

By Senator Detert

28-00994B-15

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1                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to individuals with disabilities;  
3           requiring the Department of Economic Opportunity, in  
4           consultation with other organizations, to create the  
5           Florida Unique Abilities Partner program; defining the  
6           term "individuals who have a disability"; establishing  
7           criteria for a business entity to be designated as a  
8           Florida Unique Abilities Partner; requiring a business  
9           entity to certify that it continues to meet the  
10          established criteria for designation each year;  
11          requiring the department to remove the designation if  
12          a business entity does not submit yearly certification  
13          of continued eligibility; authorizing a business  
14          entity to discontinue its use of the designation;  
15          requiring the department, in consultation with the  
16          disability community, to develop a logo for business  
17          entities designated as Florida Unique Abilities  
18          Program Partners; requiring the department to adopt  
19          guidelines and requirements for use of the logo;  
20          authorizing the department to allow a designated  
21          business entity to display a logo; prohibiting the use  
22          of a logo if a business entity does not have a current  
23          designation; requiring the department to maintain a  
24          website with specified information; requiring the  
25          Agency for Persons with Disabilities and the Florida  
26          Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation to provide a  
27          link on their websites to the department's website for  
28          the Florida Unique Abilities Partner program;  
29          requiring the department to partner with the Florida

28-00994B-15

20151246\_\_

30 Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation to create a  
31 marketing campaign with specified goals; requiring the  
32 department to identify employment opportunities posted  
33 by employers that receive the Florida Unique Abilities  
34 Partner designation on the workforce information  
35 system; requiring the department to provide a  
36 specified report to the Legislature by a specified  
37 date; requiring the department to adopt rules;  
38 providing an effective date.

39  
40 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

41  
42 Section 1. (1) The Department of Economic Opportunity shall  
43 establish the Florida Unique Abilities Partner program to  
44 designate a business entity as a Florida Unique Abilities  
45 Partner if the business entity demonstrates commitment, through  
46 employment and support, to the independence of individuals who  
47 have a disability. The department shall consult with the Agency  
48 for Persons with Disabilities, the Division of Vocational  
49 Rehabilitation of the Department of Education, the Division of  
50 Blind Services of the Department of Education, and CareerSource  
51 Florida in creating the program. As used in this section, the  
52 term "individuals who have a disability" means persons who have  
53 a physical or intellectual impairment that substantially limits  
54 one or more major life activities; persons who have a history or  
55 record of such an impairment; or persons who are perceived by  
56 others as having such an impairment.

57 (2) A business entity may apply to the Department of  
58 Economic Opportunity to be designated as a Florida Unique

28-00994B-15

20151246\_\_

59 Abilities Partner, based on the business entity's achievements  
60 in at least one of the following categories:

61 (a) Employment of individuals who have a disability.

62 (b) Contributions to local or national disability  
63 organizations or the establishment of a program that contributes  
64 to the independence of individuals who have a disability.

65 (3) The Department of Economic Opportunity shall adopt  
66 procedures for the application and designation processes for the  
67 Florida Unique Abilities Partner program. Designation as a  
68 Florida Unique Abilities Partner does not establish or involve  
69 licensure, does not affect the substantial interests of a party,  
70 and does not constitute a final agency action. The Florida  
71 Unique Abilities Partner program and designation are not subject  
72 to chapter 120, Florida Statutes.

73 (4) In determining the eligibility for the designation of a  
74 business entity as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner, the  
75 Department of Economic Opportunity must consider, at a minimum,  
76 the following criteria:

77 (a) A business entity must certify that it employs at least  
78 one individual who has a disability. Such employees must be  
79 residents of this state and must have been employed by the  
80 business entity for at least 9 months before the business  
81 entity's application for the designation; or

82 (b) A business entity must certify that it has made  
83 contributions to local and national disability organizations or  
84 contributions in support of individuals who have a disability.  
85 Contributions may be accomplished through financial or in-kind  
86 contributions, including employee volunteer hours, or  
87 accomplished through the establishment of a program that

28-00994B-15

20151246\_\_

88 contributes to the independence of individuals who have a  
89 disability. Contributions must be documented by providing copies  
90 of written receipts or letters of acknowledgment from recipients  
91 or donees. A business entity with 100 or fewer employees must  
92 make a financial or in-kind contribution of at least \$1,000, and  
93 a business entity with more than 100 employees must make a  
94 financial or in-kind contribution of at least \$5,000.

95 (5) The Department of Economic Opportunity may consider  
96 recommendations from members of the disability community in  
97 which the business entity is located as part of the business  
98 entity's application for designation as a Florida Unique  
99 Abilities Partner.

100 (6) After an initial designation as a Florida Unique  
101 Abilities Partner, a business entity must certify each year that  
102 it continues to meet the criteria for the designation. If a  
103 business entity does not submit yearly certification of  
104 continued eligibility, the Department of Economic Opportunity  
105 shall remove the designation. A business entity may elect to  
106 discontinue its use of the designation at any time by notifying  
107 the department of such decision.

108 (7) The Department of Economic Opportunity, in consultation  
109 with members of the disability community, must develop a logo  
110 that identifies a business entity that is designated as a  
111 Florida Unique Abilities Partner.

112 (8) The Department of Economic Opportunity must adopt  
113 guidelines and requirements for use of the logo, including how  
114 the logo may be used in advertising. The department may allow a  
115 business entity to display a Florida Unique Abilities Partner  
116 logo upon designation. A business entity that has not been

28-00994B-15

20151246\_\_

117 designated as a Florida Unique Abilities Partner or has elected  
118 to discontinue its designated status may not display the logo.

119 (9) The Department of Economic Opportunity must maintain a  
120 website that provides the public with a list of business  
121 entities that currently have the Florida Unique Abilities  
122 Partner designation and that provides information regarding the  
123 eligibilities for the designation. At least once a year, the  
124 department must publish on its website the best ways for  
125 business entities to facilitate the inclusion of individuals who  
126 have a disability. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities and  
127 the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation must provide  
128 a link on their websites to the department's website that makes  
129 available the information on the Florida Unique Abilities  
130 Partner program and designation.

131 (10) The Department of Economic Opportunity shall partner  
132 with the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation to  
133 create a marketing campaign that includes periodic public  
134 service announcements on radio and television stations, that  
135 promotes the awareness of the Florida Unique Abilities Partner  
136 program, and that encourages public support for business  
137 entities that currently have the Florida Unique Abilities  
138 Partner designation.

139 (11) The Department of Economic Opportunity shall identify  
140 employment opportunities posted by business entities that  
141 currently have the Florida Unique Abilities Partner designation  
142 on the workforce information system under s. 445.011, Florida  
143 Statutes.

144 (12) By January 1, 2016, the Department of Economic  
145 Opportunity must provide a report to the President of the Senate

28-00994B-15

20151246\_\_

146 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on the status of  
147 the implementation of this section, including the adoption of  
148 rules, development of the logo, and development of application  
149 procedures.

150 (13) The Department of Economic Opportunity shall adopt  
151 rules to administer this section.

152 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2015.