

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 Governmental Oversight and Accountability

BILL: SB 246

INTRODUCER: Senator Hooper

SUBJECT: Public Construction

DATE: February 11, 2019

REVISED: _____

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

I. Summary:

SB 246 reduces the amount (referred to as retainage¹) a public entity² may withhold from payment to a contractor for construction services. The retainage amount is reduced from 10 percent to 5 percent for construction projects until the project is at least 50-percent complete. The bill also reduces the retainage from 5 percent to 2.5 percent for construction projects after the project has reached 50-percent completion. These changes will have a positive fiscal impact on the private sector contractors who will receive a higher percentage of payment as work is completed for construction services.

The bill revises the requirements for Department of Management Services' rules governing certain contracts to align with the reduced retainage cap.

The bill provides the act does not apply to any contract for construction services entered into or pending approval by a public entity or to any construction services project advertised for bid by the public entity, on or before July 1, 2019.

The state may incur additional costs as a result of the reduced retainage cap if a contractor or subcontractor fails to adequately perform construction services as contracted.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.

¹ The term "retainage" means a "percentage of what a landowner pays a contractor, withheld until the construction has been satisfactorily completed and all mechanic's liens are released or have expired." BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY (10th ed. 2014)

² Section 255.072, F.S., for purposes of ss. 255-073-255.078, F.S., defines the term "public entity" as the state, or an office, board, bureau, commission, department, branch, division, or institution thereof, but does not include a local governmental entity as defined in s. 218.72, F.S.

II. Present Situation:

Public Construction Project Bonds

Section 255.05, F.S., requires any person contracting with the state or any local government, or other public authority, for construction or repair of a public building, must provide a payment and performance bond. The bond is conditioned upon the contractor's timely performance and prompt payment to all subcontractors or materialmen.³ The section was created to afford protection to the laborers and materialmen who cannot perfect a mechanic's lien on public property.⁴ The public, who is, in effect, the owner of the public works project, is also protected by the payment and performance bond requirements. The payment portion of the bond provides the surety insurer's undertaking to guarantee prompt payment to all subcontractors and materialmen, and the performance bond ensures full performance.⁵

Contracts for construction services with the state in the amount of \$100,000 or less are specifically exempted from the requirement of a payment and performance bond.⁶ Additionally, the Secretary of Management Services may delegate authority to state agencies to exempt payment and performance bond for projects more than \$100,000 but not more than \$200,000.⁷ When the construction services are for a county, city, political subdivision, or public authority, the official or board awarding the contract for \$200,000 or less has the discretion to exempt such project from the execution of the payment and performance bond.⁸

The Department of Management Services is charged with adopting rules with respect to all contracts in the amount of \$200,000 or less, to provide procedures for retainage of each request for payment submitted by a contractor for the first half of the contract and procedures for determining disbursements from the retainage for claims made by subcontractors or materialmen.⁹

Public Construction Retainage

Retainage is a common construction contracting practice whereby a certain percentage of payment is withheld by the project owner from the general contractor and, in turn, by the general contractor from the subcontractors, to ensure satisfactory completion of the project. Under s. 255.078, F.S., the state is permitted to withhold up to 10 percent from each progress payment made to the contractor until 50-percent completion of the services. Section 255.078(2) provides a retainage cap of 5-percent after 50-percent completion of the construction services. The term "50-percent completion" has the meaning provided by contract between the state and the contractor, or, if not defined by contract, the point at which the state has expended 50 percent of the total cost of the construction services purchased.¹⁰

³ Section 255.05(1)(c), F.S.

⁴ *American Home Assurance Co. v. Plaza Materials Corp.*, 908 So. 2d 360, 363 (Fla. 2005) (citation omitted).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Section 255.05(1)(d), F.S.

⁷ *Id.*; See Rule 60D-50041, F.A.C.

⁸ Section 255.05(1)(d), F.S.

⁹ Section 255.05(1)(f), F.S.

¹⁰ Section 255.078(2), F.S.

Section 255.078, F.S., specifically provides that the state is not prohibited from contracting with a contractor to withhold a retainage of less than 10 percent of each progress payment, from incrementally reducing the retainage amount, or from releasing, at any point, any portion of retainage held that is attributable to labor, services or materials supplied for the project.¹¹

In accordance with s. 255.05(1)(f), F.S., Rule 60D-50041(2), FAC., provides for procedures in instances where a payment and performance bond are not required for a public construction project and requires, in a case where the contractor defaults, the claims made for unpaid bills by laborers, materialmen, and subcontractors of the project be paid from the ten percent (10%) retainage on a pro rata basis.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies the retainage cap for public construction projects.

Section 1 amends s. 255.05, F.S., to align with the new lower retainage amounts provided in section 2 of the bill. The change in the retainage cap revises requirements for the Department of Management Services' rules for contracts under \$200,000.

Section 2 revises s. 255.078, F.S., to reduce the retainage cap the state may withhold in a contract for construction services from 10 percent to 5 percent for the first portion of the contract, until 50-percent completion. This section also revises the retainage cap from 5 percent to 2.5 percent after 50 percent of the construction services are completed.

Section 3 specifies that the act does not apply to any contract which is entered into or pending approval by a public entity, or to any construction services project advertised for bid by the public entity, on or before July 1, 2019.

Section 4 provides that the bill takes effect July 1, 2019.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

Not applicable. The bill does not require counties or municipalities to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds, reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenue in the aggregate, nor reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

¹¹ Section 255.078(5), F.S.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

The bill does not impose, authorize, or raise a state tax or fee.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

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

This bill does not impact state or local taxes or fees.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The reduction in the retainage cap will likely provide a positive fiscal impact for contractors and subcontractors because it provides a more timely payment of a larger percentage of work performed and invoiced.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The state may incur additional costs as a result of the reduced retainage cap if a contractor or subcontractor fails to adequately perform construction services as contracted. A state entity is not required to withhold retainage for construction services; rather, retainage, in most instances, functions as a secondary security device, supplementing the payment and performance bond. For construction services contracts where a payment or performance bond is not required, the lowered retainage cap potentially may not provide adequate leverage to protect the state's investment.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends sections 255.05 and 255.078 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

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