

**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 Judiciary

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BILL: SB 1634

INTRODUCER: Senator Stargel

SUBJECT: Parental Rights

DATE: February 3, 2020

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

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Davis	Cibula	JU	<b>Favorable</b>
2.			ED	
3.			RC	

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**I. Summary:**

SB 1634 establishes the “Parents’ Bill of Rights.” The bill provides that the state, its political subdivisions, any other governmental entity, or other institution may not infringe upon the fundamental rights of a parent to direct the upbringing, education, health care, and mental health of a minor child. If those entities infringe upon a parent’s fundamental right, they must demonstrate that the action is reasonable and necessary to achieve a compelling state interest, and the action must be narrowly tailored and not otherwise served by less restrictive means.

The bill enumerates a list of rights that a parent possesses in order to direct the education of his or her child and be informed about the child’s educational programs. The bill also requires the school district to promote parental involvement in the public school system by providing access to the child’s studies and instructional materials while also recognizing a parent’s right to withdraw the child from objectionable portions of the school’s curriculum.

The bill also requires a parent’s permission before a health care practitioner may provide services, prescribe medicine to the child, or perform a medical procedure, unless otherwise provided by law. The bill provides a misdemeanor penalty for a health care practitioner or similar person who violates the health care provisions and subjects these persons to disciplinary actions.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Parental Guarantees in the United States Constitution**

The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides that no State

[S]hall deprive any person of life, *liberty*, or property, without due process of law.

The U.S. Supreme Court has recognized that the Due Process clause includes an additional component that provides a heightened level of protection against any governmental interference where certain fundamental rights and liberty interests are involved. In *Troxel v. Granville*,<sup>1</sup> a case to terminate parental rights, the Court noted that the Fourteenth Amendment “liberty interest” at issue – the interest that parents had in the care, custody, and control over their children – was perhaps the oldest of any fundamental liberty interest that the Court had recognized.

The Court reflected that, in a 1923 decision,<sup>2</sup> it determined that the “liberty” interest protected by the Due Process Clause included the right of parents to “establish a home and bring up children” and “to control the education of their own.”

The Court also noted as early as 1925<sup>3</sup> that a child was not simply the creature of the State and that the people who nurture the child and direct the child’s destiny have the right, and the high duty, to recognize and prepare the child for additional obligations. In 1944, the Court confirmed the right of parents to direct the upbringing of their children when it stated:

It is cardinal with us that the custody, care and nurture of the child reside first in the parents, whose primary function and freedom include preparation for obligations the state can neither supply nor hinder.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, in recounting the history of parental authority in 1979, the Court stated, “We have recognized on numerous occasions that the relationship between parent and child is constitutionally protected.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Parental Guarantees in the State Constitution**

Similarly, the Florida Supreme Court has determined that the fundamental liberty interest in parenting one’s child “is protected by the Florida and federal constitutions. In Florida, it is specifically protected by our privacy provision.”<sup>6</sup> The Court also stated that the state constitutional privacy provision contained in Article I, section 23 affords greater protection than that of the federal constitution.

The court wrote in *Winfield v. Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering*<sup>7</sup> that the standard of review that must be used to evaluate whether a state has intruded into a citizen’s private life is the compelling state interest standard. Under that test, the burden of proof is on the state to justify its intrusion on privacy. The burden can be met by the state if it demonstrates that the regulation

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<sup>1</sup> *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57 (2000).

<sup>2</sup> *Troxel* quoting *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390, 399, 401 (1923).

<sup>3</sup> *Troxel* quoting *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510, 534-535 (1925).

<sup>4</sup> *Troxel* quoting *Prince v. Massachusetts*, 321 U.S. 158 (1944).

<sup>5</sup> *Troxel* quoting *Parham v. J.R.* 442 U.S. 584, 602 (1979).

<sup>6</sup> *Beagle v. Beagle*, 678 So. 2d 1271, 1275 (Fla. 1996).

<sup>7</sup> *Winfield v. Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering*, 477 So. 2d 544, 548 (Fla. 1985).

being challenged serves a compelling state interest and the regulation accomplishes its goal by using the least intrusive means.<sup>8</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

#### Sections 1 and 2 – The Parents’ Bill of Rights

The bill creates a new chapter in the Florida Statutes, chapter 1014, which is entitled “Parents’ Bill of Rights” and contains sections 1014.01 – 1014.06, F.S.

#### Section 3 – Legislative Findings and Definition

Section 3 contains the legislative findings and a definition. In these provisions, the Legislature finds that:

- It is a fundamental right of parents to direct the upbringing, education, and care of their minor children;
- Important information relating to a minor child should not be withheld, either inadvertently or purposefully, from a parent, including information regarding the minor child’s health, well-being, and education, while the child is in the custody of the school district; and
- It is necessary to establish a consistent mechanism for parents to be notified of information relating to the health and well-being of their minor children.

A parent is defined to be a person who has legal custody of a minor child as a natural or adoptive parent or a legal guardian.

#### Section 4 – The Infringement of Parental Rights

The bill provides that the following entities may not infringe on the fundamental rights of a parent to direct the upbringing, education, health care, and mental health of a parent’s minor child:

- The state;
- State political subdivisions;
- Any other governmental entity; or
- Any other institution.

If any of these entities infringes on a parent’s fundamental right, it must demonstrate that the action is reasonable and necessary to achieve a compelling state interest and the action is narrowly tailored and is not otherwise served by a less restrictive means. This “compelling interest” standard is discussed above in the Present Situation.

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

## Section 5 – Parental Rights

### *Rights Reserved to the Parent of a Minor Child*

This section establishes that all parental rights are reserved to the parent of a minor child “without obstruction or interference” by any of the above-referenced governmental entities.

Those rights include, but are not limited to the right to:

- Direct the education and care of the minor child.
- Direct the upbringing and the moral or religious training of the minor child.
- Enroll the minor child in a public school or, as an alternative to public education, a private school, religious school, a home education program, or other available option.
- Access and review all school records relating to the minor child.
- Make health care decisions for the minor child, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
- Access and review all medical records of the minor child, unless prohibited by law or if the parent is the subject of an investigation of a crime committed against the minor child and a law enforcement agency or official requests that the information not be released.
- Consent in writing before a biometric scan of the minor child is made, shared, or stored.
- Consent in writing before any record of the minor child’s blood or deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is created, stored, or shared, except as required by general law or authorized pursuant to a court order.
- Consent in writing before the state or any of its political subdivisions makes a video or voice recording of the minor child unless the recording is made during or as part of a court proceeding, or is made as part of a forensic interview in a criminal or Department of Children and Families investigation, or is to be used solely for the following purposes:
  - A safety demonstration, including the maintenance of order and discipline in the common areas of a school or on student transportation vehicles;
  - A purpose related to a legitimate academic or extracurricular activity;
  - A purpose related to regular classroom instructions;
  - Security or surveillance of buildings or grounds; or
  - A photo identification card.
- Be notified promptly if an employee of the state, any of its political subdivisions, any other governmental entity, or any other institution suspects that a criminal offense has been committed against his or her minor child, unless the incident has first been reported to a law enforcement agency or the Department of Children and Families and notifying the parent would impede the investigation.

The bill clarifies that the rights expressed in this section do not:

- Authorize a parent of a minor child to engage in conduct that is unlawful or to abuse or neglect his or her minor child in violation of general law;
- Condone, authorize, approve, or apply to a parental action or decision that would end life;
- Prohibit a court of competent jurisdiction, law enforcement officer, or employee of a government agency that is responsible for child welfare from acting in his or her official capacity within the reasonable and prudent scope of his or her authority; or
- Prohibit a court of competent jurisdiction from issuing an order that is otherwise permitted by law.

### *Discipline*

Any employee of any of the above-referenced entities who encourages or coerces, or attempts to encourage or coerce a minor child to withhold information from his or her parent may be subject to disciplinary action.

### *Inalienable Rights*

The final subsection states that a parent of a minor child has inalienable rights that are more comprehensive than those enumerated in this section, unless those rights have been legally waived or terminated. The bill also provides that the chapter does not prescribe all of a parent's rights and unless required by law, a parent's rights may not be limited or denied. Additionally, the chapter may not be construed to apply to a parental action or decision that would end life.

### **Section 6 – School District Notifications on Parental Rights**

The bill requires each school board, in consultation with parents, teachers, and administrators, to develop and then adopt a policy that promotes parental involvement in the public school system. The policy must include:

- A plan, pursuant to s. 1002.23, F.S., for parental participation to improve parent and teach cooperation in areas such as homework, school attendance, and discipline.
- A procedure, pursuant to s. 1002.20(19)(b), F.S., for a parent to learn about the minor child's course of study, including the source of any supplemental education materials.
- Procedures for a parent to object to instructional material, which includes all classroom materials and school activities, pursuant to s. 1006.28(2)(a)2., F.S. and a process for withdrawing the child from the activity, class, or program. The objections may be based on beliefs regarding morality, sex, and religion or the belief that the materials or activities are harmful. Instructional materials are defined to include, but are not limited to, textbooks, workbooks and worksheets, handouts, software, applications, Internet courses, and any and all digital media available to students pursuant to their role as a student in public school.
- Procedures, pursuant to s. 1002.20(3)(d), F.S. for a parent to withdraw the minor child from any portion of the school district's plan as required under s. 1003.42(2)(n), F.S., which relates to sex education or instruction in acquired immune deficiency syndrome education or any instruction regarding sexuality if the parent provides a written objection to the child's participation. The procedures must provide for a parent to be notified in advance of the course content so that he or she may withdraw the child from those portions of the course.
- Procedures, pursuant to s. 1006.195(1)(a), F.S., for a parent to learn about the nature and purpose of clubs and activities at the child's school, including those that are extracurricular or part of the school curriculum.
- Procedures for a parent to learn about parental rights and responsibilities under general law, including all of the following:
  - The right to opt the minor child out of any portion of the school district's comprehensive health education required by statute that relates to sex education instruction in acquired immune deficiency syndrome education or any instruction regarding sexuality.
  - A plan to disseminate information about school choice options, including open enrollment.
  - The right of a parent to exempt the minor child from immunizations.
  - The right of a parent to review statewide, standardized assessment results.

- The right to enroll the minor child in gifted or special education programs.
- The right of a parent to inspect school district instructional materials.
- The right of a parent to access information relating to the school district's policies for promotion or retention, including high school graduation requirements.
- The right of a parent to receive a school report card and be informed of the child's attendance requirements.
- The right of a parent to access information relating to the state public education system, state standards, report card requirements, attendance requirements, and instructional materials requirements.
- The right of a parent to participate in parent-teacher association and organizations sanctioned by a district school board or the Department of Education.
- The right of a parent to opt out of any district-level data collection relating to the minor child that is not required by law.

The information required in this section may be provided by the district school board electronically or posted on its website.

A parent may request, in writing, from the district school superintendent, the information required under this section. The superintendent must provide the information to the parent within 10 days. If the superintendent denies a parent's request for information or does not respond to the parent's request within 10 days, the parent may appeal the denial to the district school board. The parent's appeal must be placed on the agenda for the board's next public meeting. If it is too late for a parent's appeal to be placed on the agenda at the next meeting, it must be included on the agenda for the following meeting.

### **Section 7 – Parental Consent for Health Care Services**

Unless the law provides otherwise,

- A health care practitioner, as defined in s. 456.001, F.S., may not provide, solicit, or arrange to provide health care services or prescribe medicine to the minor child without first obtaining written consent from the parent.
- A person, as defined by statute to include individuals, children, firms, associations, joint adventures, partnership, estates, trusts, business trusts, syndicates, fiduciaries, corporations, and all other groups or combinations, or individual employed by the person, may not provide or solicit or arrange to provide health care services or prescribe medicine to a minor child without first obtaining written parental consent.

Unless otherwise provided by law or a court order, a provider,<sup>9</sup> as defined in s. 408.803, F.S., may not allow a medical procedure to be performed on a minor child in its facility without first obtaining written consent from the parent.

#### ***Exception***

The provisions of this section which addresses parental consent for health care services do not apply to abortion, which is governed by chapter 390.

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<sup>9</sup> Section 408.803(11), F.S., defines a provider to mean any activity, service, agency, or facility regulated by the agency and listed in s. 408.802, F.S.

***Penalties***

A health care practitioner or other person who violates this section is subject to disciplinary action pursuant to s. 408.813 or s. 456.072, F.S., sections 8 and 9 of the bill, and commits a first degree misdemeanor which is punishable by up to one year imprisonment and a fine not to exceed \$1,000.<sup>10</sup>

**Section 8 – Administrative Fines and Violations**

The Agency for Health Care Administration may impose an administrative fine for a violation of the provisions regarding the parental consent for health care services. The violation is an unclassified violation and the fine may not exceed \$500 for each violation.

**Section 9 – Grounds for Discipline**

The Department of Health may take disciplinary action against someone who fails to comply with the parental consent requirements for health care services. The disciplinary actions range from refusing to certify a license or certify the license with restrictions, suspending or permanently revoking a license, restricting a license, imposing an administrative fine not to exceed \$10,000 for each offense, issuing a reprimand or letter of concern, placing the licensee on probation, taking corrective action, imposing an administrative fine for violations of patient rights, requiring the refund of fees billed and collected, and requiring that the practitioner undergo remedial education.<sup>11</sup>

**Section 10 – Effective Date**

The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.

**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.

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<sup>10</sup> Sections 775.082(4)(a) and 775.083(1)(d), F.S.

<sup>11</sup> Section 456.072(1), F.S.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 408.813 and 456.072.

This bill creates the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1014.01, 1014.02, 1014.03, 1014.04, 1014.05, and 1014.06.

**IX. Additional Information:**

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.