

By Senators Lee, Miller, Sebesta and Crist

23-930-01

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

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25           WHEREAS, the state has achieved dramatic success in  
26          reforms to the welfare system, with more than 200,000 families  
27          leaving the welfare rolls since such reforms were enacted in  
28          1996, and

29           WHEREAS, the majority of those who have left the  
30          welfare rolls have done so because of employment and have held  
31          no more than two different jobs since leaving welfare, and

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., determines  
23 that federal waivers would facilitate the implementation of  
24 the demonstration program, it shall immediately request such  
25 waivers and shall report to the Governor, the President of the  
26 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives if any  
27 refusal of the federal government to grant such waivers  
28 prevents the implementation of the demonstration program. If  
29 Workforce Florida, Inc., finds that federal waivers to  
30 provisions of the Food Stamp Program would facilitate  
31 implementation of the demonstration program, the Department of

1 Children and Family Services shall immediately request such  
2 waivers in accordance with section 414.175, Florida Statutes.

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

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

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

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

28 (c) Notwithstanding the time period specified in  
29 section 445.032, Florida Statutes, transitional child care as  
30 specified in section 445.032, Florida Statutes, for up to 4  
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1 years after the family is no longer receiving temporary cash  
2 assistance.

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

12 (5) WAGE SUPPLEMENTATION.--

13 (a) The Legislature finds that:

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

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

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

25 (b) Workforce Florida, Inc., in cooperation with the  
26 Department of Children and Family Services and the Agency for  
27 Workforce Innovation, shall create a transitional wage  
28 supplementation program by November 1, 2001, as a component of  
29 the Passport to Economic Progress demonstration program in the  
30 areas designated for the demonstration program. This wage  
31 supplementation program does not constitute an entitlement to

1 wage supplementation. If funds appropriated are insufficient  
2 to provide wage supplementation, the board of directors of  
3 Workforce Florida, Inc., may limit wage supplementation or  
4 otherwise establish priorities for wage supplementation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Creates the "Passport to Economic Progress Act." Requires Workforce Florida, Inc., to implement a demonstration program in Hillsborough and Manatee counties. Provides for former recipients of temporary cash assistance to be eligible for certain transitional benefits and services, notwithstanding certain time limitations provided by law. Requires Workforce Florida, Inc., to create a transitional wage supplementation program within the area of the demonstration program. Provides for eligibility. Requires Workforce Florida, Inc., to evaluate the demonstration program and report to the Governor and the Legislature.