

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/SB 1190 — Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship Pilot Program

by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee and Senators Garcia, Osgood, Perry, and Rouson

The bill creates s. 409.1455, F.S., cited as the “Step into Success Act,” establishing the Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship Program (program) as a three-year pilot administered by the Department of Children and Families’ (DCF) Office of Continuing Care (OCC). The purpose of the program is to assist foster youth transitioning to adulthood to:

- Develop essential workforce and professional skills;
- Transition from the custody of the DCF to independent living; and
- Become best prepared for an independent and successful future.

The program must consist of an independent living professionalism and workforce education component and, for youth that complete that component, an onsite workforce training internship component that uses employees of participating organizations as mentors. The bill details numerous requirements for the operation of each component of the program as well as for participating organizations, mentors, and foster and former foster youth who participate. Some of the specific requirements are:

- The program is available to foster and former foster youth between the ages of 16 and 25 who are currently or were previously in foster care. A foster youth may participate in the education component at age 16 years of age or older, but may not begin the internship portion until turning 18 years of age.
- The internship component matches mentors in participating organizations with participating youth and are provided a \$1,200 per year payment with a limitation on the number of interns a mentor may be paired with in a given year.
- The DCF is required to include specific information about the program and recommendations for improvement in an annual report.

The bill provides a monthly financial assistance payment of \$1,517 to former foster youth participating in the internship component and ensures that the payment does not count toward income in the determination of federal and state benefit eligibility. Further, the bill provides a specified increase in the stipend payment amount if the youth does have a loss or reduction of any benefits.

The bill also requires the Board of Governors and State Board of Education to adopt rules and regulations to award postsecondary credit or career education clock hours to program participants.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2023.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 117-0