

Committee on Criminal Justice

CS/CS/HB 369 — Faith- and Character-Based Correctional Programs

by Judiciary Committee; Criminal Justice Subcommittee; and Rep. Rouson and others (CS/SB 2010 by Criminal Justice Committee and Senator Braynon)

This bill amends s. 944.803, F.S., which governs faith-based programs in state correctional institutions. Because some existing programs are not based on religious principles, the bill adds references to “character-based programs” and “secular institutions.” The bill also clarifies that the statute’s requirements are applicable to institution-wide programs as well as dormitory-based programs. Additionally, the bill: (1) removes the requirement that 80 percent of the inmates in a dormitory-based program must be within 36 months of release; (2) eliminates the statutory preference for admitting inmates who have a substance abuse issue; and (3) provides that peer-to-peer programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and literacy instruction, must be allowed within faith and character-based institutions of the state correctional system.

The bill also expresses legislative intent for the Department of Corrections to expand the use of faith- and character-based institutions and encourages the phasing-out of dormitory-based programs.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2011.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 117-0