

By Senator Joyner

19-00638B-16

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1                   A bill to be entitled  
2       An act relating to the Arthur G. Dozier School for  
3       Boys; directing the Department of State to preserve  
4       historical resources, records, archives, and  
5       artifacts, to create and maintain a memorial to  
6       victims, and to continue the department's research and  
7       development of evidence; authorizing the department to  
8       reimburse the next of kin of children whose bodies are  
9       buried and exhumed at the Dozier School for the costs  
10      associated with funeral services and reinterment;  
11      requiring the department to identify and locate such  
12      next of kin within a specified timeframe; requiring  
13      that the costs for which the next of kin is reimbursed  
14      be documented; requiring that payment be made within a  
15      specified timeframe; authorizing the department to  
16      make direct payment to the provider for such services;  
17      authorizing reimbursement if an exhumation occurs  
18      after a specified date, subject to the availability of  
19      funding; authorizing the department to adopt rules;  
20      providing an appropriation; providing an effective  
21      date.

22  
23       WHEREAS, the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, or the  
24       Dozier School, operated from 1900 until it was closed in 2011  
25       after allegations of abuse were confirmed in separate  
26       investigations by the Department of Law Enforcement in 2010 and  
27       the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of  
28       Justice in 2011, and

29       WHEREAS, official records indicated that 31 graves had been

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30 dug at the facility between 1914 and 1952, and

31 WHEREAS, a forensic investigation by the University of  
32 South Florida found that there are no records of where children  
33 who died at the Dozier School are buried and that a second  
34 cemetery is likely to exist, and

35 WHEREAS, exhumations of bodies began in August 2013, and  
36 the excavations yielded remains of 55 bodies, 24 more bodies  
37 than reported in official records, and

38 WHEREAS, one of the bodies exhumed during the forensic  
39 investigation was of a child reported missing since 1940, and

40 WHEREAS, representatives of children formerly held at the  
41 Dozier School have estimated that there could be 100 more bodies  
42 buried on the grounds of the school, and

43 WHEREAS, many families of children whose bodies have been  
44 exhumed lack the resources to properly reinter those children at  
45 a suitable location, and

46 WHEREAS, the State of Florida recognizes an obligation to  
47 help the families of children formerly buried at the Dozier  
48 School reinter the bodies of those children, NOW, THEREFORE,

49  
50 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

51  
52 Section 1. (1) The Department of State is directed to  
53 preserve historical resources, records, archives, and artifacts;  
54 to create and maintain a memorial for victims; and to continue  
55 its research and development of evidence at the Arthur G. Dozier  
56 School for Boys.

57 (2) The department is authorized to reimburse up to \$7,500  
58 for funeral, reinterment, and grave marker expenses to the next

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59 of kin of each child buried and exhumed at the Dozier School.  
60 The department shall identify and locate eligible families of  
61 exhumed children within 1 year after the effective date of this  
62 act and shall pay up to the maximum allowed to the next of kin  
63 no later than 6 months after locating the next of kin.

64 (a) The child's next of kin must submit receipts or  
65 documentation of the expenses to the department in order to  
66 receive reimbursement, which must be processed and remitted  
67 within 14 days of the department's receipt of the request for  
68 reimbursement and required documentation.

69 (b) If a family cannot pay the funeral, reinterment, or  
70 grave marker expenses, the department may, upon receipt of an  
71 invoice, pay such expenses directly to the funeral home or other  
72 appropriate entity.

73 (3) Subject to the appropriation of funds by the  
74 Legislature, if the remains of a child are found and exhumed at  
75 the Dozier School after June 30, 2017, the next of kin must be  
76 identified within a reasonable time and reimbursed up to \$7,500  
77 for funeral, reinterment, and grave marker expenses within 1  
78 year after the exhumation of the child. Reimbursement must be  
79 made subject to the requirements specified in paragraphs (2) (a)  
80 and (b).

81 (4) The department may adopt rules necessary to administer  
82 this section.

83 Section 2. For the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the sum of \$1.5  
84 million in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General  
85 Revenue Fund to the Department of State for the purpose of  
86 implementing this act.

87 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2016.