

Committee on Education Pre-K - 12

CS/CS/HB 1255 — Education

by Education & Employment Committee; Student Academic Success Subcommittee; and Reps. Trabulsy, Tramont, and others (CS/CS/SB 1618 by Fiscal Policy Committee; Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education; and Senator Calatayud)

The bill modifies Florida’s prekindergarten through grade 12 education system related to early learning, academic standards and student achievement, instructional personnel, and student discipline, and modifies provisions related to higher education which focus on tuition and fee policies, educational programs, and institutional operations. The bill also repeals the Florida School for Competitive Academics.

Early Learning and the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program

The bill updates eligibility for the School Readiness (SR) program by redefining “economically disadvantaged” as families earning up to 55 percent of the state median income, replacing the previous threshold of 150 percent of the federal poverty level. The bill requires SR program waitlists to track children waiting for services by household income and priority levels. Finally, the bill removes the restriction preventing families from using the full Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) voucher if their child has attended more than 70 percent of the program, allowing transfers between providers without forfeiting benefits.

School Districts

The bill removes the Commissioner of Education’s authority to evaluate whether schools have adequately included minority or low-income persons on school advisory councils. The bill also adds liability insurance to the types of casualty insurance expenses that can be funded using revenues from a school district’s discretionary millage levy.

K-12 Academic Support and Tutoring

The bill expands student academic support for students with mathematics deficiencies by requiring school districts to notify parents when a student is eligible for the New Worlds Scholarship or tutoring services. The bill requires that the New Worlds Tutoring Program best practice guidelines aligned with Florida’s Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.). Standards must be in consultation with the Department of Education’s (DOE’s) Office of Mathematics and Science. The bill requires that reading interventions be delivered by educators with a reading certification, endorsement, or micro-credential and specifies supervision for instructors with a micro-credential. Finally, the bill requires that instruction on personal financial literacy must include guidance on the costs of higher education and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Charter and Private School Facilities

The bill specifies that local governments cannot enforce building, site, or operational rules on charter schools—such as parking, student capacity, hours of operation, or site size—unless those rules are also uniformly applied to public schools in the area. Charter schools are exempt from land use changes or permits that would not be required of other public or private schools at the same location. Any condition to limit the size or hours of operation imposed on a charter school must match those for public schools and only apply if the charter school is on a site with an already approved development order that includes such conditions.

The bill authorizes private schools located in counties with four incorporated municipalities to construct new facilities on property that housed specified facilities, such as a church or theater, under the preexisting zoning and land use designations without obtaining a special exception or a land use change and without complying with any mitigation requirements or conditions.

Instructional Personnel

The bill replaces the term “critical-teacher shortage” with “high demand teacher needs area” throughout statute. The bill authorizes lab schools and charter school consortia with at least 30- member schools and a DOE-approved professional learning system to submit Teacher of the Year nominations. The bill also requires that background screening for private school employees be transferred to the Agency for Health Care Administration clearinghouse, aligning fingerprinting standards with those applied to public school teachers.

Student Discipline and Safety

The bill provides school districts additional authority to address students’ persistent disobedience or disrespect. The bill specifies measures for the child study team and provides that prior to the expiration of an expulsion period, the school superintendent must determine, based on input from the school’s threat management team, whether the expulsion should be extended and what educational services should be offered during the extension. The bill requires that if corporal punishment policies are adopted by a school district or charter school, the policies must include a requirement for parental permission. The bill revises requirements for emergency opioid antagonists, removing the specification of naloxone and allowing broader options for K-12 and postsecondary institutions.

Scholarships and Financial Aid

The bill expands Bright Futures Scholarship eligibility to include students who graduate from non-Florida high schools while residing with a parent or guardian who retired from military or public service within 12 months prior to graduation. The bill also authorizes the use of tutoring hours performed by students under the Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence (RAISE) program, whether paid or unpaid, to count toward community service requirements for both high school graduation and the Bright Futures program. The bill also clarifies and maintains

the eligibility of EASE Grant institutions under DOE's oversight for funding through the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) initiative.

Higher Education

The bill renames Hillsborough Community College to Hillsborough College. The update cycle for university facility master plans is extended from every five years to every ten years. The bill authorizes the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Board of Governors to identify a national consortium to develop general education courses for high school students and to deliver related training under the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement. The bill expands acceptable assessments for university preeminence eligibility by including the Classical Learning Test (CLT), with a qualifying average score of 83 or above on a 120-point scale.

The bill revises the criteria for nonpublic religious postsecondary institutions to operate without licensure. The bill requires the Commission for Independent Education (commission) to approve or deny institution compliance affidavits in a public meeting. The bill authorizes the commission to take certain actions against an institution that fails to comply with operating requirements.

Military-Connected Students

The bill extends the repeal date of the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2028, and requires the DOE to develop training modules for employees to expedite student record transfers for military families.

Assessments and Standards

The bill requires that standards documents approved by the SBE contain only the standards and benchmarks, without additional clarification statements. All currently approved standards documents must be revised no later than July 1, 2026. The bill adds the CLT 10 assessment as an approved test option for students in grade 10 under the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement.

Public Agency Provisions

The bill revises membership in local children's services councils and increases terms from two to three years. The bill also waives open competition requirements for state agencies to hire individuals who have completed an apprenticeship program with that agency.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 30-0; House 100-0