

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Date: March 12, 1998 Revised: _____

Subject: School Counselors/Pilot Program

	<u>Analyst</u>	<u>Staff Director</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Action</u>
1.	<u>White</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Favorable/CS</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>WM</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The committee substitute under consideration would authorize a 3-year pilot project to lower the student-to-counselor ratio in middle and high schools to no greater than 300-to-1. The project is contingent upon a specific appropriation designated for it.

This bill substantially creates two new sections of law. Since they are time-limited, they would probably not become part of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

The number of certified counselors to students in Florida schools varies. The Department of Education used 1996-1997 data to calculate the following district-wide ratios for selected districts. Information just for middle and high schools is not available. The districts are displayed from largest to smallest population:

District	Counselor/Student Ratio	District	Counselor/Student Ratio
Dade	1:392	St. Johns	1:355
Broward	1:524	Martin	1:478
Hillsborough	1:421	Indian River	1:698
Palm Beach	1:546	Monroe	1:669
Duval	1:634	Sumter	1:422
Volusia	1:379	Walton	1:607

District	Counselor/Student Ratio	District	Counselor/Student Ratio
Pasco	1:530	Wakulla	1:555
Marion	1:525	Washington	1:295
Sarasota	1:819	Hamilton	1:292
Collier	1:344	Dixie	1:774
St. Lucie	1:384	Liberty	1:1,247
Bay	1:383	Glades	1:575

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) recommends a ratio of one counselor to 450 high school students; the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends one counselor to 300 students at all levels.

In 1996-1997, the average salary of the 4,855 guidance counselors in Florida was \$38,890, not counting benefits. The salary averages ranged from a low of \$24,436 in Liberty County to a high of \$45,328 in Dade County. The Department of Education estimates that an average salary with benefits for each additional school counselor is about \$52,000.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The legislation under consideration would authorize a 3-year pilot project to lower the student-to-counselor ratio in middle and high schools to no greater than 300/1. Any counselors hired for the project would have to be certified school counselors. The Commissioner of Education would use data supplied by school districts to determine which schools would receive funding for the project. Each school district involved would conduct an evaluation and report with recommendations by December 1, 2001.

The project would be conducted only if the Legislature provided a specific appropriation for it.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Depending on how many schools were selected, a number of public school students in middle and high school would benefit from improved access to the services of a school counselor.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The project is contingent upon a specific appropriation for it. The appropriation could be of any size, but would need to be about \$52,000 for each additional school counselor provided.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.