By Senator Boyd

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21-00565-21 2021838___ A bill to be entitled

An act relating to clerks of the circuit court; amending s. 28.246, F.S.; clarifying the responsibility of an individual released from incarceration regarding enrolling in a payment plan for any outstanding court obligations; modifying the manner of calculating a monthly payment amount under a payment plan; requiring the clerk to establish all terms of a payment plan; amending s. 28.35, F.S.; modifying duties of the Florida Clerks of Court Operations Corporation with respect to the funding of clerks' offices; conforming a cross-reference; amending s. 28.36, F.S.; conforming a cross-reference; requiring the corporation to establish and manage a contingency reserve within the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund for specified purposes; prescribing reporting requirements; specifying circumstances under which moneys held in reserve may be used; prescribing procedures for the release of such funds; revising circumstances under which the corporation can modify previously authorized budgets for clerks; amending s. 28.37, F.S.; modifying a provision regarding state court system funding; defining terms; revising provisions governing the transfer of certain funds from the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund to the General Revenue Fund by the Department of Revenue; conforming a cross-reference; amending s. 28.42, F.S.; requiring the clerks to develop a uniform payment plan form by a specified date; prescribing requirements for the form;

requiring the clerks to use such form by a specified date; amending ss. 318.15, 318.20, and 322.245, F.S.; requiring orders and notifications for certain traffic citations and suspensions to include information regarding payment plans; amending s. 775.083, F.S.; designating the clerk as the entity responsible for collecting payment of certain court obligations; requiring a person ordered to pay such obligations to contact the clerk in order to pay or establish a payment plan, unless otherwise provided; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsection (4) of section 28.246, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

28.246 Payment of court-related fines or other monetary penalties, fees, charges, and costs; partial payments; distribution of funds.—

(4) (a) Each The clerk of the circuit court shall accept partial payments for each case type for court-related fees, service charges, court costs, and fines in accordance with the terms of an established payment plan developed by the clerk.

(b) An individual seeking to defer payment of fees, service charges, court costs, or fines imposed by operation of law or order of the court under any provision of general law shall apply to the clerk for enrollment in a payment plan. The clerk shall enter into a payment plan with an individual who the court determines is indigent for costs. It is the responsibility of an

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individual who is released from incarceration and has outstanding court obligations to contact the clerk within 30 days after release to pay fees, service charges, court costs, and fines in full, or to apply for enrollment in a payment plan. A monthly payment amount, calculated based upon all fees and all anticipated fees, service charges, court costs, and fines, is presumed to correspond to the person's ability to pay if the amount does not exceed 2 percent of the person's annual net income, as defined in s. 27.52(1), divided by 12. The clerk shall establish all terms of a payment plan and the court may review the reasonableness of the payment plan.

Section 2. Paragraph (f) of subsection (2) and paragraph (a) of subsection (3) of section 28.35, Florida Statutes, are amended, and paragraphs (i) and (j) are added to subsection (2) of that section, to read:

- 28.35 Florida Clerks of Court Operations Corporation.-
- (2) The duties of the corporation shall include the following:
- (f) Approving the proposed budgets submitted by clerks of the court pursuant to s. 28.36. The corporation must ensure that the total combined budgets of the clerks of the court do not exceed the total estimated revenues from fees, service charges, court costs, and fines for court-related functions available for court-related expenditures as determined by the most recent Revenue Estimating Conference, plus the total of unspent budgeted funds for court-related functions carried forward by the clerks of the court from the previous county fiscal year, and plus the balance of funds remaining in the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund after the transfer of funds to the General

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Revenue Fund required pursuant to <u>s. 28.37(4)(b)</u>, and plus any appropriations for court-related functions s. 28.37(3)(b). The corporation may amend any individual clerk of the court budget to ensure compliance with this paragraph and must consider performance measures, workload performance standards, workload measures, and expense data before modifying the budget. As part of this process, the corporation shall:

- 1. Calculate the minimum amount of revenue necessary for each clerk of the court to efficiently perform the list of court-related functions specified in paragraph (3)(a). The corporation shall apply the workload measures appropriate for determining the individual level of review required to fund the clerk's budget.
- 2. Prepare a cost comparison of similarly situated clerks of the court, based on county population and numbers of filings, using the standard list of court-related functions specified in paragraph (3)(a).
- 3. Conduct an annual base budget review and an annual budget exercise examining the total budget of each clerk of the court. The review shall examine revenues from all sources, expenses of court-related functions, and expenses of noncourt-related functions as necessary to determine that court-related revenues are not being used for noncourt-related purposes. The review and exercise shall identify potential targeted budget reductions in the percentage amount provided in Schedule VIII-B of the state's previous year's legislative budget instructions, as referenced in s. 216.023(3), or an equivalent schedule or instruction as may be adopted by the Legislature.
 - 4. Identify those proposed budgets containing funding for

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items not included on the standard list of court-related functions specified in paragraph (3)(a).

- 5. Identify those clerks projected to have court-related revenues insufficient to fund their anticipated court-related expenditures.
- 6. Use revenue estimates based on the official estimate for funds from fees, service charges, court costs, and fines for court-related functions accruing to the clerks of the court made by the Revenue Estimating Conference, as well as any unspent budgeted funds for court-related functions carried forward by the clerks of the court from the previous county fiscal year and the balance of funds remaining in the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund after the transfer of funds to the General Revenue Fund required pursuant to $\underline{s.\ 28.37(4)}$ (b), plus any appropriations for the purpose of funding court-related functions $\underline{s.\ 28.37(3)}$ (b).
- 7. Identify pay and benefit increases in any proposed clerk budget, including, but not limited to, cost of living increases, merit increases, and bonuses.
- 8. Identify increases in anticipated expenditures in any clerk budget that exceeds the current year budget by more than 3 percent.
- 9. Identify the budget of any clerk which exceeds the average budget of similarly situated clerks by more than 10 percent.
- 10. Request the Governor to order, pursuant to s.
 215.18(1), a temporary transfer of moneys from unobligated funds
 in the State Treasury to the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund in
 the Department of Revenue to meet temporary deficiencies in that
 fund.

11. Determine if the estimated revenue available for the upcoming county fiscal year is adequate to fund court-related functions, and certify and submit any aggregate difference to the chairs of the legislative appropriations committees and the Executive Office of the Governor for consideration, at least 30 days before the start of the next regular session of the Legislature.

- For the purposes of this paragraph, the term "unspent budgeted funds for court-related functions" means undisbursed funds included in the clerks of the courts budgets for court-related functions established pursuant to this section and s. 28.36.
- (i) If the corporation determines that the cumulative budget for all clerks will vary by more than 5 percent from the approved cumulative budget for the previous year, certify to the Legislature the specific causes for the variance and how each variance relates to the clerks' responsibilities in performing their court-related functions.
- (j) Prepare and submit legislative budget requests to the Legislature, consistent with the requirements of s. 216.023. Such requests must be submitted for any fiscal year for which the corporation determines that new duties or financial obligations under s. 28.36(4), beyond those funded in prior fiscal years, have been imposed on the court-related functions of clerks of the court; and for any fiscal year for which the corporation determines that the total estimated revenues available for court-related expenditures as determined by the most recent Revenue Estimating Conference, unspent revenues carried forward from the previous fiscal year, and budget

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amendments and appropriations made by law for the purpose of funding court-related functions will be inadequate to provide funding for court-related functions of clerks of the court at the current level of operations.

(3) (a) The list of court-related functions that clerks may fund from filing fees, service charges, court costs, and fines is limited to those functions expressly authorized by law or court rule. Those functions include the following: case maintenance; records management; court preparation and attendance; processing the assignment, reopening, and reassignment of cases; processing of appeals; collection and distribution of fines, fees, service charges, and court costs; processing of bond forfeiture payments; data collection and reporting; determinations of indigent status; and paying reasonable administrative support costs to enable the clerk of the court to carry out these court-related functions.

Section 3. Present subsection (3) of section 28.36, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (4), a new subsection (3) is added to that section, and subsection (1), paragraph (b) of subsection (2), and present subsection (4) of that section are amended, to read:

- 28.36 Budget procedure.—There is established a budget procedure for the court-related functions of the clerks of the court.
- (1) Only those functions listed in s. 28.35(3)(a) may be funded from fees, service charges, <u>court</u> costs, and fines retained by the clerks of the court.
- (2) Each proposed budget shall further conform to the following requirements:

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(b) The proposed budget must be balanced such that the total of the estimated revenues available equals or exceeds the total of the anticipated expenditures. Such revenues include revenue projected to be received from fees, service charges, costs, and fines for court-related functions during the fiscal period covered by the budget, plus the total of unspent budgeted funds for court-related functions carried forward by the clerk of the court from the previous county fiscal year and plus the portion of the balance of funds remaining in the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund after the transfer of funds to the General Revenue Fund required pursuant to s. 28.37(4)(b) $\frac{28.37(3)}{(b)}$ which has been allocated to each respective clerk of the court by the Florida Clerks of Court Operations Corporation. For the purposes of this paragraph, the term "unspent budgeted funds for court-related functions" means undisbursed funds included in the clerk of the courts' budget for court related functions established pursuant to s. 28.35 and this section. The anticipated expenditures must be itemized as required by the corporation.

(3) (a) The Florida Clerks of Court Operations Corporation shall establish and manage a reserve for contingencies within the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund which must consist of an amount not to exceed 16 percent of the total budget authority for the clerks of court during the current county fiscal year, to be carried forward at the end of the fiscal year. Funds to be held in reserve include transfers of cumulative excess, as provided in s. 28.37(4)(b), from the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund and may also include revenues provided by law or moneys appropriated by the Legislature.

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(b) The corporation shall provide a reporting of the balance and use of these funds during each county fiscal year as part of the corporation's annual report submitted under s. 28.35(2)(h).

- (c) The corporation may use these funds to ensure the clerks of court can perform the court-related functions as provided in s. 28.35(3)(a). Moneys in the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund which are held in reserve may be used by the corporation under the following circumstances:
- 1. To offset a deficit between the revenue available and the original budget authority. A deficit is deemed to occur when the revenue available to the clerks of court falls below the original revenue projection for that county fiscal year.
- 2. To provide funding for an emergency, as defined in s. 252.34(4). The emergency must have been declared by the Governor, pursuant to s. 252.36, or otherwise declared by law.
- 3. To provide funds in the development of the total aggregate budget of the clerks of court to ensure that a minimum continuation budget is met if, after the corporation has notified the Legislature of a deficit under s. 28.35(2)(f)6., there remains a deficit between the total revenues available and the total budget from the previous county fiscal year.
- (d) The corporation shall request a budget amendment and the Executive Office of the Governor may approve the release of funds in accordance with the notice, review, and objection procedures set forth in s. 216.177, and the office shall provide notice to the Department of Revenue and the Chief Financial Officer.
 - (5) (4) The corporation may approve increases or decreases

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to the previously authorized budgets approved for individual clerks of the court pursuant to s. 28.35 for court-related functions, if:

- (a) The additional budget authority is necessary to pay the cost of performing new or additional functions required by changes in law or court rule, by an impact resulting from financial obligations imposed on court-related functions by a county or by administrative order of a circuit court or the Supreme Court, or by order of a federal or state court; or
- (b) The additional budget authority is necessary to pay the cost of supporting increases in the number of judges or magistrates authorized by the Legislature, or for increases in the use of hearing officers and senior judges assigned by the courts.
- Section 4. Section 28.37, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:
- 28.37 Fines, fees, service charges, and costs remitted to the state.—
- (1) Pursuant to s. 14(b), Art. V of the State Constitution, selected salaries, costs, and expenses of the state courts system and court-related functions shall be funded from a portion of the revenues derived from statutory fines, fees, service charges, and court costs collected by the clerks of the court, and from adequate and appropriate supplemental funding from state revenues as appropriated by the Legislature.
 - (2) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:
- (a) "Cumulative excess" means revenues derived from statutory fees, service charges, court costs, and fines collected by the clerks of the court which are greater than the

original revenue projection.

(b) "Original revenue projection" means the official estimate, as determined by the Revenue Estimating Conference, of revenues from fines, fees, service charges, and court costs available for court-related functions for the county fiscal year covered by the projection.

- (3) The Beginning November 1, 2013, that portion of all fines, fees, service charges, and costs collected by the clerks of the court for the previous month which is in excess of one-twelfth of the clerks' total budget for the performance of court-related functions <u>must shall</u> be remitted to the Department of Revenue for deposit into the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund. Such collections do not include funding received for the operation of the Title IV-D child support collections and disbursement program. The clerk of the court shall remit the revenues collected during the previous month due to the state on or before the 10th day of each month.
- (4) (a) (a) Each year, no later than January 25, for the previous county fiscal year, the clerks of court, in consultation with the Florida Clerks of Court Operations Corporation, shall remit to the Department of Revenue for deposit in the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund the cumulative excess of all fines, fees, service charges, and <u>court</u> costs retained by the clerks of the court, plus any funds received by the clerks of the court from the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund under <u>s. 28.36(4)</u> <u>s. 28.36(3)</u>, which exceed the amount needed to meet their authorized budget amounts established under s. 28.35.
- (b) No later than February 1, 2022, and each February 1 thereafter, the Department of Revenue shall transfer 50 percent

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of the cumulative excess of the original revenue projection from the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund to the General Revenue Fund. The remaining 50 percent in the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund may be used in the development of the total combined budgets of the clerks of the court as provided in s. 28.35(2)(f)6. However, a minimum of 10 percent of the clerk-retained portion of the cumulative excess amount must be held in reserve until such funds reach an amount equal to at least 16 percent of the total budget authority from the current county fiscal year, as provided in s. 28.36(3)(a) 1. No later than February 1, 2020, the Department of Revenue shall transfer from the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund to the General Revenue Fund the sum of the cumulative excess of all fines, fees, service charges, and costs submitted by the clerks of court pursuant to subsection (2) and the cumulative excess of all fines, fees, service charges, and costs remitted by the clerks of court pursuant to paragraph (a) in excess of \$10 million.

2. No later than February 1, 2021, the Department of
Revenue shall transfer from the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund
to the General Revenue Fund not less than 50 percent of the sum
of the cumulative excess of all fines, fees, service charges,
and costs submitted by the clerks of court pursuant to
subsection (2) and the cumulative excess of all fines, fees,
service charges, and costs remitted by the clerks of court
pursuant to paragraph (a); provided however, the balance
remaining in the Clerks of Courts Trust Fund after such transfer
may not be more than \$20 million.

3. No later than February 1, 2022, the Department of Revenue shall transfer from the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund

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to the General Revenue Fund not less than 50 percent of the sum of the cumulative excess of all fines, fees, service charges, and costs submitted by the clerks of court pursuant to subsection (2) and the cumulative excess of all fines, fees, service charges, and costs remitted by the clerks of court pursuant to paragraph (a); provided however, the balance remaining in the Clerks of Courts Trust Fund after such transfer may not be more than \$20 million.

4. No later than February 1, 2023, and each February 1 thereafter, the Department of Revenue shall transfer from the Clerks of the Court Trust Fund to the General Revenue Fund the cumulative excess of all fines, fees, service charges, and costs submitted by the clerks of court pursuant to subsection (2) and the cumulative excess of all fines, fees, service charges, and costs remitted by the clerks of court pursuant to paragraph (a).

(5)(4) The Department of Revenue shall collect any funds that the Florida Clerks of Court Operations Corporation determines upon investigation were due but not remitted to the Department of Revenue. The corporation shall notify the clerk of the court and the Department of Revenue of the amount due to the Department of Revenue. The clerk of the court shall remit the amount due no later than the 10th day of the month following the month in which notice is provided by the corporation to the clerk of the court.

 $\underline{(6)}$ Ten percent of all court-related fines collected by the clerk, except for penalties or fines distributed to counties or municipalities under s. 316.0083(1)(b)3. or s. 318.18(15)(a), $\underline{\text{must}}$ shall be deposited into the fine and forfeiture fund to be used exclusively for clerk court-related functions, as provided

378 in s. 28.35(3)(a).

Section 5. Section 28.42, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

- 28.42 Manual of filing fees, charges, costs, and fines; payment plan form.—
- (1) The clerks of court, through their association and in consultation with the Office of the State Courts Administrator, shall prepare and disseminate a manual of filing fees, service charges, costs, and fines imposed pursuant to state law, for each type of action and offense, and classified as mandatory or discretionary. The manual also shall classify the fee, charge, cost, or fine as court-related revenue or noncourt-related revenue. The clerks, through their association, shall disseminate this manual to the chief judge, state attorney, public defender, and court administrator in each circuit and to the clerk of the court in each county. The clerks, through their association and in consultation with the Office of the State Courts Administrator, shall at a minimum update and disseminate this manual on July 1 of each year.
- (2) By October 1, 2021, the clerks of court, through the Florida Clerks of Court Operations Corporation, shall develop a uniform payment plan form for use by persons seeking to establish a payment plan in accordance with s. 28.246(4). The form must inform the person of the minimum payment due each month, the term of the plan, acceptable payment methods, and the circumstances under which a case may be sent to collections for nonpayment.
- (3) By January 1, 2022, each clerk of court shall use the uniform payment plan form developed pursuant to subsection (2)

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when establishing payment plans.

Section 6. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 318.15, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

318.15 Failure to comply with civil penalty or to appear; penalty.—

(1) (a) If a person fails to comply with the civil penalties provided in s. 318.18 within the time period specified in s. 318.14(4), fails to enter into or comply with the terms of a penalty payment plan with the clerk of the court in accordance with ss. 318.14 and 28.246, fails to attend driver improvement school, or fails to appear at a scheduled hearing, the clerk of the court must shall notify the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles of such failure within 10 days after such failure. Upon receipt of such notice, the department must shall immediately issue an order suspending the driver license and privilege to drive of such person effective 20 days after the date the order of suspension is mailed in accordance with s. 322.251(1), (2), and (6). The order also must inform the person that he or she may contact the clerk of the court to establish a payment plan pursuant to s. 28.246(4) to make partial payments for court-related fines, fees, service charges, and court costs. Any such suspension of the driving privilege which has not been reinstated, including a similar suspension imposed outside of this state Florida, must shall remain on the records of the department for a period of 7 years from the date imposed and must shall be removed from the records after the expiration of 7 years from the date it is imposed. The department may not accept the resubmission of such suspension.

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Section 7. Section 318.20, Florida Statutes, is amended to

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318.20 Notification; duties of department.—The department shall prepare a notification form to be appended to, or incorporated as a part of, the Florida uniform traffic citation issued in accordance with s. 316.650. The notification form must shall contain language informing persons charged with infractions to which this chapter applies of the procedures available to them under this chapter. Such notification form must shall contain a statement that, if the official determines that no infraction has been committed, no costs or penalties may shall be imposed and any costs or penalties that which have been paid will shall be returned. Additionally, the notification form must include information on paying the civil penalty to the clerk of the court and the ability to establish a payment plan pursuant to s. 28.246(4). A uniform traffic citation that is produced electronically must also include the information required by this section.

Section 8. Subsections (1) and (3) and paragraph (a) of subsection (5) of section 322.245, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

322.245 Suspension of license upon failure of person charged with specified offense under chapter 316, chapter 320, or this chapter to comply with directives ordered by traffic court or upon failure to pay child support in non-IV-D cases as provided in chapter 61 or failure to pay any financial obligation in any other criminal case.—

(1) If a person charged with a violation of any of the criminal offenses enumerated in s. 318.17 or with the commission of any offense constituting a misdemeanor under chapter 320 or

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this chapter fails to comply with all of the directives of the court within the time allotted by the court, the clerk of the traffic court must provide shall mail to the person, either electronically or by mail sent to at the address specified on the uniform traffic citation, a notice of such failure, notifying him or her that, if he or she does not comply with the directives of the court within 30 days after the date of the notice and pay a delinquency fee of up to \$25 to the clerk, from which the clerk shall remit \$10 to the Department of Revenue for deposit into the General Revenue Fund, his or her driver license will be suspended. The notice must shall be sent mailed no later than 5 days after such failure. The delinquency fee may be retained by the office of the clerk to defray the operating costs of the office.

- (3) If the person fails to comply with the directives of the court within the 30-day period, or, in non-IV-D cases, fails to comply with the requirements of s. 61.13016 within the period specified in that statute, the depository or the clerk of the court <u>must shall</u> electronically notify the department of such failure within 10 days. Upon electronic receipt of the notice, the department shall immediately issue an order suspending the person's driver license and privilege to drive effective 20 days after the date the order of suspension is mailed in accordance with s. 322.251(1), (2), and (6). The order of suspension must also contain information specifying that the person may contact the clerk of the court to establish a payment plan pursuant to s. 28.246(4) to make partial payments for fines, fees, service charges, and court costs.
 - (5) (a) When the department receives notice from a clerk of

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the court that a person licensed to operate a motor vehicle in this state under the provisions of this chapter has failed to pay financial obligations for any criminal offense other than those specified in subsection (1), in full or in part under a payment plan pursuant to s. 28.246(4), the department <u>must shall</u> suspend the license of the person named in the notice. <u>The department shall mail an order of suspension in accordance with s. 322.251(1), (2), and (6), which must also contain information specifying that the person may contact the clerk of the court to establish a payment plan pursuant to s. 28.246(4) to make partial payments for fines, fees, service charges, and court costs.</u>

Section 9. Present subsection (3) of section 775.083, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (4), and a new subsection (3) is added to that section, to read:

775.083 Fines.-

(3) The clerk of the court of each county is the entity responsible for collecting payment of fines, fees, service charges, and court costs. Unless otherwise designated by the court, a person who has been ordered to pay court obligations under this section shall immediately contact the clerk to pay fines, fees, service charges, and court costs in full, or to apply for enrollment in a payment plan, pursuant to s. 28.246(4).

Section 10. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.