

Committee on Education

CS/HB 7067 — K-12 Scholarship Programs

by Appropriations Committee; Education Committee; and Rep. Sullivan and others (CS/CS/SB 1220 by Appropriations Committee; Education Committee; and Senator Diaz)

The bill modifies provisions in the Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) Program, the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship Program, and the Hope Scholarship Program (HSP), and also establishes a dual enrollment funding incentive for school districts.

The bill modifies the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program to:

- o Establish a priority order for award of an FES, and removes the requirement that the scholarship is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. The priority order for award of an FES, as established in the bill, is as follows:
 - A student who received an FES during the previous school year.
 - A student who received an FTC scholarship in the previous school year but did not receive a renewal scholarship because of a lack of funds, and meets other FES eligibility requirements.
 - A student whose household income does not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level, or is placed in foster care or in-home care; and spent the prior year in full-time attendance at a Florida public school.
 - A student whose household income does not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level, or is placed in foster care or in-home care; and is eligible to enroll in kindergarten.
 - A student who is in a household with an income level that does not exceed 300 percent of the federal poverty level, or an adjusted maximum; and, in priority order, spent the prior year in full-time attendance at a Florida public school; or is eligible to enroll in kindergarten.
- o In order to implement the established priority order for award of scholarship, require the Department of Education (DOE) to set deadlines for receipt of initial applications and renewal notifications, and for eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations (SFOs) to verify student eligibility.
- o Allow the maximum household income level, which is currently set at 300 percent of the federal poverty level, to increase by 25 percent in any year following a fiscal year in which more than 5 percent of available FES scholarships are not awarded.
- o Change the annual growth of the FES from 0.25 percent to 1.0 percent of the state's total public school enrollment, starting in the 2020-2021 school year.
- o Require the DOE to maintain and publish a list of identified nationally norm-referenced tests for purposes of satisfying the FES program testing requirement.
- o Require each private school to, by August 15 of each year, report the test scores of all participating students to a state university for the purpose of annual reporting of performance data.

The bill modifies the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program to:

- o Specify that a student who receives an FTC scholarship remains eligible until high school graduation or age 21, regardless of the student's household income level.
- o Require each SFO to use all available funds under the FTC scholarship program and the Hope Scholarship Program for renewal FTC scholarships, prior to awarding initial scholarships.
- o Require each SFO to refer any student who does not receive a renewal FTC scholarship because of a lack of available funds to another SFO that may have funds available.

The bill modifies the Hope Scholarship Program to specify that an SFO that uses excess contributions to the HSP to fund FTC scholarships must prioritize renewal scholarships before awarding any initial scholarships.

The bill also establishes a dual enrollment full-time equivalent (FTE) incentive for school districts, beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, which provides:

- o A 0.16 FTE bonus for each early college program student who completes a general education core course with a grade of "A."
- o A 0.08 FTE bonus for each student not enrolled in an early college program who completes a general education core course with a grade of "A."
- o A 0.3 FTE bonus for any student who completes an associate degree through dual enrollment with at least a 3.0 grade point average.
- o That the school district must allocate at least 50 percent of the funds received from the dual enrollment bonus FTE funding go to the schools that generated the funds to support student academic guidance and postsecondary readiness.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2020.

Vote: Senate 21-14; House 81-39