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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate	.	House
Comm: RCS	.	
04/04/2017	.	
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The Committee on Judiciary (Rouson) recommended the following:

**Senate Amendment (with title amendment)**

Delete everything after the resolving clause  
and insert:

That the Senate regrets that the treatment of boys who were sent to the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys and the Okeechobee School was cruel, unjust, and a violation of human decency, and acknowledges this shameful part of the State of Florida's history.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate apologizes to the boys who were confined to Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys and



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12 the Okeechobee School and their family members for the wrongs  
13 committed against them by employees of the State of Florida.

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate expresses its  
15 commitment to ensuring that children who have been placed in the  
16 State of Florida's care are protected from abuse and violations  
17 of fundamental human decency.

18  
19 ===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====

20 And the title is amended as follows:

21 Delete everything before the resolving clause  
22 and insert:

23 Senate Resolution

24 A resolution acknowledging the abuses experienced by  
25 children confined in the Arthur G. Dozier School for  
26 Boys and the Florida School for Boys at Okeechobee and  
27 expressing the Senate's regret for such abuses and its  
28 commitment to ensure that the children of this state  
29 are protected from the abuses and violations of  
30 fundamental human decency.

31  
32 WHEREAS, the Florida State Reform School, also called the  
33 Florida Industrial School for Boys and later known as the Arthur  
34 G. Dozier School for Boys, referred to in this resolution as  
35 "Dozier School," was opened by the State of Florida in 1900 in  
36 Marianna to house children who had committed minor criminal  
37 offenses, such as incorrigibility, truancy, and smoking, as well  
38 as more serious offenses such as theft and murder, and

39 WHEREAS, many of the children who were sent to Dozier  
40 School were sentenced without legal representation before the



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41 court, often without a known basis for being sent to the school  
42 or a specific duration of confinement, and

43 WHEREAS, within the first 13 years of Dozier School's  
44 operation, six state-led investigations were conducted in  
45 response to reports of children being chained to walls in irons,  
46 severely beaten, and used for child labor, and

47 WHEREAS, throughout Dozier School's history, reports of  
48 abuse, suspicious deaths, and threats of closure plagued the  
49 school, and

50 WHEREAS, many former students of Dozier School have sworn  
51 under oath that they were beaten at a facility located on the  
52 school grounds known as the "White House," and

53 WHEREAS, a psychologist employed at Dozier School testified  
54 under oath at a 1958 United States Senate Judiciary Committee  
55 hearing that boys at the school were beaten by an administrator,  
56 that the blows were severe and dealt with a great deal of force  
57 with a full arm swing over the head and down, that a leather  
58 strap approximately ten inches long was used, and that the  
59 beatings were "brutality," and

60 WHEREAS, a former Dozier School employee stated in  
61 interviews with law enforcement that, in 1962, several employees  
62 of the school were removed from the facility based upon  
63 allegations that they made sexual advances toward boys at the  
64 facility, and

65 WHEREAS, a forensic investigation funded by the Florida  
66 Legislature and conducted from 2013 to 2016 by the University of  
67 South Florida found incomplete records regarding deaths and  
68 burials that occurred at Dozier School between 1900 and 1960,  
69 and that families were often notified after the child was buried



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70 or denied access to their remains at the time of burial, and  
71 WHEREAS, the excavations conducted as part of the forensic  
72 investigation yielded 55 burial sites, 24 more sites than  
73 reported in official records, and  
74 WHEREAS, given the lack of documentation and contradictions  
75 in the historical record, questions persist regarding the  
76 identity of persons buried at Dozier School and the  
77 circumstances surrounding their deaths, and  
78 WHEREAS, in 1955, the State of Florida opened a new reform  
79 school in Okeechobee, called the Florida School for Boys at  
80 Okeechobee, referred to in this resolution as "the Okeechobee  
81 School," to address overcrowding at Dozier School, and staff of  
82 Dozier School were transferred to the Okeechobee School where  
83 similar practices were implemented, and  
84 WHEREAS, many former students of the Okeechobee School have  
85 sworn under oath that they were beaten at a facility on school  
86 grounds known as the "Adjustment Unit," and  
87 WHEREAS, former Governor Claude Kirk toured Dozier School  
88 in 1968 and stated, "If one of your kids were kept in such  
89 circumstances, you'd be up there with rifles," and  
90 WHEREAS, Dozier School was closed in 2011 after  
91 investigations by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and  
92 the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of  
93 Justice, and  
94 WHEREAS, more than 500 former students of Dozier School and  
95 the Okeechobee School have come forward with reports of  
96 physical, mental, and sexual abuse by school staff during the  
97 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, and resulting trauma that has endured  
98 throughout their adult lives; NOW THEREFORE,