



2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION FINAL REPORT

Summary of Key Accomplishments

The 2025 Legislative Session delivered significant progress for arts education in Florida, particularly in music and fine arts, due to sustained advocacy by the Center for Fine Arts, Florida Music Education Association (FMEA), the Florida Art Education Association (FAEA), and the Florida School Music Association (FSMA). The most notable policy victory was the passage of [House Bill 1105](#) , which includes:

- **Graduation Flexibility for Marching Band: Two years of Marching Band will now meet the one high school required PE/Health course (HOPE) to align with athletes and ROTC members.**
- **Seal of Fine Arts Expansion: The Seal of Fine Arts designation has been expanded to include students completing advanced arts credentials such as AICE arts courses.**

These provisions represent a direct outcome of FMEA's legislative agenda and grassroots mobilization and reinforce the importance of arts education in Florida's academic framework.

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I. K–12 Education Funding and the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP)

The General Appropriations Act ([SB 2500](#)) allocates **\$15.25 billion** for the FEFP in FY 2025–26. Key components include:

- Base Student Allocation: \$5,372.60 per student.
- Total Required Local Effort: \$10.9 billion.
- Program Cost Factors:
 - K–3 Basic: 1.108
 - Grades 4–8: 1.000
 - Grades 9–12: 0.972
- Exceptional Students (Level IV): 3.609
- Exceptional Students (Level V): 6.064
- ESOL: 1.165
- Career Education (Grades 9–12): 1.081

Additional Categorical Allocations:

- Safe Schools: \$290 million
- Mental Health Assistance: \$180 million
- Academic Acceleration: \$596 million
- Student Transportation: \$565 million
- Classroom Supply Assistance: \$300 per teacher

Exceptional Student Education (ESE): Guaranteed allocation of \$2,113.61 per eligible FTE with adjustments for small districts.

Arts-Specific Appropriations:

- Early Childhood Music Education: \$400,000
- Very Special Arts: \$500,000 (incl. \$150,000 recurring)
- Arts4All Florida: \$800,000 (incl. \$250,000 recurring)
- Holocaust Education (Florida Holocaust Museum): \$750,000
- Museum-Based Education (Discovery & Science; Children's Theatre): targeted grants

II. Postsecondary Education and Financial Aid

- Bright Futures Scholarship Program:
 - Academic Scholars: 100% tuition + fees
 - Medallion Scholars: 75% (100% for AA students at Florida Colleges)
 - Top Scholar Stipend: \$44 per credit hour
- CAPE and Gold Seal Scholarships:

- Career Certificate / Applied Tech: \$39 per credit hour
- Technical/BAS or BS Degree: \$48 per credit hour
- Total Bright Futures Allocation: \$637.7 million
- Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG): \$109.4 million

III. Policy Provisions Impacting Arts and K-20 Education

From HB [1105](#) and other bills:

Educator Workforce:

New certification pathway for non-degreed fine/performing arts teachers with 3 years of experience and a high school diploma.

Standardized educator preparation programs will emphasize academic content and exclude identity politics.

Charter and Private School Facilities ([HB 1255](#) / HB 1105):

Charter schools face fewer zoning hurdles and may use surtax funds.

Private schools can build on legacy properties in urban areas without rezoning.

Special Populations & Inclusion:

Expansion of autism programs and training through UF Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment ([SB 112](#)).

Disability awareness curriculum enhanced with arts-based content ([HB 447](#)).

Driver Education ([SB 994](#)):

Public school driver education must now include training on traffic stop interactions, developed with the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

IV. Cultural and Community Arts Support

- Over \$20 million appropriated to the Division of Arts and Culture with additional funding for special projects.

V. Bill Summaries

1. Education Enrolled Bill Summaries 2025 Session:

- CS/CS/SB 248: Expands sports participation rights for home and private school students.
- CS/CS/SB 296: Provides flexibility on middle and high school start times.
- CS/SB 1102: Broadens eligibility and funding for children with special needs in School Readiness.
- CS/HB 1145: Expands workforce education grant access and Money-back Guarantee Program.
- CS/CS/HB 443: Enhances charter school governance, student conduct codes, and data access.

2. Florida Post Secondary Education 2025 Bill Summaries:

- CS/CS/SB 312: Restructures governance for the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition.
- CS/CS/SB 584: Prioritizes housing and support services for foster and homeless youth in college.
- CS/HB 681: Increases accountability and transparency in apprenticeship program funding.

3. Other 2025 Bill Summaries:

- CS/CS/HB 531: Creates a centralized state background screening portal and public resource.
- CS/CS/HB 633: Strengthens auditing and reporting for mental health managing entities.
- CS/CS/HB 969: Requires new statewide evaluations of school mental health supports.
- SB 994: Expands driver education course requirements across age groups.

Detailed Bill Summaries:

CS/CS/SB 112 — Children with Developmental Disabilities

by Fiscal Policy Committee; Education Pre-K – 12 Committee; and Senator Harrell

The bill expands and coordinates state efforts to support children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD or autism) and other developmental disabilities through early intervention, school readiness services, specialized educational options, and professional training. It also codifies and assigns new responsibilities to the University of Florida Center for Autism and

Neurodevelopment (UF CAN), establishes new grant programs, and extends eligibility for Florida's Early Steps Program.

Early Steps Extended Option

The bill creates the Early Steps Extended Option, which allows eligible children to continue receiving services through the Early Steps Program (Early Steps) until the beginning of the school year following their fourth birthday. To qualify, a child must be:

- Determined eligible for Early Steps services at least 45 days before his or her third birthday;
- Eligible for services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and
- Enrolled by parent choice in the Extended Option before his or her third birthday.

The Department of Health (DOH) must seek federal approval for the option by July 1, 2026, but may implement the program with state funds regardless of federal participation. The child's family must choose between Early Steps or IDEA Part B services; children may not receive services under both programs concurrently or reenter the Extended Option once they exit. School districts and local Early Steps offices must coordinate transitions to school district services or other programs, convene joint conferences, and develop or modify education plans. The DOH must include performance measures for the program in its annual Early Steps report.

The bill appropriates \$720,282 in recurring funds and \$35,622 in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the DOH and authorizes six full-time equivalent positions to implement the Early Steps Extended Option.

UF Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment

The bill codifies the UF CAN and assigns it a broad range of responsibilities, including:

- Coordinating research, training, public awareness, and best practices related to autism;
- Collaborating with state and local agencies, the Florida State University Autism Institute, each Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD), and others;
- Creating an autism micro-credential, available at no cost to instructional personnel, early learning providers, and child care staff. The micro-credential must align with the autism endorsement and include competencies in identification, instructional strategies, assistive technology, and classroom support. Participants who earn the credential are eligible for a one-time stipend; and
- Administering new grant programs and reporting annually, beginning August 1, 2026, on expenditures and outcomes.

Autism Charter School Startup Grants

The bill establishes a startup grant program to assist in the creation or expansion of charter schools and laboratory schools that exclusively serve students with autism. UF CAN must administer the program and develop guidelines, including application requirements, planning assistance, eligibility criteria, and accountability reporting. Grants may be used for facility acquisition or improvements, specialized materials and technology, staff recruitment and training, and transportation. Priority is given to applicants serving rural and underserved areas or with a track record of success. Schools may receive funding after securing charter or laboratory school approval.

Specialized Summer Program Grants

The bill creates a specialized summer program grant to support structured, inclusive summer services for children with autism and significant cognitive or behavioral needs. UF CAN must administer the program, publish grant guidelines, and offer technical assistance. Eligible programs must operate for at least four weeks and provide a full-day schedule that may include therapy, skill building, recreational activities, and family training. Staff must be appropriately trained, and grant funding may support facilities, staffing, equipment, curriculum, insurance, and transportation. Programs must submit a post-program report to UF CAN.

Additional Provisions

The bill includes additional provisions related to grant funding and professional development. The bill:

- Expands the Dr. and Mrs. Alfonse and Kathleen Cinotti Health Care Screening and Services Grant Program to allow grant funds to be used for autism screenings, referrals for treatment, and related services provided by nonprofit organizations.
- Requires the Commissioner of Education to review continuing education and inservice training related to ASD and to submit findings and recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2025.
- Allows autism-related training to be applied toward the renewal requirements for professional educator certificates.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 113-0

CS/CS/SB 248 — Student Participation in Interscholastic and Intrасhoolastic Extracurricular Sports

by Judiciary Committee; Education Pre-K – 12 Committee; and Senator Simon

This bill expands the ability of home education program and private school students to participate in interscholastic or intrascholastic athletics at Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) member schools. The bill authorizes students enrolled in a home education program to participate on interscholastic athletic teams at any public school within their school district, provided they reside in that district and meet certain conditions.

The bill provides that middle or high school students in private schools may participate in interscholastic or intrascholastic sports at member public or private schools by:

- Allowing middle or high school students attending an FHSAA-member private school that does not offer their sport of interest to participate in interscholastic or intrascholastic sports at a member public or private school. Current law allows such participation from a non-member FHSAA private school, regardless of whether the schools offers the sport.
- Eliminating the requirement that students be enrolled in a non-FHSAA member private school consisting of 200 students or fewer to participate in activities or sports.

The bill clarifies that, in determining whether an FHSAA school offers an activity or sport, the activity or sport must be expressly designated as one of the following based on the biological sex at birth of the team members: males, men, or boys; females, women, or girls; or coed or mixed, including both males and females.

Finally, the bill requires that any decisions made by an FHSAA committee on appeals, the executive director or his or her designee, and the FHSAA board of directors must be posted online in a searchable format, in compliance with safeguards for privacy of educational records.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 36-1; House 88-10

CS/CS/SB 296 — Middle School and High School Start Times

by Fiscal Policy Committee; Education Pre-K – 12 Committee; and Senators Bradley, Yarborough, and Davis

The bill provides an exemption for a district school board or a charter school governing board from the statutory requirement that by July 1, 2026, the instructional day at all district and charter middle schools may not start before 8 a.m. and high schools may not start before 8:30 a.m. Rather than implementing the statutorily prescribed start times, the bill allows such boards to submit a report to the Department of Education by June 1, 2026, that includes information related to current school start times, documentation of strategies that were considered to implement prescribed start times, and the impacts and unintended consequences of implementing the prescribed start times.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 116-0

SB 356 — Holocaust Remembrance Day

by Senators Berman, Davis, Polsky, Arrington, Smith, Gaetz, Avila, Bernard, and Brodeur

The bill establishes "Holocaust Remembrance Day." The bill requires the Governor to annually proclaim January 27 as "Holocaust Remembrance Day" and permits the day to be suitably observed in public schools, the Capitol, and elsewhere as designated by the Governor. The bill permits instruction to be delivered by schools on January 27, or another day as appropriate, on the harmful impacts of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism as well as the positive impacts of the Jewish community on humanity.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 114-0

CS/CS/HB 443 — Education

by Education & Employment Committee; Education Administration Subcommittee; and Reps. Snyder, Rizo, and others (CS/CS/SB 822 by Rules Committee; Education Pre-K – 12 Committee; and Senator Rodriguez)

Charter School Administration and Operations

The bill clarifies that charter schools are public schools and should be considered a public facility for the purposes of concurrency related to the development of communities.

The bill allows university lab schools to use discretionary capital improvement funds for purchases, lease-purchases and leases of real property, facilities, insurance, certain vehicles, certain equipment, and other materials.

The bill prohibits sponsors from imposing administrative deadlines on charter schools that are earlier than the sponsor's own deadlines for similar reports or submissions. Additionally, the bill limits imposing deadlines for financial audits or other administrative requirements that are 15-days before the sponsor's own deadline for similar submissions to the Department of Education.

The bill limits a landlord and associated persons from serving on the governing board of a charter school, with an exception for a charter school-in-a-municipality.

The bill allows a high performing charter school to assume the charter of an existing charter school within the same district and requires that the request to assume the charter be in written format from the charter school being assumed.

Charter School Enrollment

The bill expands available enrollment preferences for charter schools to include all preschool children who completed a prekindergarten program at the charter school or at a prekindergarten program with a written agreement with the charter school, not limited to only the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program.

The bill allows certain charter schools to increase the school's enrollment capacity beyond what is stated in the charter agreement, subject to certain conditions, and requires notification by the charter school to the sponsor of the intention to increase enrollment by March 1 for the upcoming school year.

Charter School Students

The bill allows charter schools to adopt their own code of student conduct and requires acknowledgement by the parents if the code is more stringent than the code of student conduct adopted by the charter school's sponsor.

The bill requires that the charter school sponsor and the Department of Education promptly and efficiently share student data, including student assessment data, with charter schools. The bill clarifies that charter schools must comply with Florida law regarding notification to parents of any change in a student's services or monitoring related to mental, emotional, or physical well-being.

Virtual Education Students

The bill allows full-time virtual students to participate in athletic activities in any public school in the district where the student resides if requirements are met, or develop an agreement with a private school for participation in athletics.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 30-7; House 86-25

CS/HB 447 — Disability History and Awareness Instruction

by Student Academic Success Subcommittee and Rep. Salzman and others (CS/SB 540 by Education Pre-K – 12 Committee and Senators Collins, Burgess, Harrell, Wright, Gaetz, Albritton, Arrington, Avila, Berman, Bernard, Boyd, Bradley, Brodeur, Burton, Calatayud,

Davis, DiCeglie, Garcia, Hooper, Ingoglia, Jones, Leek, Martin, McClain, Osgood, Passidomo, Pizzo, Polsky, Rodriguez, Rouson, Sharief, Simon, Smith, Truenow, and Trumbull)

The bill designates the act as the “Evin B. Hartsell Act” and modifies the content of disability history and awareness instruction for school districts that choose to provide such instruction during the first two weeks of October.

Specifically, the bill:

- Requires instruction to include grade-specific content for kindergarten through grade-12:
 - o Grades K-3: Conversations about bullying and activities to teach about physical disabilities.
 - o Grades 4-6: Information about autism spectrum disorder.
 - o Grades 7-9: Information about hearing impairments.
 - o Grades 10-12: Information about learning and intellectual disabilities.
- Authorizes the Department of Education to consult with the Evin B. Hartsell Foundation to further develop the required instructional materials.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 35-0; House 107-0

CS/CS/CS/HB 597 — Diabetes Management in Schools

by Education & Employment Committee; Health Professions & Programs Subcommittee; Education Administration Subcommittee; and Rep. Smith and others (CS/SB 772 by Education Pre-K – 12 Committee and Senator Calatayud)

The bill (Chapter 2025-15, L.O.F.) authorizes school districts or public schools to acquire and maintain a supply of undesignated glucagon and requires that undesignated glucagon be stored in a secure location that is immediately accessible to authorized personnel. The bill authorizes school districts or public schools to enter into arrangements with manufacturers or suppliers to obtain glucagon free of charge or at a fair market or reduced price and allows school districts or public schools to accept donated or transferred glucagon that meet certain requirements. School districts or public schools may also obtain monetary donations or apply for grants to purchase glucagon.

The bill allows school districts or public schools to request a prescription for glucagon from a county health department and authorizes licensed health care practitioners to prescribe glucagon in the name of the school district or public school. The bill further authorizes licensed pharmacists to dispense glucagon.

The bill requires participating schools to make available undesignated glucagon to be administered as ordered in a student’s diabetes medical management plan or by a health care practitioner. The bill requires employees to call for emergency assistance and provide

parental notification after the administration of glucagon to a student. The bill provides certain persons and entities with immunity from civil and criminal liability for the appropriate administration of glucagon.

The bill requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules to implement these requirements.

These provisions were approved by the Governor and take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 110-0

HB 809 — School Social Workers

by Reps. Hunschofsky, Lopez, V., and others (CS/SB 1150 by Education Pre-K – 12 Committee and Senator Calatayud)

The bill exempts school social workers from the demonstration of mastery of general knowledge and subject area knowledge required for educator certification.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 109-0

CS/CS/HB 875 — Educator Preparation

by the Education & Employment Committee; Careers & Workforce Subcommittee; and Reps. Rizo, Snyder, and others (CS/SB 1590 by Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education and Senator Burgess)

Implementation Plan

The bill outlines a multi-year implementation plan, beginning with the Department of Education (DOE) establishing a workgroup by September 1, 2025, to revise the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs) and to develop a rule to implement uniform core curricula. The workgroup must include representatives from teacher preparation programs, educator preparation institutes, school districts, classroom teachers, and other stakeholders.

The bill requires the DOE to submit the revised FEAPs to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by July 1, 2026, and the State Board of Education (SBE) must consider them by August 1, 2026. Once the revised practices and rules are approved, the bill requires the DOE to also submit an implementation plan to align teacher preparation programs, certification pathways, and core training courses with the new standards.

By July 1, 2027, the DOE must begin developing the Florida Teacher Excellence Examination (FTEE) to align with the revised FEAPs and serve as a readiness measure for certification.

Uniform Core-Curricula

The bill requires all state-approved teacher preparation programs to implement uniform core curricula by August 1, 2027, aligned with the revised FEAPs and adopted by the SBE to ensure consistency in teacher training statewide. The core curricula must:

- Support critical thinking, mastery of academic content, instructional strategies, and teaching competence;
- Be guided by the state's academic standards, including evidence-based assessment and grading practices;
- Include training on evidence-based instructional materials from various sources and on the use of intervention materials;
- Provide scientifically researched and evidence-based reading instruction grounded in the science of reading, with phonics as the primary strategy for teaching word reading;
- Include literacy and mathematics instructional practices and differentiated instruction for English language learners and students with disabilities;
- Require a mastery-based clinical experience in classroom settings; and
- Exclude instruction that distorts significant historical events or promotes identity politics or specified theories.

The bill also requires teacher candidates to complete two specific courses: one on the cognitive science of learning, and one on classroom management and high-impact instructional strategies.

Florida Center for Teaching Excellence

The bill establishes the Florida Center for Teaching Excellence at Miami-Dade College, subject to funding, in collaboration with the University of South Florida, to prepare high-quality teachers through training in cognitive science, teaching strategies, and knowledge-rich curricula.

Coaching for Educator Readiness and Teaching Certification Program

The bill requires the DOE to create the Coaching for Educator Readiness and Teaching (CERT) Certification Program as a competency-based, on-the-job certification pathway for teachers holding a temporary certificate. School districts, charter schools, and charter management organizations are authorized to implement the program to support teacher development and professional certification.

The CERT program must include structured mentorship, individualized professional learning plans, and guided classroom practice. The program must include:

- An initial evaluation of the teacher's competencies to guide the development of a personalized professional learning plan;

- A summative evaluation aligned with the school or district’s instructional personnel evaluation system;
- Ongoing professional learning tied to the educator’s growth needs; and
- On-the-job training aligned to the revised FEAPs.

The bill requires candidates to pass the applicable subject area examination and complete all reading endorsement competencies, including the practicum, if required by the certificate area.

Teacher Apprenticeship Program

The bill revises mentor qualifications for the Teacher Apprenticeship Program to require three rather than five years of teaching experience, “effective” or “highly effective” evaluations not solely based on value-added model (VAM) scores, and in 2029, completion of clinical educator training and certificate or endorsement in reading, as applicable.

Educator Certification

Effective July 1, 2029, the bill adds new certification pathways and removes outdated ones.

Specifically, the bill:

- Adds a general knowledge mastery pathway via education and classroom management coursework.
- Adds a professional preparation pathway through the CERT program.
- Removes the professional education competency exam for candidates completing approved programs.
- Repeals the use of professional learning certification programs and educator preparation institutes for certification.

School Community Professional Learning Act

The bill updates statutory references to align with the revised FEAPs and Florida Educational Leadership Standards. The bill requires training on using approved instructional materials, including intervention resources.

The bill requires the DOE to establish criteria for approving clinical educator and mentor training programs, including components such as FEAPs-based instruction, communication strategies, modeling of evidence-based practices, and educator resilience.

Flexible Education Pathway for School Counselors

The bill creates a flexible pathway to certification for school counselors by reducing internship hour requirements from 600 to 300 for classroom teachers with five years of experience and recent “effective” or “highly effective” evaluations. The SBE and Board of

Governors must adopt rules and regulations to support flexibility in meeting internship requirements.

Nondegreed Teachers of Fine and Performing Arts

The bill establishes qualifications for part-time, nondegreed fine and performing arts teachers to require background screening and documentation of a high school diploma and at least three years of successful experience in the specialization area.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming law, except as otherwise expressly provided in this act.

Vote: Senate 31-0; House 91-22

CS/CS/CS/SB 1070 — Electrocardiograms for Student Athletes

by Fiscal Policy Committee; Health Policy Committee; Education Pre-K – 12 Committee; and Senators Simon, Avila, and Arrington

The bill cites the act as the "Second Chance Act" and requires that, beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, prior to participating or seeking to participate in interscholastic athletic competition for the first time a student must pass an electrocardiogram (EKG) screening. The EKG screening must be based on standards established by the Florida High School Athletic Association's (FHSAA) Sports Medicine Advisory Committee. The bill allows a student who has received an EKG in the two-years prior to the 2026-2027 school year to use that EKG to meet the requirement.

The bill requires the FHSAA to adopt bylaws to prohibit participation based on the results of an abnormal EKG until the student submits written medical clearance from a specified health professional.

The bill includes a provision that requires each school district to pursue public and private partnerships to provide low-cost EKGs for students and exempt a student who resides in a county where the district is unable to provide EKGs for less than \$50 per student.

The bill allows for exceptions to the required EKG for the following reasons:

- Parental objection based on religious reasons, which must be in writing.
- The parent has secured a medical exemption from the EKG by a physician.
- The school district where the student resides is unable to secure low-cost EKGs.

The bill also allows a practitioner in good standing with equivalent licensure issued by another state to provide the EKG.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 111-0

CS/SB 1102 — School Readiness Program

by Fiscal Policy Committee and Senator Calatayud

The bill expands eligibility criteria for children with special needs served in the School Readiness (SR) program. The bill expands the individuals who can determine and provide documentation of a child's special needs and allows additional documentation, rather than only an individual education plan, to determine eligibility for the SR program, to include an Individualized Family Support Plan, diagnosis of a special need, or written determination by certain medical professionals.

The bill provides specific criteria for SR providers to be eligible to receive additional funding through the special needs differential rating for serving children with special needs. The criteria include meeting the minimum program assessment score for SR contracting, targeted training for working with children with special needs within a specified timeframe, and subsequent relevant training to maintain eligibility.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 116-0

CS/HB 1145 — Workforce Education

by Higher Education Budget Subcommittee and Rep. Shoaf (CS/SB 742 by Education Pre-K – 12 Committee and Senator Simon)

The bill expands access to workforce education grant funding and modifies requirements under the Money-back Guarantee Program.

Specifically, the bill:

- Authorizes charter schools to directly apply for and receive funding through the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program. This allows charter schools to independently propose and implement new or expanded career and technical education programs that lead to industry certifications on the CAPE Industry Certification Funding List.
- Expands the Money-back Guarantee Program, which requires school districts and Florida College System (FCS) institutions to refund tuition to students who are unable to find employment within six months of completing a qualifying workforce program. The bill:
 - o Increases the number of required programs from three to six by July 1, 2026, and requires notification to the State Board of Education.
 - o Clarifies that enrollment in a designated program automatically enrolls the student in the Money-back Guarantee Program.

- o Allows institutions to set eligibility criteria for reimbursement but specifies that work search and internship requirements may not exceed the requirements for reemployment assistance under s. 443.091, F.S.
- o Requires school districts and FCS institutions to report eligibility criteria annually to the State Board of Education.
- o Expands DOE's annual reporting requirement to include both performance outcomes and the eligibility criteria used by each school district and FCS institution for tuition reimbursement.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 100-4

CS/HB 1237 — Human Trafficking Awareness

by The Education & Employment Committee and Reps. Booth, Overdorf, and others (CS/SB 444 by Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education and Senators Avila, Collins, and Yarborough)

The bill creates requirements for human trafficking awareness training in public schools. The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) by December 1, 2025, to identify a free training curriculum regarding human trafficking awareness, which may be conducted either in-person or online. The training must include:

- The difference between sex trafficking and labor trafficking.
- The identification of students who may be victims of human trafficking.
- The role of school employees in reporting and responding to suspected human trafficking.
- A protocol for reporting suspected human trafficking.

Each public school, including charter schools, must require that the following staff receive human trafficking awareness training:

- Instructional personnel, to include classroom teachers, school counselors, social workers, career specialists, school psychologists, librarians and media specialists, learning specialists, and paraprofessionals.
- School administrators.
- Educational Support Employees, which includes, but is not limited to, doctors, nurses, secretaries, craft workers, and service workers.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 35-0; House 113-0

CS/CS/HB 1255 — Education

by Education & Employment Committee; Student Academic Success Subcommittee; and Reps. Trabulsy, Tramont, and others (CS/CS/SB 1618 by Fiscal Policy Committee; Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education; and Senator Calatayud)

The bill 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 which focus on tuition and fee policies, educational programs, and institutional operations. The bill also repeals the Florida School for Competitive Academics.

Early Learning and the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program

The bill updates eligibility for the School Readiness (SR) program by redefining "economically disadvantaged" as families earning up to 55 percent of the state median income, replacing the previous threshold of 150 percent of the federal poverty level. The bill requires SR program waitlists to track children waiting for services by household income and priority levels. Finally, the bill removes the restriction preventing families from using the full Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) voucher if their child has attended more than 70 percent of the program, allowing transfers between providers without forfeiting benefits.

School Districts

The bill removes the Commissioner of Education's authority to evaluate whether schools have adequately included minority or low-income persons on school advisory councils. The bill also adds liability insurance to the types of casualty insurance expenses that can be funded using revenues from a school district's discretionary millage levy.

K-12 Academic Support and Tutoring

The bill expands student academic support for students with mathematics deficiencies by requiring school districts to notify parents when a student is eligible for the New Worlds Scholarship or tutoring services. The bill requires that the New Worlds Tutoring Program best practice guidelines aligned with Florida's Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.). Standards must be in consultation with the Department of Education's (DOE's) Office of Mathematics and Science. The bill requires that reading interventions be delivered by educators with a reading certification, endorsement, or micro-credential and specifies supervision for instructors with a micro-credential.

Finally, the bill requires that instruction on personal financial literacy must include guidance on the costs of higher education and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Charter and Private School Facilities

The bill specifies that local governments cannot enforce building, site, or operational rules on charter schools—such as parking, student capacity, hours of operation, or site size—unless

those rules are also uniformly applied to public schools in the area. Charter schools are exempt from land use changes or permits that would not be required of other public or private schools at the same location. Any condition to limit the size or hours of operation imposed on a charter school must match those for public schools and only apply if the charter school is on a site with an already approved development order that includes such conditions.

The bill authorizes private schools located in counties with four incorporated municipalities to construct new facilities on property that housed specified facilities, such as a church or theater, under the preexisting zoning and land use designations without obtaining a special exception or a land use change and without complying with any mitigation requirements or conditions.

Instructional Personnel

The bill replaces the term “critical-teacher shortage” with “high demand teacher needs area” throughout statute. The bill authorizes lab schools and charter school consortia with at least 30 member schools and a DOE-approved professional learning system to submit Teacher of the Year nominations. The bill also requires that background screening for private school employees be transferred to the Agency for Health Care Administration clearinghouse, aligning fingerprinting standards with those applied to public school teachers.

Student Discipline and Safety

The bill provides school districts additional authority to address students’ persistent disobedience or disrespect. The bill specifies measures for the child study team and provides that prior to the expiration of an expulsion period, the school superintendent must determine, based on input from the school’s threat management team, whether the expulsion should be extended and what educational services should be offered during the extension. The bill requires that if corporal punishment policies are adopted by a school district or charter school, the policies must include a requirement for parental permission. The bill revises requirements for emergency opioid antagonists, removing the specification of naloxone and allowing broader options for K-12 and postsecondary institutions.

Scholarships and Financial Aid

The bill expands Bright Futures Scholarship eligibility to include students who graduate from non-Florida high schools while residing with a parent or guardian who retired from military or public service within 12 months prior to graduation. The bill also authorizes the use of tutoring hours performed by students under the Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence (RAISE) program, whether paid or unpaid, to count toward

community service requirements for both high school graduation and the Bright Futures program. The bill also clarifies and maintains the eligibility of EASE Grant institutions under DOE's oversight for funding through the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) initiative.

Higher Education

The bill renames Hillsborough Community College to Hillsborough College. The update cycle for university facility master plans is extended from every five years to every ten years. The bill authorizes the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Board of Governors to identify a national consortium to develop general education courses for high school students and to deliver related training under the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement. The bill expands acceptable assessments for university preeminence eligibility by including the Classical Learning Test (CLT), with a qualifying average score of 83 or above on a 120-point scale.

The bill revises the criteria for nonpublic religious postsecondary institutions to operate without licensure. The bill requires the Commission for Independent Education (commission) to approve or deny institution compliance affidavits in a public meeting. The bill authorizes the commission to take certain actions against an institution that fails to comply with operating requirements.

Military-Connected Students

The bill extends the repeal date of the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2028, and requires the DOE to develop training modules for employees to expedite student record transfers for military families.

Assessments and Standards

The bill requires that standards documents approved by the SBE contain only the standards and benchmarks, without additional clarification statements. All currently approved standards documents must be revised no later than July 1, 2026. The bill adds the CLT 10 assessment as an approved test option for students in grade 10 under the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement.

Public Agency Provisions

The bill revises membership in local children's services councils and increases terms from two to three years. The bill also waives open competition requirements for state agencies to hire individuals who have completed an apprenticeship program with that agency. If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 30-0; House 100-0

CS/SB 1374 — School District Reporting Requirements

by Rules Committee and Senator Yarborough

The bill modifies reporting, self-reporting, and background screening requirements for school employees and volunteers. It expands mandatory notifications, requires new school district policies, and authorizes additional options for background checks.

Specifically, the bill:

- Requires district school boards to adopt a policy for the temporary removal of instructional personnel from the classroom within 24 hours after notification of an arrest for a felony or any misdemeanor offense listed in Level 2 background screening standards.
- Expands law enforcement notification requirements to include misdemeanor offenses under Level 2 background screening.
- Expands self-reporting requirements for instructional and administrative personnel, requiring them to report felony and misdemeanor arrests under Level 2 background screening standards within 48 hours. The bill clarifies that self-reports are not admissions of guilt and are inadmissible in any proceeding.
- Authorizes public schools and private schools that participate in state scholarship programs to screen volunteers through the Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse or request national criminal history checks through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

The bill also requires school districts to handle sealed and expunged criminal records disclosed through self-reporting in accordance with existing confidentiality laws.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 115-0

CS/CS/SB 1402 — Students Enrolled in Dropout Retrieval Programs

by Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education; Education Pre-K – 12 Committee; and Senator Yarborough

The bill authorizes a Virtual Instruction Program (VIP) provider to choose to receive a school improvement rating in lieu of a school grade for each district with which it contracts and requires that the school improvement rating be based on the assessment scores of all students served by that VIP within the school district.

The bill exempts VIP providers that operate exclusively as a dropout retrieval program from receiving a district grade. The bill also requires all dropout retrieval programs to choose between receiving a school improvement rating or a school grade. The bill defines a dropout retrieval program as a program serving students who have officially withdrawn from high

school before graduation and were not engaged in the education system at the time of enrollment.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 116-0

CS/SB 1470 — School Safety

by Appropriations Committee on Pre-K – 12 Education and Senator Burgess

The bill expands the Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel School Guardian Program (school guardian program), clarifies perimeter and door security requirements, modifies training and oversight for school security guards, and refines procedures for threat assessment and emergency response.

School Guardian Program Options and Oversight

The bill aligns the training, certification, and oversight of school security guards with requirements for school guardians. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires all school security guard training, including initial and ongoing training, to be conducted or approved by a sheriff;
- Requires background screening, psychological evaluation, and drug testing before training;
- Prohibits sheriffs from waiving training or screening costs for security agencies;
- Requires sheriffs to maintain training, certification, and firearm qualification records for each certified guard; and
- Allows sheriffs to provide training to individuals legally allowed to carry a concealed firearm under Florida law, including under permitless carry provisions.

The bill authorizes child care facilities to participate in the school guardian program to the same extent as a private school.

Reporting Requirements for School Safety Personnel

The bill modifies existing reporting requirements for school guardians and school security guards, which:

- Aligns school security guards reporting to school guardian requirements;
- Requires security agencies, in addition to schools and sheriffs, to report school security guard employment and separation data to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE); and
- Directs the FDLE to maintain a consolidated statewide list of both school guardians and school security guards, including certification, appointment, and separation data, and any firearm discharges or misconduct reported under law.

Clarifications to Locked Campus and Access Requirements

The bill clarifies and modifies school perimeter and door security requirements.

Specifically, the bill:

- Limits the school perimeter, locked access, and door security requirements to the time beginning 30 minutes before the school day and ending 30 minutes after;
- Allows doors or gates to remain unlocked if a locked barrier separates the space from student-occupied areas;
- Provides exemptions for:
 - o Career and technical education spaces where locking doors would pose health or safety risks (with documentation in the Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool);
 - o Common areas such as cafeterias and media centers, except during instructional time or student testing; and
- Requires each substitute teacher to receive school safety protocols and procedures before his or her first day of substitute teaching.

Temporary Door Lock Use During Active Assailant Incidents

The bill allows classrooms with permanently installed door locks to also use temporary door locks during active assailant incidents if the devices:

- Can be removed from the egress side in a single operation without a key;
- Can be removed from the ingress side with a key or other credential;
- Comply with the Florida Fire Prevention Code, with allowance for installation at any height; and
- Are incorporated into the school's active assailant response plan.

Panic Alert and Digital Mapping System Integration

Subject to appropriation, the bill requires the Department of Education to establish and maintain a centralized system that integrates panic alert systems and digital maps used by public and charter schools. All such schools must connect their panic alert systems to the centralized system and ensure interoperability for real-time emergency coordination.

Behavioral Threat Management and Data Privacy

The bill clarifies the responsibilities of the Office of Safe Schools (OSS) regarding behavioral threat assessment and management. The bill codifies OSS's role in maintaining the statewide threat management process and the Florida-specific threat assessment instrument, and authorizes the State Board of Education to adopt rules governing access to threat assessment reports stored in the statewide threat management portal.

Florida Institute of School Safety Workgroup

The bill directs the OSS to convene a stakeholder workgroup to develop recommendations for the creation of a Florida Institute of School Safety. The workgroup must include law enforcement, school personnel, mental health professionals, and other experts. OSS must submit its recommendations to the Governor and Legislature by January 1, 2026.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 110-0

CS/CS/SB 1514 — Anaphylaxis in Public and Charter Schools

by Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education; Education Pre-K – 12 Committee; and Senators Smith, Arrington, Davis, and Avila

This bill requires district school boards and charter school governing boards to ensure that the emergency action plan for anaphylaxis for each student in kindergarten through grade eight is in effect and accessible at all times when the student is on campus, including during extracurricular activities, athletics, school dances, and contracted before-and-after-school programs at the school.

The bill also requires district school boards and charter school governing boards to ensure that each school serving these grade levels provides training to an adequate number of school personnel and contracted staff in preventing and responding to allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis. The training must include instruction on recognizing the signs of an anaphylactic reaction and administering an FDA-approved epinephrine delivery device that has a pre-measured, appropriate weight-based dose.

The bill requires the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Department of Health, to adopt rules by October 1, 2025, including identifying an approved training curriculum.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 113-0

CS/HB 1607 — Cardiac Emergencies

by Education Administration Subcommittee and Reps. Yarkosky, Rizo, and others (CS/SB 430 by Education Pre-K – 12 Committee and Senators Simon, Burgess, and Arrington)

The bill requires school districts to provide basic first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training to students, once in middle school and once in high school,

through physical education or health classes. The instruction must include the opportunity to practice CPR skills and incorporate the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED).

The bill creates a Plan for Urgent Life-Saving Emergencies (PULSE), which each school district must develop to guide personnel in responding to sudden cardiac arrest and similar emergencies on school grounds. The plan must incorporate evidence-based elements, and consider those recommended by the American Heart Association, and be integrated with local emergency response protocols.

The bill also requires that by July 1, 2027, each public school, including charter schools, have at least one operational AED on campus in a clearly marked and publicized location. Schools must maintain the AED in accordance with manufacturer guidelines, keep verification records, register the AED's location with the local emergency medical services medical director, and ensure that appropriate staff are trained in CPR and defibrillator use. The bill also clarifies that a public school's compliance with the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) rules regarding AEDs does not constitute compliance with these requirements.

The bill provides civil liability protection for school employees and volunteers under the Good Samaritan Act and the Cardiac Arrest Survival Act.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 113-0

Florida Post Secondary Education 2025 Bill Summaries

CS/CS/SB 312 — Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, Inc.

by Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee; Education Postsecondary Committee; and Senators Gaetz and Harrell

The bill modifies governance and reporting requirements for the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, Inc. (IHMC). The bill transfers authority for creating not-for-profit subsidiaries from the Board of Governors to the IHMC's board of directors and removes the requirement for the Board of Governors to approve subsidiary articles of incorporation. Subsidiaries are also authorized to enter into affiliation agreements with certain universities. The bill also updates reporting responsibilities, requiring the IHMC to certify compliance with state requirements rather than the University of West Florida. Additionally, the bill revises the composition of the IHMC board by removing the chair of the University of West Florida Board of Trustees and adding an additional public representative appointed by that board.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 112-0

CS/CS/SB 584 — Young Adult Housing Support

by Fiscal Policy Committee; Education Postsecondary Committee; and Senators Garcia and Osgood

The bill requires each Florida College System (FCS) institution and state university, in consultation with the State Office on Homelessness within the Department of Children and Families (DCF), to develop plans for prioritizing the placement of students who are or were formerly in foster care and those experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness into residence halls and dormitory residences owned by the institution or university. This includes, but is not limited to, students who qualify for a tuition and fee exemption based on meeting the federal definition of homeless children and youth and students who are current or former foster youth. The bill specifies that the Office of Continuing Care is responsible for determining whether a student is or was formerly in foster care, and each FCS and state university is responsible for determining whether a student is experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The bill provides that if an FCS institution or state university implements a priority system for assigning students to, or awarding any of the following, the institution or university must give first priority to students who qualify for a tuition and fee exemption based on meeting the federal definition of homeless children and students who are current or former foster youth:

- Institution-operated or university-operated housing.
- Year-round housing.
- Work-study opportunities.

The bill prohibits FCS institutions and state universities from requiring students to have a cosigner or guarantor to obtain housing if the student receives housing support through the Road to Independence Program or is in a continuing care program for young adults.

The bill requires the DCF, community-based care lead agencies, and housing authorities to take any action required by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to administer the federal Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative, to include:

- Entering into a memorandum of understanding or letter of intent with all housing authorities within their service areas.
- Providing or securing supportive services for participating youth for the duration of the FYI initiative voucher.

- Providing a written certification to the housing authority verifying the youth's child welfare history.
- Identifying youth eligible for an FYI initiative voucher within the community-based care lead agency's caseload and communicating their eligibility to the youth.

The bill requires the DCF, community-based care lead agencies, and their subcontracted service providers that administer housing funds for young adults in the child welfare system to document actions taken to facilitate a young adult's acquisition of a residential lease, which may include, monthly basis through a housing voucher.

Finally, the bill requires the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), in consultation with specified groups, to conduct a study of the barriers that young adults who are homeless or were formerly in foster care face when trying to obtain housing. OPPAGA must report its findings by December 1, 2026, to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 116-0

CS/HB 681 — Apprenticeship and Preapprenticeship Program Funding

by Careers and Workforce Subcommittee and Rep. Melo and others (CS/SB 1458 by Education Postsecondary Committee and Senator DiCeglie)

The bill modifies transparency, financial accountability, and governance requirements in the administration of registered apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs. It establishes new requirements for partnerships between local educational agencies (LEAs) and program providers, modifies reporting timelines and content, and expands public access to workforce education funding information.

Specifically, the bill:

- Requires the Department of Education (DOE) uniform minimum standards and policies for apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs to allow partnerships between LEAs and program partners to ensure equitable and transparent funding arrangements.
- Requires partnership agreements between LEAs and apprenticeship or preapprenticeship providers to document each party's responsibilities and define a funding split based on services provided. If the LEA's role is administrative only, its funding share may not exceed 10 percent.
- Requires the DOE to develop a standard model contract template for LEA-program partnerships that addresses roles, funding terms, legal compliance, and reporting obligations.

- Modifies the required contents of the DOE’s annual apprenticeship and preapprenticeship report by expanding existing reporting elements related to local educational LEA expenditures. Specifically, the bill:
 - o Shifts the deadline for publication of the report from September 1 to November 30.
 - o Expands the expenditure summary to include both the LEA’s and the apprenticeship or preapprenticeship program’s responsibilities and costs.
 - o Adds to the requirement for reporting allocations by training provider, program, and occupation to also include the total funds “received.”
 - o Adds to the reporting of administrative costs a requirement to include the total number of personnel hours required to administer each apprenticeship and preapprenticeship program.
- Directs the DOE to develop and publish an online funding transparency tool by July 1, 2026. The tool must provide searchable historical funding data (by source, school district, or Florida College System institution) for the previous three fiscal years.
- Adds requirements for District Workforce Education Funding Steering Committee meetings, including public notice, opportunity for comment, publication of workpapers, and authorization for remote participation. It also moves the deadline for submitting the funding model to the Legislature from March 1 to at least two months before the start of the regular session.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 117-0

SB 892 — Florida State University Election Law Center

by Senator Simon

The bill creates the Florida State University (FSU) Election Law Center within the FSU College of Law to serve as a nonpartisan, evidence-based academic center focused on election law. The center is authorized to conduct research, hold events, offer training and technical assistance, and support students pursuing careers in election law.

The bill defines “election law” broadly to include historical, empirical, and comparative aspects of voting rights, election administration, redistricting, campaign finance, election audits, election contests, and legal doctrines relevant to election-related litigation, among other topics.

The center’s goals include conducting rigorous, objective, and nonpartisan research; providing public education and training; supporting student education and experience in election law; and serving as a resource for election officials and the Legislature. The center is also directed to develop best practices and propose evidence-based reforms to strengthen Florida’s electoral system and public confidence in elections.

To fulfill its mission, the center may:

- Hire faculty and staff and develop election law courses.
- Host events such as workshops, lectures, and conferences.
- Conduct and publish election law research and develop public resources.
- Provide continuing education to attorneys, judges, election officials, and others.
- Assist government entities with election law inquiries.
- Offer scholarships, fellowships, and research assistantships to students.
- Partner with other entities to support its goals.

The Department of State, supervisors of elections, and related entities may share relevant data with the center, subject to confidentiality and security safeguards.

The bill requires the dean of the FSU College of Law to appoint a tenured faculty director, who must hire an executive director. The directors oversee the center's programs, budget, staffing, and operations. The center's work is protected by academic freedom and must promote intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity.

The center will be funded through legislative appropriations, charitable donations, and university funds.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 112-0

CS/CS/CS/HB 1105 — Education

by Education & Employment Committee; Higher Education Budget Subcommittee; Careers & Workforce Subcommittee; and Rep. Kincart Jonsson and others (CS/CS/SB 270 by Appropriations Committee on Higher Education; Education Postsecondary Committee; and Senator Burgess)

The bill revises multiple components of Florida's K–20 education system, including charter school funding and accountability, high school graduation requirements, school bus safety, student device use, and postsecondary program eligibility.

Charter Schools

The bill establishes new funding and reporting requirements related to charter schools. The bill:

- Requires school districts to share any local government infrastructure surtax revenues with eligible charter schools based on enrollment, for levies approved on or after July 1, 2025.
- Requires school districts to provide to district charter schools information related to shared discretionary revenues.

- Requires use of a State Board of Education-adopted standard monitoring tool to monitor charter school performance.

The bill modifies charter school conversion procedures and establishes a new class of “job engine” charter schools focused on job creation and economic development. The bill:

- Requires that charter school conversion applications submitted by parents must originate from parents of students enrolled in the school to be converted and removes the requirement for demonstration of teacher support.
- Authorizes municipalities to apply to establish a job engine charter school, either as a new or conversion school, and allows such schools to give enrollment preference to children of employees of identified job-producing entities.
- Expands Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant eligibility to include job engine charter schools and clarifies eligibility for serving students in grades 6-12.

Private School Construction

The bill authorizes private schools located in counties with four incorporated municipalities to construct new facilities on property that housed specified facilities, such as a church or theater, under that facility’s preexisting zoning and land use designations without obtaining a special exception or a land use change and without complying with any mitigation requirements or conditions.

High School Instruction and Graduation Requirements

The bill modifies provisions related to high school instruction and graduation options. The bill:

- Allows marching band to substitute for a performing arts or physical education credit, with exceptions.
- Eliminates the certificate of completion and requires the DOE to develop, by January 1, 2026, guidance about adult education and postsecondary options for students who do not earn a diploma.
- Requires the DOE to develop new applied, equivalent, and integrated courses to substitute for course requirements, and to incorporate work-based internships in graduation planning.
- Expands the Florida Seal of Fine Arts to include Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) arts courses.
- Requires the DOE to establish, by August 1, 2026, competencies for a mathematics endorsement for teachers, which must include specified topics.

Bright Futures Scholarship Program

The bill:

- Expands Bright Futures Scholarship eligibility to include students who graduate from non-Florida high schools while residing with a parent or guardian who retired from military or public service within 12 months prior to graduation.
- Authorizes use of the Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone designation, with conditions, to meet specified diploma eligibility requirements for the Florida Academic Scholars (FAS) award, beginning with students graduating in the 2025–2026 school year, but clarifies that earning the AP Capstone designation does not satisfy the requirements for earning a standard high school diploma.

Career and Professional Education

The bill makes several changes to the Florida Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act and associated Bright Futures scholarship programs. The bill:

- Updates references to reflect inclusion of the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars and Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars awards in the Bright Futures Scholarship Program.
- Requires CAPE academies and high schools offering career-themed courses to provide students the opportunity to earn the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award.
- Modifies eligibility for the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars award by:
 - o Shifting the requirement from a 3-course sequential program of studies to 3 career and technical education courses; and
 - o Requiring 75 hours of volunteer service, rather than the current 30, to satisfy the community service requirement for both Gold Seal Vocational and Gold Seal CAPE Scholars awards for students entering grade 9 in the 2024–2025 school year and thereafter.

Career Dual Enrollment Access

The bill requires dual enrollment agreements between career centers and the high schools they serve to specify how students will be notified of available transportation options and to address scheduling changes to increase access and participation. The bill also requires that dual enrollment articulation agreements between district school superintendents and public postsecondary institution presidents include any necessary scheduling changes.

Workforce Credential Program for Students with Disabilities

The bill creates a new program to help students with disabilities demonstrate job readiness through employer-recognized credentials. The bill:

- Establishes a DOE-led credentialing program for students with autism or cognitive disabilities, to be implemented by January 1, 2026.
- Requires validation by exceptional student education (ESE) instructors and collaboration with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) on a safety badge.
- Mandates annual reports through 2030, on participation and outcomes.

Student Wireless Communications Device Use

The bill establishes statewide restrictions on student cell phone use and creates a pilot to evaluate full-day prohibitions. The bill:

- Prohibits device use by elementary and middle school students during the school day.
- Prohibits high school use during instructional time, except as authorized, with teacher-designated storage areas and board-adopted usage zones.
- Provides exceptions for medical or educational needs.
- Requires the DOE to study full-day restrictions in high schools in six districts and submit a report with a model policy by December 1, 2026.

School Bus Trespass

The bill modifies enforcement of trespassing laws on school property by:

- Expanding the definition of “school” for purposes of the school trespass statute to include any vehicle operated, owned, or contracted by a school district for student transportation.
- Clarifying that verbal notice or a posted sign is sufficient to support prosecution for trespass.
- Authorizing arrest without a warrant based on probable cause for trespass on a school bus.

Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys

The bill revises the structure and operations of the Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys by:

- Transferring the council and administrative support from the Department of Legal Affairs to Florida Memorial University.
- Reducing the quorum requirement from 11 to 9 members, and allowing members participating via communications media technology to count toward a quorum and vote.

ABLE Program Governance

The bill authorizes the chair of the Florida Prepaid College Board to designate a representative to serve on the board of directors of Florida ABLE, Inc. It also revises the governance structure of Florida ABLE, Inc. by requiring its board to annually elect a chair from among its members, rather than designating the chair of the Florida Prepaid College Board to serve in that role.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 26-5; House 85-14

Other Related 2025 Bill Summaries

CS/CS/HB 531 — Public Education of Background Screening Requirements

by Health Care Budget Subcommittee; Human Services Subcommittee; and Reps. Hunschofsky, Trabulsy and others (CS/SB 614 by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee and Senator Polsky)

The bill requires the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), in consultation with all specified agencies, to develop and maintain a user-friendly, public-facing webpage to serve as a centralized hub for education and awareness of the Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse and state background screening processes and standards. The webpage must maintain up to date information and explain the background screening process through the clearinghouse, Level 2 screening requirements, fingerprinting procedures, and include a searchable job catalog, disqualifying offenses, exemption steps, and a downloadable checklist with timelines and details of the process.

Additionally, the bill requires all specified agencies to prominently link to this resource from their websites and requires the inclusion of the link in all job postings by qualified entities. The webpage must be active by January 1, 2026 and must be updated annually by October 1.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 107-0

CS/CS/HB 633 — Behavioral Health Managing Entities

by Health Care Budget Subcommittee; Human Services Subcommittee; and Rep. Koster and others (CS/SB 1354 by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs and Senator Trumbull)

The bill requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to contract for biennial operational and financial audits of the behavioral health managing entities (ME) that are charged with coordinating the state's safety net program for mental health and substance use disorder services. The audits must include business practices, financial records, services administered, payment methods, referral patterns, network adequacy information, and expenditures and claims to include potential Medicaid service duplication. A final report must be submitted to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2025.

The bill establishes performance standards and metrics that must be submitted monthly to the DCF in a standardized electronic format. This requires the MEs to report specific data related to:

- Service accessibility;
- Community behavioral health outcomes;
- Diversion from acute care;

- Integration with child welfare services;
- High-utilizer rates;
- Post-hospitalization outpatient care;
- Appointment wait times; and
- Emergency room visits for behavioral health issues.

The bill also requires the DCF to post the ME performance information to its website by the 22nd of every month. These posted measures must reflect ME performance for the previous calendar month, year-to-date totals, and annual trends.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 113-0

CS/CS/HB 969 — Reporting of Student Mental Health Outcomes

by Human Services Subcommittee; Education Administration Subcommittee; and Rep. Cassel and others (CS/SB 1310 by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs and Senator Bradley)

The bill requires the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), in consultation with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Education (DOE), the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute (Institute), and other relevant stakeholders to evaluate school district student mental health services and supports and compliance with statutory requirements.

The bill requires the DOE, school district threat management coordinators, and mental health coordinators to provide specified information to the OPPAGA for reporting and evaluation purposes.

The bill requires the DCF and the Institute to coordinate with the OPPAGA and provide requested information related to the performance of the coordinated behavioral health system of care pursuant to Ch. 394, F.S.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 106-1

SB 994 — Driver License Education Requirements

by Senator Collins

The bill provides that each applicant for a driver license who is 18 years of age or older must complete an approved traffic law and substance abuse education course.

The bill also provides that each applicant for learner's driver license must satisfactorily complete a driver education course approved by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles which meets or exceeds the Department of Education Driver Education/Traffic Safety-Classroom #1900300 current course description.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 33-0; House 112-0