1

A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to education for children in shelter care 3 or foster care; amending s. 39.0016, F.S.; defining the 4 term "surrogate parent"; providing legislative intent; 5 providing conditions and requirements for district school 6 superintendent or court appointment of a surrogate parent 7 for educational decisionmaking for a child who has or is 8 suspected of having a disability; providing requirements 9 for educational placement; providing requirements relating 10 to qualifications and responsibilities of surrogate parents; limiting liability; amending s. 39.202, F.S.; 11 providing for access to certain records to liaisons 12 13 between school districts and the Department of Children 14 and Family Services; amending s. 39.402, F.S.; requiring access to a child's medical records and educational 15 16 records if a child is placed in a shelter; authorizing appointment of a surrogate parent; amending s. 39.701, 17 F.S.; requiring the court and citizen review panel in 18 19 judicial reviews to consider testimony by a surrogate parent for educational decisionmaking; providing for 20 21 additional deliberations relating to appointment of an 22 educational decisionmaker; requiring certain documentation 23 relating to the educational setting; amending s. 1003.21, F.S.; providing access to free public education for 24 25 children known to the department; authorizing a temporary 26 exemption relating to school attendance; amending s. 27 1003.22, F.S.; authorizing a temporary exemption from

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28	school-entry health examinations for children known to the
29	department; providing an effective date.
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31	Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
32	
33	Section 1. Section 39.0016, Florida Statutes, is amended
34	to read:
35	39.0016 Education of abused, neglected, and abandoned
36	children; agency agreements; children having or suspected of
37	having a disability
38	(1) <u>DEFINITIONS</u> As used in this section, the term:
39	(a) "Children known to the department" means children who
40	are found to be dependent or children in shelter care.
41	(b) "Department" means the Department of Children and
42	Family Services or a community-based care lead agency acting on
43	behalf of the Department of Children and Family Services, as
44	appropriate.
45	(c) "Surrogate parent" means an individual appointed to
46	act in the place of a parent in educational decisionmaking and
47	in safeguarding a child's rights under the Individuals with
48	Disabilities Education Act and this section.
49	(2) AGENCY AGREEMENTS
50	<u>(a)</u> The department shall enter into an agreement with
51	the Department of Education regarding the education and related
52	care of children known to the department. Such agreement shall
53	be designed to provide educational access to children known to
54	the department for the purpose of facilitating the delivery of
55	services or programs to children known to the department. The
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agreement shall avoid duplication of services or programs and shall provide for combining resources to maximize the availability or delivery of services or programs.

59 <u>(b)</u>(4) The department shall enter into agreements with 60 district school boards or other local educational entities 61 regarding education and related services for children known to 62 the department who are of school age and children known to the 63 department who are younger than school age but who would 64 otherwise qualify for services from the district school board. 65 Such agreements shall include, but are not limited to:

66

1.(a) A requirement that the department shall:

67 <u>a.1.</u> Enroll children known to the department in school.
68 The agreement shall provide for continuing the enrollment of a
69 child known to the department at the same school, if possible,
70 with the goal of avoiding disruption of education.

71 <u>b.2.</u> Notify the school and school district in which a 72 child known to the department is enrolled of the name and phone 73 number of the child known to the department caregiver and 74 caseworker for child safety purposes.

75 <u>c.3.</u> Establish a protocol for the department to share 76 information about a child known to the department with the 77 school district, consistent with the Family Educational Rights 78 and Privacy Act, since the sharing of information will assist 79 each agency in obtaining education and related services for the 80 benefit of the child.

81 <u>d.4.</u> Notify the school district of the department's case 82 planning for a child known to the department, both at the time 83 of plan development and plan review. Within the plan development

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84 or review process, the school district may provide information 85 regarding the child known to the department if the school 86 district deems it desirable and appropriate.

87 2.(b) A requirement that the district school board shall: 88 a.1. Provide the department with a general listing of the 89 services and information available from the district school board, including, but not limited to, the current Sunshine State 90 91 Standards, the Surrogate Parent Training Manual, and other 92 resources accessible through the Department of Education or local school districts to facilitate educational access for a 93 94 child known to the department.

95 <u>b.2</u>. Identify all educational and other services provided 96 by the school and school district which the school district 97 believes are reasonably necessary to meet the educational needs 98 of a child known to the department.

99 c.3. Determine whether transportation is available for a 100 child known to the department when such transportation will 101 avoid a change in school assignment due to a change in 102 residential placement. Recognizing that continued enrollment in the same school throughout the time the child known to the 103 104 department is in out-of-home care is preferable unless 105 enrollment in the same school would be unsafe or otherwise 106 impractical, the department, the district school board, and the 107 Department of Education shall assess the availability of 108 federal, charitable, or grant funding for such transportation.

109 <u>d.4.</u> Provide individualized student intervention or an 110 individual educational plan when a determination has been made 111 through legally appropriate criteria that intervention services Page 4 of 20

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are required. The intervention or individual educational plan must include strategies to enable the child known to the department to maximize the attainment of educational goals.

115 3.(c) A requirement that the department and the district 116 school board shall cooperate in accessing the services and supports needed for a child known to the department who has or 117 118 is suspected of having a disability to receive an appropriate 119 education consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities 120 Education Act and state implementing laws, rules, and assurances. Coordination of services for a child known to the 121 122 department who has or is suspected of having a disability may 123 include:

124

a.1. Referral for screening.

125 <u>b.2.</u> Sharing of evaluations between the school district
 126 and the department where appropriate.

127 <u>c.3.</u> Provision of education and related services
128 appropriate for the needs and abilities of the child known to
129 the department.

<u>d.4.</u> Coordination of services and plans between the school
 and the residential setting to avoid duplication or conflicting
 service plans.

<u>e.5.</u> Appointment of a surrogate parent, consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act <u>and pursuant to</u> <u>subsection (3)</u>, for educational purposes for a child known to the department who qualifies as soon as the child is determined to be dependent and without a parent to act for the child. The surrogate parent shall be appointed by the school district without regard to where the child known to the department is

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140 placed so that one surrogate parent can follow the education of 141 the child known to the department during his or her entire time 142 in state custody.

143 <u>f.6.</u> For each child known to the department 14 years of 144 age and older, transition planning by the department and all 145 providers, including the department's independent living program 146 staff, to meet the requirements of the local school district for 147 educational purposes.

148 (c) (2) The provisions of this subsection section establish 149 standards goals and not rights. This subsection section does not 150 require the delivery of any particular service or level of 151 service in excess of existing appropriations. A person may not 152 maintain a cause of action against the state or any of its 153 subdivisions, agencies, contractors, subcontractors, or agents 154 based upon this subsection section becoming law or failure by 155 the Legislature to provide adequate funding for the achievement 156 of these standards goals. This subsection section does not 157 require the expenditure of funds to meet the standards goals 158 established in this subsection section except funds specifically 159 appropriated for such purpose.

160 (3) CHILDREN HAVING OR SUSPECTED OF HAVING A DISABILITY .--161 (a)1. The Legislature finds that disability is a natural 162 part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right 163 of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. 164 Improving educational results for children with disabilities is 165 an essential element of our public policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and 166 167 economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. Page 6 of 20

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168 The Legislature also finds that research and experience 2. 169 have shown that the education of children with disabilities can 170 be made more effective by: 171 a. Having high expectations for these children and 172 ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the 173 regular classroom, to the maximum extent possible. 174 Providing appropriate exceptional student education, b. 175 related services, and aids and supports in the least restrictive 176 environment appropriate for these children. 177 c. Having a trained, interested, and consistent 178 educational decisionmaker for the child when the parent is 179 determined to be legally unavailable or when the foster parent 180 is unwilling, has no significant relationship with the child, or 181 is not trained in the exceptional student education process. 3. It is, therefore, the intent of the Legislature that 182 all children with disabilities known to the department, 183 184 consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 185 have available to them a free, appropriate public education that 186 emphasizes exceptional student education and related services 187 designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further 188 education, employment, and independent living and that the 189 rights of children with disabilities are protected. 190 (b)1. Each district school superintendent or dependency court must appoint a surrogate parent for a child known to the 191 192 department who has or is suspected of having a disability, as 193 defined in s. 1003.01(3), when: a. After reasonable efforts, no parent can be located; or 194

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195 b. A court of competent jurisdiction over a child under 196 this chapter has determined that no person has the authority 197 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, including 198 the parent or parents subject to the dependency action, or that 199 no person has the authority, willingness, or ability to serve as 200 the educational decisionmaker for the child without judicial 201 action. 202 2. A surrogate parent appointed by the district school 203 superintendent or the court must be at least 18 years old and 204 have no personal or professional interest that conflicts with 205 the interests of the student to be represented. Neither the 206 district school superintendent nor the court may appoint an 207 employee of the Department of Education, the local school 208 district, a community-based care provider, the Department of 209 Children and Family Services, or any other public or private 210 agency involved in the education or care of the child as 211 appointment of those persons is prohibited by federal law. This 212 prohibition includes group home staff and therapeutic foster 213 parents. However, a person who acts in a parental role to a 214 child, such as a foster parent or relative caregiver, is not 215 prohibited from serving as a surrogate parent if he or she is 216 employed by such agency, willing to serve, and knowledgeable 217 about the child and the exceptional student education process. 218 The surrogate parent may be a court-appointed guardian ad litem 219 or a relative or nonrelative adult who is involved in the 220 child's life regardless of whether that person has physical 221 custody of the child. Each person appointed as a surrogate 222 parent must have the knowledge and skills acquired by

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223	successfully completing training using materials developed and
224	approved by the Department of Education to ensure adequate
225	representation of the child.
226	3. If a guardian ad litem has been appointed for a child,
227	the district school superintendent must first consider the
228	child's guardian ad litem when appointing a surrogate parent.
229	The district school superintendent must accept the appointment
230	of the court if he or she has not previously appointed a
231	surrogate parent. Similarly, the court must accept a surrogate
232	parent duly appointed by a district school superintendent.
233	4. A surrogate parent appointed by the district school
234	superintendent or the court must be accepted by any subsequent
235	school or school district without regard to where the child is
236	receiving residential care so that a single surrogate parent can
237	follow the education of the child during his or her entire time
238	in state custody. Nothing in this paragraph or in rule shall
239	limit or prohibit the continuance of a surrogate parent
240	appointment when the responsibility for the student's
241	educational placement moves among and between public and private
242	agencies.
243	5. For a child known to the department, the responsibility
244	to appoint a surrogate parent resides with both the district
245	school superintendent and the court with jurisdiction over the
246	child. If the court elects to appoint a surrogate parent, notice
247	shall be provided as soon as practicable to the child's school.
248	At any time the court determines that it is in the best
249	interests of a child to remove a surrogate parent, the court may

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250	appoint a new surrogate parent for educational decisionmaking
251	purposes for that child.
252	6. The surrogate parent shall continue in the appointed
253	role until one of the following occurs:
254	a. The child is determined to no longer be eligible or in
255	need of special programs, except when termination of special
256	programs is being contested.
257	b. The child achieves permanency through adoption or legal
258	guardianship and is no longer in the custody of the department.
259	c. The parent who was previously unknown becomes known,
260	whose whereabouts were unknown is located, or who was
261	unavailable is determined by the court to be available.
262	d. The appointed surrogate no longer wishes to represent
263	the child or is unable to represent the child.
264	e. The superintendent of the school district in which the
265	child is attending school, the Department of Education contract
266	designee, or the court that appointed the surrogate determines
267	that the appointed surrogate parent no longer adequately
268	represents the child.
269	f. The child moves to a geographic location that is not
270	reasonably accessible to the appointed surrogate.
271	7. The appointment and termination of appointment of a
272	surrogate under this paragraph shall be entered as an order of
273	the court with a copy of the order provided to the child's
274	<u>school as soon as practicable.</u>
275	8. The person appointed as a surrogate parent under this
276	paragraph must:

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277 Be acquainted with the child and become knowledgeable a. 278 about his or her disability and educational needs. 279 b. Represent the child in all matters relating to 280 identification, evaluation, and educational placement and the 281 provision of a free and appropriate education to the child. 282 c. Represent the interests and safeguard the rights of the 283 child in educational decisions that affect the child. 284 9. The responsibilities of the person appointed as a 285 surrogate parent shall not extend to the care, maintenance, custody, residential placement, or any other area not 286 287 specifically related to the education of the child, unless the 288 same person is appointed by the court for such other purposes. 289 10. A person appointed as a surrogate parent shall enjoy 290 all of the procedural safeguards afforded a parent with respect 291 to the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of 292 a student with a disability or a student who is suspected of 293 having a disability. 294 11. A person appointed as a surrogate parent shall not be 295 held liable for actions taken in good faith on behalf of the 296 student in protecting the special education rights of the child. 297 (4) (5) TRAINING.--The department shall incorporate an 298 education component into all training programs of the department 299 regarding children known to the department. Such training shall 300 be coordinated with the Department of Education and the local 301 school districts. The department shall offer opportunities for education personnel to participate in such training. Such 302 coordination shall include, but not be limited to, notice of 303 304 training sessions, opportunities to purchase training materials, Page 11 of 20

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305 proposals to avoid duplication of services by offering joint 306 training, and incorporation of materials available from the 307 Department of Education and local school districts into the 308 department training when appropriate. The department training 309 components shall include:

(a) Training for surrogate parents to include how an
ability to learn of a child known to the department is affected
by abuse, abandonment, neglect, and removal from the home.

(b) Training for parents in cases in which reunification is the goal, or for preadoptive parents when adoption is the goal, so that such parents learn how to access the services the child known to the department needs and the importance of their involvement in the education of the child known to the department.

319 (C) Training for caseworkers and foster parents to include 320 information on the right of the child known to the department to 321 an education, the role of an education in the development and 322 adjustment of a child known to the department, the proper ways to access education and related services for the child known to 323 324 the department, and the importance and strategies for parental 325 involvement in education for the success of the child known to 326 the department.

(d) Training of caseworkers regarding the services and information available through the Department of Education and local school districts, including, but not limited to, the current Sunshine State Standards, the Surrogate Parent Training Manual, and other resources accessible through the Department of Education or local school districts to facilitate educational

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333 access for a child known to the department.

334 Section 2. Paragraph (p) of subsection (2) of section 335 39.202, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

336 39.202 Confidentiality of reports and records in cases of 337 child abuse or neglect.--

338 (2) Except as provided in subsection (4), access to such 339 records, excluding the name of the reporter which shall be 340 released only as provided in subsection (5), shall be granted 341 only to the following persons, officials, and agencies:

342 An employee of the local school district who is (p) 343 designated as a liaison between the school district and the department pursuant to an interagency agreement required under 344 345 s. 39.0016 and the principal of a public school, private school, 346 or charter school where the child is a student. Information 347 contained in the records which the liaison or the principal 348 determines are necessary for a school employee to effectively 349 provide a student with educational services may be released to 350 that employee.

351 Section 3. Subsection (11) of section 39.402, Florida 352 Statutes, is amended to read:

353

39.402 Placement in a shelter.--

(11) (a) If a child is placed in a shelter pursuant to a court order following a shelter hearing, the court shall require in the shelter hearing order that the parents of the child, or the guardian of the child's estate, if possessed of assets which under law may be disbursed for the care, support, and maintenance of the child, to pay, to the department or institution having custody of the child, fees as established by

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361 the department. When the order affects the quardianship estate, 362 a certified copy of the order shall be delivered to the judge 363 having jurisdiction of the guardianship estate. The shelter 364 order shall also require the parents to provide to the 365 department and any other state agency or party designated by the 366 court, within 28 days after entry of the shelter order, the 367 financial information necessary to accurately calculate child 368 support pursuant to s. 61.30.

369 (b) The court shall request that the parents consent to 370 provide access to the child's medical records and provide 371 information to the court, the department or its contract 372 agencies, and any guardian ad litem or attorney for the child. 373 If a parent is unavailable or unable to consent or withholds 374 consent and the court determines access to the records and 375 information is necessary to provide services to the child, the 376 court shall issue an order granting access. The court may also 377 order the parents to The parent or legal quardian shall provide 378 all known medical information to the department and to any 379 others granted access under this subsection.

380 (C) The court shall request that the parents consent to 381 provide access to the child's educational records and provide 382 information to the court, the department or its contract 383 agencies, and any guardian ad litem or attorney for the child. 384 If a parent is unavailable or unable to consent or withholds 385 consent and the court determines access to the records and 386 information is necessary to provide services to the child, the 387 court shall issue an order granting access.

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388 (d) The court may appoint a surrogate parent or may refer 389 the child to the district school superintendent for appointment 390 of a surrogate parent if the child has or is suspected of having 391 a disability and the parent is unavailable pursuant to s. 392 39.0016(3)(b).

393 Section 4. Subsection (8) of section 39.701, Florida394 Statutes, is amended to read:

395

39.701 Judicial review.--

396 (8) The court and any citizen review panel shall take into consideration the information contained in the social services 397 398 study and investigation and all medical, psychological, and 399 educational records that support the terms of the case plan; 400 testimony by the social services agency, the parent, the foster 401 parent or legal custodian, the guardian ad litem or surrogate 402 parent for educational decisionmaking if one has been appointed 403 for the child, and any other person deemed appropriate; and any 404 relevant and material evidence submitted to the court, including 405 written and oral reports to the extent of their probative value. 406 These reports and evidence may be received by the court in its 407 effort to determine the action to be taken with regard to the 408 child and may be relied upon to the extent of their probative 409 value, even though not competent in an adjudicatory hearing. In 410 its deliberations, the court and any citizen review panel shall 411 seek to determine:

(a) If the parent was advised of the right to receive
assistance from any person or social service agency in the
preparation of the case plan.

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(b)

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If the parent has been advised of the right to have

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416 counsel present at the judicial review or citizen review 417 hearings. If not so advised, the court or citizen review panel 418 shall advise the parent of such right.

(c) If a guardian ad litem needs to be appointed for the child in a case in which a guardian ad litem has not previously been appointed or if there is a need to continue a guardian ad litem in a case in which a guardian ad litem has been appointed.

(d) Who holds the rights to make educational decisions for
the child. If appropriate, the court may refer the child to the
district school superintendent for appointment of a surrogate
parent or may itself appoint a surrogate parent under the
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and s. 39.0016.

428 <u>(e) (d)</u> The compliance or lack of compliance of all parties 429 with applicable items of the case plan, including the parents' 430 compliance with child support orders.

431 <u>(f)(e)</u> The compliance or lack of compliance with a 432 visitation contract between the parent and the social service 433 agency for contact with the child, including the frequency, 434 duration, and results of the parent-child visitation and the 435 reason for any noncompliance.

436 <u>(g)(f)</u> The compliance or lack of compliance of the parent 437 in meeting specified financial obligations pertaining to the 438 care of the child, including the reason for failure to comply if 439 such is the case.

440 (h) (g) Whether the child is receiving safe and proper care 441 according to s. 39.6012, including, but not limited to, the 442 appropriateness of the child's current placement, including 443 whether the child is in a setting that is as family-like and as

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444 close to the parent's home as possible, consistent with the 445 child's best interests and special needs, and including 446 maintaining stability in the child's educational placement, as 447 documented by assurances from the community-based care provider 448 that: 449 1. The placement of the child takes into account the 450 appropriateness of the current educational setting and the 451 proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the

452 time of placement.

453 <u>2. The community-based care agency has coordinated with</u>
454 <u>appropriate local educational agencies to ensure that the child</u>
455 <u>remains in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time</u>
456 <u>of placement</u>.

457 (i) (h) A projected date likely for the child's return home
 458 or other permanent placement.

459 <u>(j)(i)</u> When appropriate, the basis for the unwillingness 460 or inability of the parent to become a party to a case plan. The 461 court and the citizen review panel shall determine if the 462 efforts of the social service agency to secure party 463 participation in a case plan were sufficient.

464 <u>(k) (j)</u> For a child who has reached 13 years of age but is 465 not yet 18 years of age, the adequacy of the child's preparation 466 for adulthood and independent living.

467 (1) (k) If amendments to the case plan are required.
 468 Amendments to the case plan must be made under s. 39.6013.

469 Section 5. Paragraph (f) of subsection (1) and paragraph 470 (g) of subsection (4) of section 1003.21, Florida Statutes, are 471 amended to read:

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(1)

472

1003.21 School attendance.--

473

474 Homeless children, as defined in s. 1003.01, and (f) 475 children who are known to the department, as defined in s. 476 39.0016, must have access to a free public education and must be 477 admitted to school in the school district in which they or their 478 families live. School districts shall assist homeless children 479 and children who are known to the department to meet the 480 requirements of subsection (4) and s. 1003.22, as well as local 481 requirements for documentation.

482 Before admitting a child to kindergarten, the (4) 483 principal shall require evidence that the child has attained the 484 age at which he or she should be admitted in accordance with the 485 provisions of subparagraph (1) (a)2. The district school 486 superintendent may require evidence of the age of any child whom 487 he or she believes to be within the limits of compulsory 488 attendance as provided for by law. If the first prescribed 489 evidence is not available, the next evidence obtainable in the 490 order set forth below shall be accepted:

491 If none of these evidences can be produced, an (q) 492 affidavit of age sworn to by the parent, accompanied by a 493 certificate of age signed by a public health officer or by a 494 public school physician, or, if neither of these is available in 495 the county, by a licensed practicing physician designated by the 496 district school board, which certificate states that the health officer or physician has examined the child and believes that 497 the age as stated in the affidavit is substantially correct. A 498 499 homeless child, as defined in s. 1003.01, and a child who is

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500 <u>known to the department, as defined in s. 39.0016</u>, shall be
501 given temporary exemption from this section for 30 school days.
502 Section 6. Subsection (1) and paragraph (e) of subsection
503 (5) of section 1003.22, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

504 1003.22 School-entry health examinations; immunization 505 against communicable diseases; exemptions; duties of Department 506 of Health.--

507 (1) Each district school board and the governing authority 508 of each private school shall require that each child who is 509 entitled to admittance to kindergarten, or is entitled to any 510 other initial entrance into a public or private school in this state, present a certification of a school-entry health 511 examination performed within 1 year prior to enrollment in 512 513 school. Each district school board, and the governing authority 514 of each private school, may establish a policy that permits a 515 student up to 30 school days to present a certification of a 516 school-entry health examination. A homeless child, as defined in 517 s. 1003.01, and a child who is known to the department, as 518 defined in s. 39.0016, shall be given a temporary exemption for 519 30 school days. Any district school board that establishes such 520 a policy shall include provisions in its local school health 521 services plan to assist students in obtaining the health examinations. However, any child shall be exempt from the 522 523 requirement of a health examination upon written request of the parent of the child stating objections to the examination on 524 525 religious grounds.

526 527 (5) The provisions of this section shall not apply if:(e) An authorized school official issues a temporary

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528 exemption, for a period not to exceed 30 school days, to permit 529 a student who transfers into a new county to attend class until 530 his or her records can be obtained. A homeless child, as defined 531 in s. 1003.01, and a child who is known to the department, as 532 defined in s. 39.0016, shall be given a temporary exemption for 533 30 school days. The public school health nurse or authorized 534 private school official is responsible for followup of each such 535 student until proper documentation or immunizations are 536 obtained. An exemption for 30 days may be issued for a student 537 who enters a juvenile justice program to permit the student to 538 attend class until his or her records can be obtained or until 539 the immunizations can be obtained. An authorized juvenile 540 justice official is responsible for followup of each student who 541 enters a juvenile justice program until proper documentation or immunizations are obtained. 542

543

Section 7. This act shall take effect July 1, 2009.

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