

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to welfare transition;
3 providing a short title; providing legislative
4 intent; authorizing the Passport to Economic
5 Progress demonstration program in specified
6 areas; requiring the Department of Children and
7 Family Services to pursue federal government
8 waivers as necessary; increasing the amount of
9 income that may be disregarded in determining
10 eligibility for temporary cash assistance for
11 families residing in the demonstration areas;
12 authorizing an extended period of time for the
13 receipt of welfare-transition benefits by
14 families residing in the demonstration areas;
15 providing legislative findings; directing
16 Workforce Florida, Inc., to create a
17 transitional wage supplementation program;
18 authorizing wage supplementation payments to
19 certain individuals; requiring an evaluation
20 and reports on the demonstration program;
21 providing for conflicts of laws; providing
22 appropriations; providing an effective date.

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24 WHEREAS, the state has achieved dramatic success in
25 reforms to the welfare system, with more than 200,000 families
26 leaving the welfare rolls since such reforms were enacted in
27 1996, and

28 WHEREAS, the majority of those who have left the
29 welfare rolls have done so because of employment and have held
30 no more than two different jobs since leaving welfare, and
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1 WHEREAS, however, many of those who have left the
2 welfare rolls are generating incomes below the federal poverty
3 level, leaving them vulnerable to falling back into the
4 welfare system, and

5 WHEREAS, there also are families that remain within the
6 welfare system who are at risk of exhausting their eligibility
7 for assistance and who would benefit from greater incentives
8 to increase their earnings, and

9 WHEREAS, a strategy that encourages employment,
10 training, and education represents the best approach for
11 increasing family incomes and promoting economic
12 self-sufficiency, and

13 WHEREAS, the Workforce Innovation Act of 2000
14 restructured the state's workforce system to provide
15 individuals with enhanced opportunities to develop skills to
16 secure, maintain, and advance in employment through training
17 and education, and

18 WHEREAS, the expansion of incentives for employment,
19 the extension of transitional support services, and the
20 provision of wage supplements will further enhance the ability
21 of families who are participants in the welfare system or who
22 are leaving the welfare system to raise their incomes and
23 achieve economic progress, NOW, THEREFORE,

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25 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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27 Section 1. Short title.--This act may be cited as the
28 "Passport to Economic Progress Act."

29 Section 2. Legislative intent.--The purpose of the
30 Passport to Economic Progress Act is to provide incentives and
31 services designed to assist individuals who are recipients of

1 temporary cash assistance or who are former recipients of
2 temporary cash assistance generate family income levels that
3 help foster the achievement and maintenance of economic
4 self-sufficiency. It is the intent of the Legislature to
5 create through this act a demonstration program for the
6 provision of such incentives and services, with the goal of
7 developing a model for the continued evolution and enhancement
8 of the welfare-reform efforts of the state.

9 Section 3. Passport to Economic Progress demonstration
10 program.--

11 (1) AUTHORIZATION.--Notwithstanding any law to the
12 contrary, Workforce Florida, Inc., in conjunction with the
13 Department of Children and Family Services and the Agency for
14 Workforce Innovation, shall implement a Passport to Economic
15 Progress demonstration program by November 1, 2001, consistent
16 with the provisions of this section in Hillsborough and
17 Manatee counties. Workforce Florida, Inc., must consult with
18 the applicable regional workforce boards and the applicable
19 local offices of the department which serve the demonstration
20 areas and must encourage community input into the
21 implementation process.

22 (2) WAIVERS.--If Workforce Florida, Inc., in
23 consultation with the Department of Children and Family
24 Services, finds that federal waivers would facilitate
25 implementation of the demonstration program, the department
26 shall immediately request such waivers, and Workforce Florida,
27 Inc., shall report to the Governor, the President of the
28 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives if any
29 refusal of the Federal Government to grant such waivers
30 prevents the implementation of the demonstration program. If
31 Workforce Florida, Inc., finds that federal waivers to

1 provisions of the Food Stamp Program would facilitate
2 implementation of the demonstration program, the Department of
3 Children and Family Services shall immediately request such
4 waivers in accordance with section 414.175, Florida Statutes.

5 (3) INCOME DISREGARD.--In order to provide an
6 additional incentive for employment, and notwithstanding the
7 amount specified in section 414.095(12), Florida Statutes, for
8 individuals residing in the areas designated for this
9 demonstration program, the first \$300 plus one-half of the
10 remainder of earned income shall be disregarded in determining
11 eligibility for temporary cash assistance. All other
12 conditions and requirements of section 414.095(12), Florida
13 Statutes, shall continue to apply to such individuals.

14 (4) TRANSITIONAL BENEFITS AND SERVICES.--In order to
15 assist them in making the transition to economic
16 self-sufficiency, former recipients of temporary cash
17 assistance residing within the areas designated for this
18 demonstration program shall be eligible for the following
19 benefits and services:

20 (a) Notwithstanding the time period specified in
21 section 445.030, Florida Statutes, transitional education and
22 training support services as specified in section 445.030,
23 Florida Statutes, for up to 4 years after the family is no
24 longer receiving temporary cash assistance;

25 (b) Notwithstanding the time period specified in
26 section 445.031, Florida Statutes, transitional transportation
27 support services as specified in section 445.031, Florida
28 Statutes, for up to 4 years after the family is no longer
29 receiving temporary cash assistance; and

30 (c) Notwithstanding the time period specified in
31 section 445.032, Florida Statutes, transitional child care as

1 specified in section 445.032, Florida Statutes, for up to 4
2 years after the family is no longer receiving temporary cash
3 assistance.

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5 All other provisions of sections 445.030, 445.031, and
6 445.032, Florida Statutes, shall apply to such individuals, as
7 appropriate. This subsection does not constitute an
8 entitlement to transitional benefits and services. If funds
9 are insufficient to provide benefits and services under this
10 subsection, the board of directors of Workforce Florida, Inc.,
11 may limit such benefits and services or otherwise establish
12 priorities for the provisions of such benefits and services.

13 (5) WAGE SUPPLEMENTATION.--

14 (a) The Legislature finds that:

15 1. There are former recipients of temporary cash
16 assistance who are working full time but whose incomes are
17 below the federal poverty level.

18 2. Having incomes below the federal poverty level
19 makes such individuals particularly vulnerable to reliance on
20 public assistance despite their best efforts to achieve or
21 maintain economic independence through employment.

22 3. It is necessary to supplement the wages of such
23 individuals for a limited period of time in order to assist
24 them in fulfilling the transition to economic
25 self-sufficiency.

26 (b) Workforce Florida, Inc., in cooperation with the
27 Department of Children and Family Services and the Agency for
28 Workforce Innovation, shall create a transitional wage
29 supplementation program by November 1, 2001, as a component of
30 the Passport to Economic Progress demonstration program in the
31 areas designated for the demonstration program. This wage

1 supplementation program does not constitute an entitlement to
2 wage supplementation. If funds appropriated are insufficient
3 to provide wage supplementation, the board of directors of
4 Workforce Florida, Inc., may limit wage supplementation or
5 otherwise establish priorities for wage supplementation.

6 (c) To be eligible for wage supplementation under this
7 subsection, an individual must:

8 1. Be a former recipient of temporary cash assistance
9 who last received such assistance on or after January 1, 2000;

10 2. Be employed full time, which for the purposes of
11 this subsection means employment averaging at least 32 hours
12 per week; and

13 3. Have an average family income for the 6 months
14 preceding the date of application for wage supplementation
15 which is less than 100 percent of the federal poverty level.

16 (d) Workforce Florida, Inc., shall determine the
17 schedule for the payment of wage supplementation under this
18 subsection. An individual eligible for wage supplementation
19 under this subsection may receive a payment that equals the
20 amount necessary to bring the individual's total family income
21 for the period covered by the payment to 100 percent of the
22 federal poverty level. An individual may not receive wage
23 supplementation payments for more than a total of 12 months.

24 (e) The wage supplementation program authorized by
25 this subsection shall be administered through the regional
26 workforce boards and the one-stop delivery system, under
27 policy guidelines, criteria, and applications developed by
28 Workforce Florida, Inc., in cooperation with the Department of
29 Children and Family Services and the Agency for Workforce
30 Innovation. To the maximum extent possible, the regional

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1 workforce boards shall use electronic debit card technologies
2 to provide wage supplementation payments under this program.

3 (6) EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.--Workforce
4 Florida, Inc., in conjunction with the Department of Children
5 and Family Services, the Agency for Workforce Innovation, and
6 the regional workforce boards in the areas designated for this
7 demonstration program, shall conduct a comprehensive
8 evaluation of the effectiveness of the demonstration program
9 operated under this section. By January 1, 2003, Workforce
10 Florida, Inc., shall submit a report on such evaluation to the
11 Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the
12 House of Representatives. The report must include
13 recommendations as to whether the demonstration program should
14 be expanded to other service areas or statewide and whether
15 the program should be revised to enhance its administration or
16 effectiveness.

17 (7) CONFLICTS.--If there is a conflict between the
18 implementation procedures described in this section and
19 federal requirements and regulations, federal requirements and
20 regulations shall control.

21 Section 4. There is appropriated from the Federal
22 Grants Trust Fund to the Department of Children and Family
23 Services \$310,000 to provide funds for 9 months to implement
24 the additional income disregard for fiscal year 2001-2002.
25 There is appropriated from the Employment Security
26 Administration Trust Fund to the Agency for Workforce
27 Innovation \$3,222,500 to provide funds for 9 months to extend
28 transitional benefits and services and to implement the wage
29 supplementation program for fiscal year 2001-2002. The source
30 of these funds is the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
31 block grant.

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Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2001.