placement and earnings before registration.

Preeminent State Research Universities Program

Present Situation

The preeminent state research universities program is a collaborative partnership between the Board of Governors (BOG) and the Legislature to raise the academic and research preeminence of the highest performing state research universities in Florida.¹⁶³ A state university that meets 12 of the 13 academic and research excellent standards specified in law is designated a “preeminent state research university.”¹⁶⁴ Currently, the University of Florida, Florida State University, University of South Florida, and Florida International University are designated as preeminent state research universities.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Section 1001.706, F.S.

¹⁶⁰ See Section 1008.39, F.S. The Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) is a data collection and consumer reporting system that provides employment and education follow-up data on former students and program participants who have graduated, exited, or completed a public education or training program within the State of Florida.

¹⁶¹ Section 1001.706(5), F.S.

¹⁶² Florida Board of Governors, *MyFloridaFuture*, <https://www.flbog.edu/myfloridafuture/> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

¹⁶³ Section 1001.7065(1), F.S.

¹⁶⁴ Section 1001.7065(3), F.S.

¹⁶⁵ Board of Governors, State University System of Florida, *Accountability Propels State University System of Florida to New Heights*, <https://www.flbog.edu/2024/07/01/accountability-propels-state-university-system-of-florida-to-new-heights/> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

The following are the academic and research excellence standards established for the preeminent state research universities program and must be reported annually in the BOG Accountability Plan:

- An average weighted grade point average (GPA) of 4.0 or higher and an average SAT score of 1200 or higher or an average ACT score of 25 or higher for fall semester incoming freshmen.
- A top-50 ranking on at least two well-known national public university rankings, such as U.S. News & World Report.
- A 90% or higher freshman retention rate for full-time, first-time-in-college students.
- A 60% or higher four-year graduation rate for full-time, first-time-in-college students.
- At least six faculty members who are members of a national academy.
- Total annual research expenditures of \$200 million or more, including federal research funding.
- Annual research expenditures in diversified nonmedical sciences of \$150 million or more.
- A top-100 national ranking for research expenditures in five or more STEM fields.
- At least 100 patents awarded by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office over the most recent three-year period.
- 400 or more doctoral degrees awarded annually, including professional doctoral degrees in medical and health care disciplines.
- 200 or more postdoctoral appointees annually.
- An endowment of \$500 million or more.
- Total annual STEM-related research expenditures of \$50 million or more, including federal research funding.¹⁶⁶

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1001.7065, F.S., by expanding the standardized test options used to meet the academic and research excellence standards for the preeminent state research universities program. It adds the Classical Learning Test (CLT) as an alternative to the SAT and ACT, requiring an average CLT score of 83 or higher on a 120-point scale for incoming freshmen.

Emergency Opioid Antagonists

Present Situation

Each Florida College System institution and state university must maintain a supply of emergency opioid antagonists,¹⁶⁷ such as naloxone hydrochloride or any similarly acting drug approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), in every residence hall or dormitory it owns or operates. These emergency opioid antagonists must be placed in clearly marked locations within each residence hall or dormitory and must be easily accessible to campus law enforcement officers trained in their administration. Public and private partnerships

¹⁶⁶ Section 1001.7065(2), F.S.

¹⁶⁷ Section 1004.0971(1)(b), F.S., defines an “emergency opioid antagonist” as naloxone hydrochloride or any similarly acting drug that blocks the effects of opioids administered from outside the body and that is approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of an opioid overdose.

are encouraged to cover the costs associated with purchasing and placing these emergency opioid antagonists.¹⁶⁸

Campus law enforcement officers who are trained and administer or attempt to administer an emergency opioid antagonist in compliance with applicable laws, as well as the institution that employs such officers, are immune from civil or criminal liability.¹⁶⁹

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1004.0971, F.S., by removing the specific reference to “naloxone hydrochloride or any similarly acting” drug and instead broadly defining an emergency opioid antagonist as any FDA-approved drug that blocks the effects of opioids and is used for opioid overdose treatment.

Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education Program

Present Situation

Created within the Department of Education, the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program offers a unique opportunity for students who have left high school to get back on track. Designed for students aged 16 to 21, GATE provides a pathway to earn valuable career education credentials while also completing a standard high school diploma or its equivalent.¹⁷⁰

Through the GATE program, students can enroll in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program and an Adult Secondary Education (ASE) program simultaneously. Eligible ASE programs include Adult High School or GED® Preparation. Participants will work towards earning both a high school diploma and a credential from a Career Education Program on the Master Credential list in their chosen career field. Students have up to three years to complete the GATE Program.¹⁷¹

To be eligible for participation in the GATE Program, a student must:

- Not have earned a standard high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma before enrolling in the GATE Program;
- Have been withdrawn from high school;
- Be a resident of the state for tuition purposes;
- Be 16 to 21 years of age at the time of initial enrollment, and if 16 or 17 years of age, have withdrawn from school enrollment pursuant to certain requirements and safeguards;¹⁷²
- Select the adult secondary education program and career education program of his or her choice at the time of admission to the GATE Program, provided that the career education program is included on the Master Credentials List. The student must remain in their chosen

¹⁶⁸ Section 1004.0971, F.S.

¹⁶⁹ Section 1004.0971(5), F.S.

¹⁷⁰ Section 1004.933, F.S. and Florida Department of Education, Adult Education, *Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/gate.shtml> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

¹⁷¹ Florida Department of Education, Adult Education, *Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/gate.shtml> (last visited Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁷² Section. 1003.21(1), F.S.

pathway after enrollment, except that, if necessary, the student may enroll in an adult basic education program prior to enrolling in the adult secondary education program;

- Maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) for career and technical education coursework; and
- Complete the adult secondary education program and the career education program within three years unless the institution determines that an extension is warranted due to extenuating circumstances.¹⁷³

GATE Startup Grant Program

The GATE Startup Grant Program is established within the Department of Education (department) to fund and support the startup and implementation of the GATE Program. The purpose of the grant program is to increase access to programs that support adult learners earning a high school credential, either a high school diploma or its equivalent, and a workforce credential aligned to statewide or regional demand. The department is required to administer the grants, determine eligibility, and distribute grant awards.¹⁷⁴

Applicants eligible to apply for the GATE Startup Grant Program must meet the definition of an “institution”¹⁷⁵ and must be located in or serve a rural area of opportunity as designated by the Governor. Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO) are areas designated by the Governor that have been adversely affected by an extraordinary economic event, severe or chronic distress, or a natural disaster.¹⁷⁶

Florida’s designated RAOs are:

- Northwest Rural Area of Opportunity: Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, and Washington Counties, and the area within the city limits of Freeport and Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and intercostal waterway.
- South Central Rural Area of Opportunity: DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee counties, and the cities of Pahokee, Belle Glade, and South Bay (Palm Beach County) and Immokalee (Collier County).
- North Central Rural Area of Opportunity: Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor and Union.¹⁷⁷

Grant funds may be used for planning activities and other expenses associated with the creation of the GATE Program, such as expenses related to program instruction, instructional equipment, supplies, instructional personnel, and student services. Grant funds may not be used for indirect costs. Grant recipients must submit an annual report in a format prescribed by the department.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Section 1004.933(4), F.S.

¹⁷⁴ Section 1011.804, F.S.

¹⁷⁵ Section 1011.804(2), F.S. The term “institution” means a school district career center established under s. 1001.44, a charter technical career center established under s. 1002.34, or a Florida College System institution identified in s. 1000.21 which offers the GATE Program pursuant to s. 1004.933.

¹⁷⁶ Section 288.0656(d), F.S.

¹⁷⁷ Department of Education, *Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/gate.shtml> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

¹⁷⁸ Section 1011.804(6), F.S.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1004.933, F.S., by authorizing an institution to enter into an agreement with an online provider for the adult education or career instruction portion of the GATE Program, provided the provider's instructional content and services align with the state career and adult education curriculum frameworks.

The bill also modifies the age requirement at initial enrollment, changing it from "16 to 21" to "at least 16" years old. Additionally, it clarifies that students are not required to enroll in adult secondary and career education program coursework simultaneously with the GATE Program but maintains the three-year completion requirement.

The bill amends s. 1011.804, F.S., by expanding the authorized use of the GATE Startup Fund. Specifically, it authorizes institutions with existing GATE Programs located in or serving a RAO to apply for grant funds exclusively for marketing and outreach efforts to increase student participation. Additionally, all grant recipients are authorized to use funds for these purposes.

Nonpublic Religious Postsecondary Institutions

Present Situation

The Commission for Independent Education

The Commission for Independent Education (commission) was established in 2001 and is responsible for matters relating to nonpublic postsecondary educational institutions. The commission's functions include consumer protection, program improvements, institutional policies and administration, data management, and the licensure of independent schools, colleges, and universities.¹⁷⁹

Licensure of Nonpublic Postsecondary Educational Institutions

Each college or school operating within the state must obtain licensure from the commission unless the institution is not under the commission's purview or jurisdiction as provided in law.¹⁸⁰ The commission has developed 12 standards by which to evaluate institutions for licensure. Standards include administrative organization, academic programs, admissions requirements, finances, faculty, library resources, facilities, student services and advertising.¹⁸¹

Provisional Licensure is the first level of licensure obtained by an applicant and allows the institution to advertise, recruit students, accept fees and tuition from students, and hold classes. Provisional Licensure is granted when the commission has determined that an applicant is in substantial compliance with the standards for licensure. A Provisional License is typically granted for one year. The process to obtain Provisional Licensure for a new applicant normally takes six to twelve months.¹⁸² A provisional license may include conditions required by the

¹⁷⁹ Section 1005.21, F.S., and Florida Department of Education, *Commission for Independent Education*, <https://www.fldoe.org/policy/cie/> (last visited Jan. 16, 2024).

¹⁸⁰ Sections 1005.31(1) and 1005.06, F.S.

¹⁸¹ Section 1005.31(2), F.S. and Rule 6E-2.004, F.A.C.

¹⁸² Florida Department of Education, *2022-2023 Commission for Independent Education Annual Report* (2024), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7748/urlt/2223annualreport.pdf> at 14 (last visited Apr. 2, 2025).

commission and all conditions must be met before the institution may receive a different licensure status.¹⁸³

Annual Licensure is typically the second level of licensure obtained by an institution holding a Provisional License, or seeking renewal of an Annual License, when the commission has determined that an institution is in full compliance with the standards for licensure. An institution may continue to hold an Annual License as long as the institution remains in full compliance with the standards for licensure, does not undergo a substantive change, or meets the requirements and applies for a License by Means of Accreditation. An Annual License is typically granted for one year. Prior to the granting of an initial Annual License, a satisfactory on-site visit must occur. The process to obtain an initial Annual License or renewal of an Annual License normally takes three months from receipt of the Application for Annual License.

Institutions that hold an Annual License may add new degrees, programs, or majors to their offerings or alter any licensed program by more than 20 percent since their last review, change the title of a program or the credential awarded, or discontinue a program upon approval by the commission.¹⁸⁴

Religious Institutions

The commission does not have jurisdiction or purview over all nonpublic postsecondary educational institutions. Certain postsecondary educational institutions are exempt from licensure and jurisdiction under the commission.¹⁸⁵

Religious institutions are not under the jurisdiction or purview of the commission and are not required to obtain licensure. A religious college may operate without governmental oversight if the college annually verifies by sworn affidavit to the commission that:

- The name of the institution includes a religious modifier or the name of a religious patriarch, saint, person, or symbol of the church.
- The institution offers only educational programs that prepare students for religious vocations as ministers, professionals, or laypersons in the categories of ministry, counseling, theology, education, administration, music, fine arts, media communications, or social work.
- The titles of degrees issued by the institution cannot be confused with secular degree titles. For this purpose, each degree title must include a religious modifier that immediately precedes, or is included within, any of the following degrees: Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Science, Doctor of Philosophy, and Doctor of Education. The religious modifier must be placed on the title line of the degree, on the transcript, and whenever the title of the degree appears in official school documents or publications.
- The duration of all degree programs offered by the institution is consistent with the standards of the commission.

¹⁸³ Section 1005.31(5), F.S.

¹⁸⁴ Florida Department of Education, *2022-2023 Commission for Independent Education Annual Report (2024)*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7748/urlt/2223annualreport.pdf> at 20 (last visited Apr. 2, 2025).

¹⁸⁵ Section 1005.06, F.S. These include public colleges and universities; institutions that are otherwise licensed, such as dental schools, midwifery schools, or real estate schools; institutions eligible for the Effective Access for Student Education tuition assistance program; continuing education programs; and religious institutions.

- The institution’s consumer practices are consistent with those specified in law.¹⁸⁶

The commission may provide such a religious institution with a letter stating that the institution has met the requirements specified in law and is not subject to government oversight.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1005.06, F.S., to revise the criteria under which nonpublic religious postsecondary educational institutions may operate without licensure from the Commission for Independent Education. Specifically, the bill replaces the term “religious college” with “nonpublic religious postsecondary educational institution” and expands the number of affirmations required in the annual sworn affidavit from five to seven, to include:

- An explanation of the religious modifier, religious name, or religious symbol used in the institution’s name.
- The titles and majors of every degree program offered by the institution as they appear on degrees and transcripts issued by the institution.

The bill authorizes the commission to request documentation from the institution demonstrating compliance with the affidavit requirements and the consumer protection standards. The institution is required to submit the requested documentation within 30 days after the request. The bill requires the commission to review affidavits in a public meeting and approve the affidavit unless the affidavit is facially invalid, is contradicted by the institution’s public advertisements or by other evidence, or the institution fails to provide requested documentation.

Additionally, the bill requires the commission to revoke its approval, in a public meeting, if an institution previously received a written exemption and the institution fails to remain in compliance. If an affidavit is denied by the commission, the commission is authorized to take action unless the institution applies for licensure, ceases operations in the state, or submits documentation showing it meets the requirements of the exemption.

The bill moves administrative oversight responsibility for eligible Effective Access to Student Education (EASE) Grant institutions from the commission to the Department of Education. The bill also amends s.1009.8962, F.S., to conform a cross-reference that authorizes institutions eligible for the EASE grant remain eligible for the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) fund.

The bill authorizes the commission to adopt rules.

Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network

Present Situation

The Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network (Network) is administered by the Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC), which operates under the Northwest Regional Data Center (NWRDC),

¹⁸⁶ Section 1005.06(1), F.S. and Rule 6E-5.001, F.A.C.

an affiliate of Florida State University.¹⁸⁷ The Network provides academic support services to Florida College System (FCS) institutions and state universities, including access to distance learning courses, coordination of online academic resources, and administration of a shared library automation system. Additionally, it negotiates statewide licensing agreements for electronic library resources and promotes the use of low-cost and open-access educational materials to reduce textbook costs for students.¹⁸⁸

The Student Open Access Resources Repository is a statewide searchable database of open educational resources curated by faculty members from FCS institutions and state universities. It is designed to expand access to free and low-cost instructional materials and support the development of faculty-created content. The repository is based on the statewide course numbering system and aims to accelerate textbook affordability. Institutions receiving grant funds for open educational resources must openly license and share materials developed using these funds by adding them to the repository.¹⁸⁹

The Network is administered by a host entity responsible for delivering statewide academic support services. This host entity must submit an annual report by December 31 to the Chancellors of the State University System and Florida College System. The report includes data on the usage of open educational resources, the number and types of courses in the repository, and grant fund distributions. Additionally, the Chancellors must submit an annual performance report on the host entity's service delivery to the Governor, the Legislature, the Board of Governors, and the State Board of Education. The Board of Governors and the Department of Education are also required to include any necessary funding increases for these services in their legislative budget requests.¹⁹⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1006.73, F.S., by removing certain reporting requirements related to the Student Open Access Resources Repository, which is no longer funded. Specifically, it eliminates the requirement to report the number and types of courses included in the repository and data on the utilization of the repository and open educational resources by FCS institutions and state universities.

The bill removes the requirement for the Chancellors of the SUS and the FCS to submit an annual performance report on the host entity's delivery of services. It also eliminates the requirement for the BOG and the DOE to include any necessary funding increases for these services in their annual legislative budget requests.

Additionally, the bill removes an obsolete provision that required the Commissioner of Education and the Chancellor of the BOG to submit a joint recommendation on expanding access

¹⁸⁷ Florida Virtual Campus, About FLVC Library Services, [https://libraries.flvc.org/about-flvc-ls#:~:text=Funded%20by%20the%20state%20as,\)%20\(Served%20only%20state%20universities\)](https://libraries.flvc.org/about-flvc-ls#:~:text=Funded%20by%20the%20state%20as,)%20(Served%20only%20state%20universities)) (last visited April 8, , 2025).

¹⁸⁸ Section 1006.73(1), F.S.

¹⁸⁹ Section 1006.73(4), F.S.

¹⁹⁰ Section 1006.73(5), F.S.

to postsecondary distance learning, student support services, and library assets for school district career centers and charter technical career centers.

College Reach-Out Program

Present Situation

The College Reach-Out Program (CROP) was established in 1983 to motivate and prepare students in grades six–12 from low-income educationally disadvantaged backgrounds towards pursuing and successfully completing postsecondary education. Participants are students who otherwise would be unlikely to seek admission to a postsecondary institution without additional support and recruitment efforts.¹⁹¹

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 1007.34, F.S., by replacing the term “minority” with “underrepresented” in references to the student population within the College Reach-Out Program.

Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement

Present Situation

The Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement was established to prepare, inspire, and connect students to postsecondary success and opportunity, with a particular focus on minority students and students who are underrepresented in postsecondary education.¹⁹²

Each public high school, including alternative sites and centers of the Department of Juvenile Justice, must provide for the administration of the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) or the PreACT to all 10th-grade students. A written notice must be provided to parents, including the opportunity to exempt their child from taking the assessment.¹⁹³

The partnership is responsible for identifying students for participation in advanced courses, providing information to students and parents regarding available opportunities, and explaining enrollment procedures. This information must include details on the benefits of advanced coursework in preparing students for postsecondary education, increasing access to postsecondary opportunities, and qualifying for scholarships and financial aid.¹⁹⁴

The partnership must coordinate efforts to expand student access to advanced coursework, including working with school districts, the Florida Virtual School, and Florida College System (FCS) institutions and state universities to develop advanced courses and provide instructional

¹⁹¹ Florida Department of Education, *College Reach-Out Program (CROP)* available at <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/family-community/activities-programs/pre-collegiate/crop.shtml> (last visited April 8,, 2025)

¹⁹² Section 1007.35(4), F.S.

¹⁹³ Section 1007.35(5), F.S.

¹⁹⁴ Section 1007.35(6)(i), F.S.

support.¹⁹⁵ It must also provide assessment tools to evaluate student strengths and weaknesses related to success in advanced coursework.¹⁹⁶

Classic Learning Test (CLT)

Present Situation

The Classic Learning Test (CLT) is a standardized college entrance exam that emphasizes classical education. Designed as an alternative to the SAT and ACT, the CLT assesses students' reading, writing, and mathematical reasoning skills through texts drawn from classic literature, historical documents, and philosophical works. It aims to evaluate critical thinking and moral reasoning rather than test-taking strategies, appealing particularly to private, religious, and classical schools.¹⁹⁷ The CLT provides a suite of assessments, including the CLT for grades 11–12, the CLT10 for grades 9–10, and the CLT3–8 for grades 3–8.¹⁹⁸ In Florida 11th grade students are offered the opportunity to participate in a school day CLT administration if the school district in which they reside chooses to administer the CLT school day.¹⁹⁹

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1007.35, F.S., by renaming the “Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement” to the “Florida Partnership for Underrepresented Student Achievement.” The bill removes the partnership’s specific focus on minority students, broadening its scope to all underrepresented student populations.

The bill provides legislative intent recognizing the value of career pathways beyond traditional college access, including vocational and trade schools, and emphasizes the importance of incentivizing high school programs that prepare students for those career paths. The bill provides that school districts can select to offer the CLT10 to all 10th grade students under the partnership.

The bill also requires that for each enrolled public high school student who has a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or higher and has score at or about the 75th national percentile or higher on the PSAT/NMSQT, CLT 10 or PreACT to administered pursuant to subsection (5), a school district must ensure the student has access to the following resources until the student participates in the ACT, CLT, or SAT:

- Online ACT, CLT, or SAT preparation courses or access to other evidence-based ACT, CLT, or SAT preparation resources. A school district may offer in-person preparation courses.
- Information on all eligibility requirements for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

The bill requires that students maintain a GPA of 3.5 or higher to remain eligible to access ACT, CLT, or SAT resources.

Additionally, the bill removes requirements for the partnership to:

¹⁹⁵ Section 1007.35(6)(g) and (l), F.S.

¹⁹⁶ Section 1007.35(6)(d), F.S.

¹⁹⁷ Classic Learning Test, *What We Do*, <https://www.cltexam.com/>, (last visited April 8, 2025).

¹⁹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹⁹ Section 1008.22(3)(c), F.S.

- Provide teacher training, professional development, and instructional materials.
- Consider ways to incorporate FCS institutions into its mission of preparing all students for postsecondary success.
- Cooperate with the DOE to provide information on partnership activities, opportunities, and priorities.

Florida Gold Seal Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Scholars Award

Present Situation

The Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars Award, established within the Bright Futures Scholarship Program, supports students who complete industry certifications that articulate for postsecondary credit.²⁰⁰

To qualify, students must earn at least five postsecondary credit hours through CAPE industry certifications and complete at least 30 volunteer hours or 100 hours of paid work.²⁰¹ This scholarship provides funding for career-focused postsecondary programs, including technical degrees, applied technology diplomas, or career certificates, and may extend to bachelor's degree programs in specific articulated pathways.²⁰²

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1009.536, F.S., by modifying the eligibility requirements for the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award. Specifically, the bill reduces the required minimum postsecondary credit hours earned through CAPE industry certifications from five to three and adds a requirement that students earn a minimum cumulative weighted grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 in all subjects required for high school graduation, excluding electives.

The bill also expands eligibility by allowing students who complete the GATE Program to apply for the award before or within three months of completion.

Prepping Institutions, Programs, Employers, and Learners through Incentives for Nursing Education (PIPELINE) Fund

Present Situation

The PIPELINE Fund is a performance-based funding initiative designed to reward public postsecondary nursing education programs for their excellence and effectiveness.²⁰³ The fund provides allocations to eligible institutions, school district career centers, charter technical career centers, Florida College System institutions, and state universities,²⁰⁴ based on two key performance metrics:

- Number of program completers; and

²⁰⁰ Section 1009.536, F.S.

²⁰¹ Section 1009.536(2), F.S.

²⁰² Section 1009.536(5), F.S.

²⁰³ Section 1009.897, F.S.

²⁰⁴ Section 1009.897(2), F.S.

- First-time passage rate on the National Council of State Boards of Nursing Licensing Examination (NCLEX).²⁰⁵

Programs with first-time NCLEX passage rates above the national average receive additional rewards.²⁰⁶

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 1009.897, F.S., by specifying that funds under the PIPELINE Fund must be used for healthcare industry-related programs.

Contracting for Educational Facilities

Present Situation

Governing boards overseeing educational facilities, including district school boards, Florida College System institution boards of trustees, and state university boards of trustees, must competitively bid construction, remodeling, renovation, demolition, or improvement projects and award contracts to the lowest responsible bidder once funds are available and project plans are approved.²⁰⁷

Boards are authorized to allocate up to 10 percent of capital project funds exclusively for contracts with minority business enterprises, which are competitively bid only among qualifying businesses to address the effects of past discriminatory practices.²⁰⁸ To ensure compliance and contractor qualifications, boards must also prequalify bidders and require that contractors hold the appropriate certificates or licenses before awarding any construction contract.²⁰⁹ This statutory framework is designed to maintain fair competition, emergency flexibility, and equitable contracting practices while ensuring adherence to licensing and safety regulations.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1013.46, F.S., by removing the provision related to the option of setting aside 10 percent of allocated funds for construction contracts with minority business enterprises.

University Campus Master Plans

Present Situation

Each university board of trustees (BOT) is required to prepare and adopt a campus master plan for the university and maintain a copy of the plan on the university's website. The master plan must identify general land uses and address the need for and plans for provision of roads, parking, public transportation, solid waste, drainage, sewer, potable water, and recreation and open space during the coming 10 to 20 years. The plans contain certain elements and address the

²⁰⁵ Section 1009.897(3), F.S.

²⁰⁶ Section 1009.897(3)(b), F.S.

²⁰⁷ Section 1013.46(1)(a), F.S.

²⁰⁸ Section 1013.46(1)(c), F.S.

²⁰⁹ Section 1013.46(2), F.S.

compatibility with the surrounding community. These master plans must be updated every 5 years.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1013.30, F.S., to revise the frequency of the university master plan submission from five years to 10 years.

The bill is effective July 1, 2025, except as otherwise specified.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to prepare and offer standards of curriculum for instruction related to agricultural education. Additionally, the bill authorizes the DOE to enter into a contract from state or nationally recognized agricultural educational organizations to develop such curriculum. The fiscal impact for the development of the curriculum is indeterminate, but likely insignificant and able to be absorbed within existing resources.

Should the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability develop contracts with institutions in the State University System, it may result in a revenue increase to the institutions. However, it may result in a cost to the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.

Requiring state universities and Florida College System institutions to waive tuition and fees for active members of the Florida State Guard would result in a revenue loss for the institutions.

Modifying the grandparent out-of-state fee waiver has an indeterminate fiscal impact on institutions. The bill may reduce the number of individuals enrolling due to the grandparent requirement to have established a domicile in the state for five years.

Hillsborough Community College may have costs associated with their name change, such as those related to signage, publication, documentation, advertising, and other related items.

There would be a fiscal impact on any institution participating in the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education Program (GATE) Program that chooses to enter into an agreement with an online provider for the adult education or career instruction portion of the program. Eliminating the 21-year-old age cap would likely expand the number of GATE Program participants. However, this waiver is subject to the availability of funds.

The changes to the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award is indeterminate. It is assumed that reducing the required minimum postsecondary credit hours earned through CAPE would increase the number of eligible participants. The bill also adds provisions regarding minimum GPA requirements which could cause a cost neutral result. However, there would be a negative fiscal impact on the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award by expanding it to GATE Program completers.

Revising the frequency of the university campus master plans from five years to 10 years may result in a costs savings to the institutions.

Additionally, there could be an impact to the school districts to administer the CLT10 tests, however funding is contingent up funding in the GAA. There could also be a cost to the districts to provide practice access for these tests.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 11.45, 11.51, 216.251, 251.001, 288.036, 381.853, 413.407, 435.12, 446.032, 446.041, 447.203, 1000.04, 1000.05, 1000.21, 1001.20, 1001.452, 1001.706, 1001.7065, 1002.20, 1002.33, 1002.394, 1002.395, 1002.42, 1002.68, 1002.71, 1002.945, 1003.41, 1003.42, 1003.4201, 1003.4282, 1004.0971, 1004.933, 1005.06, 1006.73, 1007.27, 1007.34, 1007.35, 1008.36, 1008.365, 1008.37, 1009.23, 1009.26, 1009.536, 1009.8962, 1009.897, 1011.71, 1011.804, 1012.315, 1012.56, 1012.77, 1013.30, and 1013.46.

This bill creates the following sections of the Florida Statutes. 1001.325 and 1001.68.

This bill repeals the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1002.351, 1008.2125, 1011.58, and 1011.59.

IX. Additional Information:

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

CS/CS by Fiscal Policy on April 8, 2025:

The committee substitute incorporates all of the provisions in CS/CS/SB 1624, which include:

- Providing tuition and fee waivers for active Florida State Guard members for up to six credit hours per term.
- Strengthening the FAU Office of Ocean Economy as a hub for research regarding Florida's maritime industry workforce.
- Focusing programs on underrepresented or economically disadvantaged students rather than identity groups.
- Expanding access to the GATE program by authorizing partnerships with online providers, removing age limits for participation, and expanding the use of funds for marketing and outreach in Rural Areas of Opportunity.
- Requiring PIPELINE funds, which rewards excellent nursing programs, to be used for healthcare programs.
- Renaming Hillsborough Community College to Hillsborough College.
- Authorizing smaller Florida College System institutions that primarily serve rural communities to establish state college regional consortium service organizations.
- Creating additional guardrails around the operations of private religious postsecondary institutions which are not licensed by the Commission for Independent Education.

The committee substitute also includes the following new provisions:

- Adds the Classic Learning Test (CLT) 10 assessment as an approved assessment for students in grade 10 under the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement.

- Requires school districts to provide access to Bright Futures Scholarship Program eligibility information and online ACT, CLT, and SAT prep resources to students who meet certain eligibility.
- Includes liability insurance among the types of casualty insurance that may be funded using revenue from a school district's discretionary millage levy.
- Extends the background rescreening deadlines for public and private school employees by approximately six months, moving compliance dates from June 30 to December 1 over the next three years.
- Realigns administrative oversight for eligible EASE Grant institutions from the Commission for Independent Education to the Department of Education and makes a conforming update to eligibility for a Linking Industry to Nursing Education grant.
- Moves the Postsecondary Feedback report on high schools report deadline from April 30 to May 31.

CS by Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education on March 24, 2025:

The committee substitute authorizes a private school located in a county with four incorporated municipalities to construct new facilities on property that is:

- Purchased or leased from a library, community service organization, museum, performing arts venue, theater, cinema, or church that is or was actively used as such within five years of any executed agreement with the private school;
- Owned by a Florida College System institution or state university; or
- Recently used to house a school or childcare facility licensed under s. 402.305, Florida Statutes.

The committee substitute authorizes the new facilities may be constructed under the property's preexisting zoning and land use designations, without the need for rezoning, a special exception, a land use change, or compliance with mitigation requirements or conditions.

The committee substitute also requires that the new facility be used solely as a private school and comply with all applicable state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules, including those related to fire safety and building safety.

B. Amendments:

None.