

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Appropriations

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BILL: CS/CS/SB 1220

INTRODUCER: Appropriations Committee (Recommended by Appropriations Subcommittee on Education); Education Committee; and Senator Diaz

SUBJECT: K-12 Scholarship Programs

DATE: March 5, 2020

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>Sikes</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
2.	<u>Underhill</u>	<u>Elwell</u>	<u>AED</u>	<u>Recommend: Fav/CS</u>
3.	<u>Underhill</u>	<u>Kynoch</u>	<u>AP</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>

**Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

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**I. Summary:**

CS/CS/SB 1220 modifies provisions in the Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) program, the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) scholarship program, and the Hope Scholarship Program (HSP) in order to establish a priority order for award of FES and FTC scholarships, and to ensure renewal FTC scholarship students are able to retain a state scholarship. Specifically, the bill:

- Modifies the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship program to:
  - Specify that a student who receives an FTC scholarship remains eligible until high school graduation or age 21, regardless of the student's household income level.
  - Require each eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization (SFO) to refer any student who does not get a renewal FTC scholarship because of a lack of available funds to another SFO that may have available funds.
- Modifies the Family Empowerment Scholarship program to:
  - Establish a priority order for award of an FES, which includes a student who received an FTC scholarship in the previous school year but did not receive a renewal scholarship because of a lack of available funds.
  - Require the Department of Education to maintain and publish a list of nationally norm-referenced tests and to establish deadlines relating to applications, renewal notifications, and verification of student eligibility.
  - Require each private school to report test scores of students receiving a FES to a specified state university.

- Change the annual growth of the FES from 0.25 percent to 1.0 percent of the state's total public school enrollment.
- Allow the maximum household income level for eligibility to increase by 25 percent in any year following a fiscal year in which more than 5 percent of available FES scholarships are not awarded.
- Modifies the HSP to specify that an SFO that uses excess contributions to the HSP to fund FTC scholarships must prioritize renewal scholarships before awarding any initial scholarships.

Revising the increase for maximum student participation in the FES from 0.25 percent (roughly 7,000 students) to 1.0 percent (roughly 28,000 students) annually may increase the student FTE and state funding needed for the FEFP. In addition, expanding the Florida Empowerment Scholarship (FES) eligibility to include FTC students may increase FTE and state funding needed for the FEFP.

See Section V.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2020.

## II. Present Situation:

The present situation for the relevant portions of the bill is discussed under the Effect of Proposed Changes of this bill analysis.

## III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

### Private Education Choice

#### *Present Situation*

Many states are expanding school choice options to include private schools in addition to public schools. In total, 27 states and the District of Columbia have enacted policies designed to broaden access to a private education. The three primary policies states have adopted that expand private school choices include:<sup>1</sup>

- School vouchers.
- Scholarship tax credits.
- Education savings accounts.

#### Private Education Choice in Florida

A private school in Florida is an individual, association, co-partnership, or corporation, or department, division, or section of such organizations, that designates itself as an educational

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<sup>1</sup> School vouchers are state-funded scholarships that pay for students to attend private school rather than public school. Scholarship tax credits allow individuals and corporations to allocate a portion of their owed state taxes to private nonprofit scholarship organizations that issue public and private school scholarships to K-12 students. Education Savings Accounts are state-funded grants deposited into special savings accounts from which parents can withdraw funds for certain educational expenses. National Conference of State Legislatures, *Private School Choice* <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/private-school-choice635174504.aspx> (last visited Dec. 18, 2019).

center that includes kindergarten or a higher grade and is below college level. A private school may be a parochial, religious, denominational, for-profit, or nonprofit school. A home education program is not considered a private school.<sup>2</sup>

Florida offers multiple private education choice scholarship programs for students who meet the eligibility requirements. In order to participate in Florida's state school choice scholarship program, private schools must comply with specified requirements.<sup>3</sup>

Two of Florida's scholarship programs are focused on students from low income families:

- Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship Program.
- Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES).<sup>4</sup>

#### Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program

The FTC Scholarship Program allows for private, voluntary contributions from corporate donors to eligible non-profit scholarship-funding organizations (SFOs) that award scholarships to eligible children from low-income families.<sup>5</sup> State law requires the SFOs to use the contributions received to provide scholarships to eligible students for the cost of private school tuition or transportation to public school in which the student is enrolled that is different from the school to which the student was assigned.

To be eligible for an FTC scholarship a student must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The student is on the direct certification list or the student's household income level does not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level.
- The student is currently placed, or during the previous state fiscal year was placed, in foster care or in out-of-home care as defined in law.
- The student's household income level is greater than 185 percent of the federal poverty level but does not exceed 260 percent of the federal poverty level.

A student who initially receives a scholarship as a result of being placed in foster care or in out-of-home care remains eligible to participate until the student graduates from high school or attains the age of 21 years, whichever occurs first, regardless of the student's household income level. A student who initially received a scholarship based on income eligibility before the 2019-2020 school year remains eligible to participate until he or she graduates from high school, attains the age of 21 years, or the student's household income level exceeds 260 percent of the federal poverty level, whichever occurs first. A sibling of a student who is participating in the scholarship program is eligible for a scholarship if the student resides in the same household as the sibling.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Section 1002.01(2), F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Section 1002.421(1), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> Section 1002.395(8)(a), F. S.

<sup>5</sup> The program include credits against the insurance premium tax for contributions to eligible non-profit SFOs, credits against severance taxes on oil and gas production, self-accrued sales tax liabilities of direct pay permit holders, and alcoholic beverage taxes on beer, wine, and spirits. Section 1002.395(6)(d), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 1002.395(3), F.S.

A student is not eligible for a scholarship while he or she is enrolled in a Department of Juvenile Justice program; receiving another state educational scholarship; or enrolled in a home education, private tutoring, virtual, correspondence, distance learning program; or enrolled in the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind.<sup>7</sup>

SFOs must comply with requirements relating to administration of the FTC scholarship program, which include antidiscrimination, background checks, and private school choice. In addition, SFOs must:<sup>8</sup>

- Give first priority to eligible students who received a scholarship from an eligible SFO or from the state during the previous school year; and must also prioritize new applicants whose household income levels do not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level or who are in foster care or out-of-home care.
- Provide a scholarship to an eligible student on a first-come, first-served basis unless the student qualifies for priority established in law.

During the 2018-19 school year, FTC scholarships in the amount of \$644.6 million were awarded to a total of 104,091 students enrolled in 1,825 participating Florida private schools.<sup>9</sup> More than 109,000 FTC scholarships have been awarded for the 2019-2020 school year.<sup>10</sup>

#### Family Empowerment Scholarship Program

Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, the FES Program provides educational options to eligible children of families with limited financial resources. A student who receives a scholarship remains eligible to participate until the student graduates from high school or attains the age of 21 years, whichever occurs first, regardless of the student's household income level.<sup>11</sup> Similar to the McKay Scholarship, the FES is funded through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). The program is capped at 18,000 students for the 2019-2020 school year and can annually increase by 0.25 percent of the state's total public school student enrollment.<sup>12</sup>

To be eligible for an FES, a student must meet the following criteria:<sup>13</sup>

- The student is:
  - On the direct certification list pursuant to law or the student's household income level does not exceed 300 percent of the federal poverty level; or
  - Currently placed, or during the previous fiscal year was placed, in foster care or in out-of-home care as defined in law.
- The student is eligible to enroll in kindergarten or has spent the prior school year in attendance at a Florida public school. However, a dependent child of a member of the United States Armed Forces who transfers to a school in this state from out of state or from a foreign

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<sup>7</sup> Section 1002.395(4), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 1002.395(6), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Fact Sheet, Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program* (Dec. 18, 2019), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5606/urlt/FTC-Sept-2019.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Email from Amy Graham, Senior Policy Director, Step Up For Students, (Jan. 9, 2020) (on file with the Senate Committee on Education), Email from Patti Froebel, Controller, AAA Scholarship Foundation, (Dec. 18, 2019) (on file with Committee on Education).

<sup>11</sup> Section 1002.394(1), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> Section 1002.394(11)(b), F.S.

<sup>13</sup> Section 1002.394(3), F.S.

country due to a parent's permanent change of station orders or a foster child is exempt from the prior public school attendance requirement.

- The parent has obtained acceptance for admission of the student to a private school that is eligible for the program and the parent has requested a scholarship from the Department of Education at least 60 days before the date of the first scholarship payment.

Priority is given to students whose household income levels do not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level or who are in foster care or out-of-home care. A sibling of a student who is participating in the scholarship program under this subsection is eligible for a scholarship if the student resides in the same household as the sibling.<sup>14</sup>

A student is not eligible for an FES while he or she is:<sup>15</sup>

- Enrolled in a public school including the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind, College-Prep Boarding Academy, a developmental research school, or a charter school;
- Enrolled in a school operating for the purpose of providing educational services to youth in a Department of Juvenile Justice commitment program;
- Receiving any other educational scholarship pursuant to Florida law;
- Participating in a home education program;
- Participating in a private tutoring program; or
- Participating in a virtual school, correspondence school, or distance learning program that receives state funding pursuant to the student's participation.

The DOE is required to:<sup>16</sup>

- Publish and update, as necessary, information on the DOE website about the FES Program, including, but not limited to, student eligibility criteria, parental responsibilities, and relevant data.
- Cross-check the list of participating scholarship students with the public school enrollment lists before each scholarship payment to avoid duplication.

Among other requirements, to be eligible to participate in the FES program, a private school must annually administer or make provision for students participating in the FES program in grades 3 through 10 to take one of the nationally norm-referenced tests identified by the DOE or take the statewide standardized assessments. A participating private school must report a student's scores to his or her parent.<sup>17</sup>

An eligible nonprofit SFO:<sup>18</sup>

- Must verify the household income level of students and submit the verified list of students and related documentation to the DOE.
- May use a specified amount of the total amount of scholarships for administrative expenses.
- Must, in a timely manner, submit any information requested by the DOE relating to the scholarship under this section.

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<sup>14</sup> Section 1002.394(3), F.S.

<sup>15</sup> Section 1002.394(5), F.S.

<sup>16</sup> Section 1002.394(7), F.S.

<sup>17</sup> Section 1002.394(8), F.S.

<sup>18</sup> Section 1002.394(10), F.S.

- Must notify the DOE about any violation of the requirements of the FES program by a parent or a private school.

The FES was initially established for up to 18,000 students annually on a first-come, first-served basis beginning with the 2019-2020 school year. Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, the number of students participating in the FES program may annually increase by 0.25 percent of the state's total public school student enrollment.<sup>19</sup>

As of December 2019, 17,795 FES scholarships were awarded to students for the 2019-2020 school year.<sup>20</sup>

### Hope Scholarship Program

The Hope Scholarship Program (HSP) was established in 2018<sup>21</sup> to provide the parent of a public school student an opportunity to transfer the student to another public school or to request a scholarship for the student to enroll in and attend an eligible private school if that student has been subjected to battery; harassment; hazing; bullying; kidnapping; physical attack; robbery; sexual offenses, harassment, assault, or battery; threat or intimidation; or fighting at school.<sup>22</sup>

A tax credit<sup>23</sup> is available for use by a person that makes an eligible contribution.<sup>24</sup> Eligible contributions shall be used to fund HSP scholarships and may be used to fund FTC scholarships, with conditions. An SFO may carry forward to the next state fiscal year no more than five percent of net eligible contributions to the HSP. Any amounts carried forward must be expended for annual scholarships or partial-year scholarships in the following state fiscal year, and must be transferred to other eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations participating in the HSP to provide scholarships for eligible students. If no other eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization participates in the HSP, net eligible contributions in excess of the 5 percent may be used to fund scholarships for students eligible for a FTC scholarship.<sup>25</sup>

### *Effect of Proposed Changes*

The bill modifies s. 1002.394, F.S., relating to the Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) program, s. 1002.395, F.S., relating to the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) scholarship program, and s. 1002.40, F.S., relating to the Hope Scholarship Program (HSP).

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<sup>19</sup> Section 1002.394(11)(a), F.S.

<sup>20</sup> Includes the school districts for 65 counties, four lab school districts, and the Florida School for the Deaf & the Blind. Email from Jared Ochs, Director of Legislative Affairs, Department of Education, (Jan. 2, 2020) (on file with the Senate Committee on Education).

<sup>21</sup> Section 16, ch. 2018-6, L.O.F.

<sup>22</sup> Section 1002.40(1) and (6), F.S.

<sup>23</sup> The purchaser of a motor vehicle is granted a credit of 100 percent of an eligible contribution made to an eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization for the Hope Scholarship Program against any tax imposed by the state and collected from the purchaser by a dealer, designated agent, or private tag agent as a result of the purchase or acquisition of a motor vehicle, except that a credit may not exceed the tax that would otherwise be collected from the purchaser by a dealer, designated agent, or private tag agent. Section 212.1832(1), F.S.

<sup>24</sup> Section 1002.40(13), F.S.

<sup>25</sup> Section 1002.40(11)(i), F.S.

### Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program

The bill establishes that first priority for an FTC scholarship is for a student who received a full-time scholarship from an eligible SFO in the previous year. The bill also specifies that priority for an initial FTC scholarship must be given to a student whose household income level does not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level or who is in foster care or out-of-home care.

The bill requires eligible nonprofit SFOs to apply all funds available under the FTC scholarship program and the Hope Scholarship Program for renewal scholarship awards before awarding any initial scholarships. The bill also requires each eligible nonprofit SFO to refer any student eligible for an FTC scholarship who did not receive a renewal or initial scholarship based solely on the lack of available funds through the FTC scholarship program or HSP to another eligible nonprofit SFO that may have funds available.

The bill modifies continued eligibility requirements to specify that a student eligible for an FTC scholarship remains eligible to participate until the student graduates from high school or attains the age of 21 years, whichever occurs first, regardless of the student's income level.

### Family Empowerment Scholarship Program

The bill modifies initial eligibility for the FES program, which currently sets a maximum household income level of 300 percent of the federal poverty level, by specifying that the maximum household income level will increase by 25 percent in the fiscal year following any fiscal year in which more than 5 percent of the available scholarships authorized under the FES program have not been awarded.

The bill establishes an additional eligibility criterion for FES to include, beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, a student who received an FTC scholarship during the previous school year but did not receive a renewal FTC scholarship based solely on the eligible nonprofit SFO's lack of available funds after the SFO fully exhausts funds under the FTC scholarship program and the HSP. The purpose of this provision is to ensure that FTC scholarship program students will continue to have access to a scholarship program even if contributions to the program decline. The bill requires eligible nonprofit SFOs with such students to annually notify the DOE in a format and by a date established by the DOE.

The bill establishes a priority order for award of an FES, and removes the requirement that the scholarship is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. The priority order is as follows.

- A student who received and FES during the previous school year and requested a renewal scholarship award.
- A student who received an FTC scholarship in the previous school year but did not receive a renewal scholarship because of a lack of funds under FTC and excess Hope Scholarship contributions; and is on the direct certification list or whose household income does not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level, is placed in foster care or in-home care, or has a household income level does not exceed 300 percent of the federal poverty level, or an adjusted maximum.
- A student who is on the direct certification list or whose household income does not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level, or is placed in foster care or in-home care; and spent the prior year in full-time attendance at a Florida public school.

- A student who is on the direct certification list or whose household income does not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level, or is placed in foster care or in-home care; and is eligible to enroll in kindergarten.
- A student who is in a household with an income level that does not exceed 300 percent of the federal poverty level, or an adjusted maximum; and, in priority order, spent the prior year in full-time attendance at a Florida public school; or is eligible to enroll in kindergarten.

In order to implement the priority order established in the bill, the bill requires:

- The DOE to:
  - Notify eligible nonprofit SFOs of the deadlines for submitting the verified list of students determined to be eligible for an initial or renewal scholarship.
  - Establish deadlines for the receipt of initial applications and renewal notifications in order to implement the established priority order for scholarship awards.
- Parents to request a scholarship by a date established by the DOE, and to annually renew participation in the FES program by the date established by the DOE.
- Eligible nonprofit SFOs to award initial and renewal scholarships in the priority order established in the bill. The SFO must also comply with the deadlines established by the DOE.

Similar to requirements in law for the FTC scholarship program, the bill requires for the FES program:

- The DOE to maintain and publish a list of nationally norm-referenced tests identified for purposes of satisfying the FES program testing requirement.
- Each private school to, by August 15 of each year, report the scores of all participating students to a state university for the purpose of annual reporting of performance data.

Finally, the bill increases the annual growth of the FES to specify that, beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, the maximum number of students participating in the FES must annually increase by 1 percent (rather than 0.25 percent currently in law) of the state's total public school student enrollment.

#### Hope Scholarship Program

The bill specifies that if an SFO uses excess eligible contributions to the HSP to fund FTC scholarships, the SFO must fully exhaust all contributions made to the HSP for renewal FTC scholarship students prior to awarding any initial scholarships.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

##### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

##### B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Increasing the allowable annual growth for student participation in the FES from 0.25 percent of total public school enrollment to 1.0 percent, may increase the student FTE and funding needed for the FEFP. The annual growth in maximum student participation will increase from approximately 7,000 to 28,000 students (over and above the current 18,000).

Expanding the FES eligibility to include a student who received a FTC scholarship may increase the need for additional state funds. Students who move from the FTC scholarship to the FES, would be added to the FTE count and funding for the FEFP. It is unknown at this time how many students would meet the requirements to be reclassified between the two scholarships.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1002.394, 1002.395, and 1002.40.

**IX. Additional Information:**

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**  
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

**CS/CS by Appropriations on March 3, 2020:**

The committee substitute modifies provisions in the bill relating to the Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) and the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship, and adds a provision in the Hope Scholarship Program (HSP).

- Modifies the Family Empowerment Scholarship program to:
  - Modify initial eligibility to establish an adjusted maximum percent of the federal poverty level to conform to a provision in the bill increasing the maximum income level under certain conditions.
  - Establish eligibility for a student who received an FTC scholarship in the previous school year but did not receive a renewal FTC because of a lack of available funds. The committee substitute requires any eligible scholarship-funding organization (SFO) with such students to annually notify the Department of Education.
  - Clarify that “prior school year in attendance” applies to students enrolled full time.
  - Add to the eligibility requirements for parents to request a scholarship that such request be made by the date established by the Department of Education (DOE); and for parents to annually renew participation in the FES program by the date established by the DOE.
  - Establish a priority order for award of a scholarship.
  - Specify that the maximum household income level increases by 25 percent following a fiscal year in which more than 5 percent of the FES are not awarded.
  - Authorize FES to annually increase by 1.0 percent of public school enrollment (rather than 0.25), starting in 2020-2021.
  - Require the DOE to maintain and publish a list of nationally norm-referenced tests; notify SFOs of the deadlines for submitting student eligibility verifications; and establish deadlines for receipt of initial applications and renewal notifications.
  - Require each private school to report test scores to state university, which is similar to the requirement for the FTC scholarship program.
  - Require each SFO to comply with the established priority order for award of a scholarship and with deadlines established by the DOE.
- Modifies the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship program to:
  - Authorize a student to receive an award until high school graduation or age 21, regardless of family income.
  - Clarify that first priority must be given to renewal students who received a full-time scholarship in the previous year.
  - Require SFOs to exhaust all FTC scholarship and Hope Scholarship Program (HSP) funds for renewal scholarships before awarding initial scholarships.
  - Require SFOs to refer students to another SFO those students who did not get an FTC renewal scholarship because of lack of funds.

- Modifies the Hope Scholarship Program to specify that an SFO that uses excess contributions to the HSP to fund an FTC scholarship must prioritize renewal scholarships before awarding any initial scholarships.
- Removes from the bill provisions related to:
  - Initial teacher preparation programs and educator preparation institutes.
  - Educator certification requirements relating to demonstration of subject area competence.
  - The Education Practices Commission.
  - Teacher professional development.

**CS by Education on January 21, 2020:**

The committee substitute maintains the provisions in the bill, which include

- Modifying initial teacher preparation (ITP) program core curricula relating to reading instructional strategies and adds a new requirement for mental health strategies and support.
- Changing ITP program provisions related to student grade point average and mastery of general knowledge from admission requirements to program requirements.
- Modifying educator certification requirements to authorize applicants to demonstrate mastery of subject area competence with a bachelor's degree in the subject area earned within the past 10 years.
- Modifying requirements relating to the Education Practices Commission (EPC) to specify that:
  - The Commissioner of Education may select and remove the EPC executive director, and may establish the duties of the executive director.
  - The assignment of the EPC to the Department of Education (DOE) includes fiscal accountability.
  - The EPC may expend funds for legal services, and removes the authority to expend funds for a general counsel or access to counsel.

The committee substitute adds additional provisions related to teacher preparation programs and educator certification, but also adds provisions related to teacher professional development and state scholarship programs. The committee substitute:

- Requires ITP and educator preparation institute (EPI) programs to include: the opportunity for student to complete an endorsement; instruction in mandatory training for instructional personnel; and in program performance evaluation employer surveys measures regarding student proficiency.
- Modifies the renewal requirement for an educator professional certificate by specifying that a teacher may only earn inservice points once in the five years certificate validity period for any mandatory training topic that is not linked to student learning or professional growth.
- Modifies requirements relating to professional development (PD) by:
  - Authorizing teachers to use up to 25 percent of their proportional share of a district calculation of PD funds for specified purposes, and requiring the DOE to identify PD that requires demonstration of proficiency.

- Requiring the DOE to create an annual and 5-year model calendar of state-mandated PD, and the school district to create similar calendars as a part of the professional PD system.
- Requiring the DOE to maintain a statewide registry of specified approved professional development providers.
- Creating the Professional Development Choice Pilot Program in the DOE, subject to appropriation, to allow a teacher to receive a grant up to \$500 for PD that is aligned to PD standards and satisfies professional certificate inservice requirements.
- Establishes the Professional Education Excellence Resources (PEER) Pilot Program (program), subject to legislative appropriation, and:
  - Establishes the PEER program in Clay, Pinellas, and Walton counties.
  - Authorizes PEER program participants to extend the teacher contract day or year for specified PD purposes, subject to salary considerations.
  - Specifies the use of program funds to include teacher compensation, instructional personnel, content area specialists, instructional coaches, and PD opportunities.
  - Requires PEER program participants to collaborate with specified entities to develop high-quality online PD.
  - Authorizes PEER program participants to establish a master teacher program subject to requirements, and requires participates to collaborate with the University of Florida Lastinger Center to develop a master teacher academy.
  - Establishes reporting requirements regarding the use of PEER program funds, the impact on teacher evaluations and student achievement, and recommendations for continuation of the program.
- Modifies the Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES), by:
  - Expanding scholarship eligibility to an FES student who received a Florida Tax Credit (FTC) scholarship in the prior year and was in a public school the year prior to initial receipt of the FTC scholarship.
  - Adding a provision that, similar to the McKay scholarship, the FES is not subject to the maximum value for funding a student.
- Aligns FES and FTC eligibility by:
  - Allowing an FES student to participate in up to two courses from a virtual school, correspondence school, or distance learning program that receives state funding.
  - Increasing the FTC scholarship income eligibility threshold for a student whose household income level does not exceed 300 percent of the federal poverty level with priority given to students whose household income levels do not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level.
  - Modifying that a student eligible for an FTC scholarship remains eligible to participate until the student graduates from high school or attains the age of 21 years, whichever occurs first, regardless of the student's income level.

**B. Amendments:**

None.