

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: CS/HB 611 Civic Literacy Education

SPONSOR(S): Secondary Education & Career Development Subcommittee, Diamond

TIED BILLS: None **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 146

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Secondary Education & Career Development Subcommittee	16 Y, 0 N, As CS	Bauman	Sanchez
2) Education & Employment Committee	21 Y, 0 N	Bauman	Hassell

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

To help students evaluate the roles, rights, and responsibilities of United States citizens and identify methods of active participation in society, government, and the political system, the bill requires the Commissioner of Education to develop minimum criteria for a civic literacy practicum that may be incorporated into a school's curriculum for the high school United States Government course beginning within the 2022-2023 school year.

The bill establishes minimum requirements for a student to complete a civic literacy practicum, including the activities for student civic engagement and completion of a research paper that reflects upon the student's experience and explains the significance and role of the governmental entity.

The hours a student spends outside of classroom instruction in the practicum's civic engagement activity may be counted toward the community service requirements of the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. The bill encourages school districts to integrate practicum activities and hours into requirements for academic awards.

The bill creates the Citizen Scholar program within the University of South Florida (USF) and headquartered at the USF St. Petersburg Center for Civic Engagement. Subject to appropriation, the bill requires USF St. Petersburg to contract with the YMCA to provide students participating in the Youth and Government Program the opportunity to be designated Citizen Scholars and earn undergraduate credit.

The bill establishes that the Citizen Scholar program must combine academic instruction with the implementation of concepts learned in the classroom into the local community to improve civic literacy and expand students' educational experiences. The program must also provide students with opportunities to deepen their knowledge of American democracy and improve civil discourse.

This bill may have a fiscal impact that can be absorbed within existing resources, for schools that choose to incorporate a civic literacy practicum into a school's curriculum for the high school United States Government course.

This bill has an effective date of July 1, 2021.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Civics Education in Florida

Present Situation

The mission of Florida's K-20 education system is to "allow its students to increase their proficiency by allowing them the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through rigorous and relevant learning opportunities."¹ Civic literacy and preparing students to become civically engaged and knowledgeable adults who positively contribute to their communities is a priority of the Florida education system.²

Secondary Education

Florida law requires each district school board to provide instruction on the history, significance, and principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, flag education, and civil government.³ The law requires districts to provide a character-development program in kindergarten through grade 12.⁴ Each school district must develop or adopt a curriculum for its K-12 character-development program and submit it to the Florida Department of Education (DOE) for approval.⁵ The character development curriculum must "stress the qualities of patriotism; responsibility; citizenship; kindness; respect for authority, life, liberty, and personal property; honesty; charity; self-control; racial, ethnic, and religious tolerance; and cooperation."⁶

A district school board may also adopt rules requiring patriotic programs in schools that encourage respect for the government of the United States and its national anthem and flag.⁷ Teachers or administrators in the schools may read or post historic material such as the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, and other foundational materials.⁸

Currently, Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for social studies include civics content in kindergarten through grade 12.⁹ For middle grades, a student must successfully complete three middle school or higher courses in social studies in order to be promoted to high school.¹⁰ One of the three courses must be a civics education course that includes the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments; the structures and functions of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; and the meaning and significance of documents such as the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States.¹¹

At the high school level, 24 credits are required for a standard high school diploma.¹² Three credits must be in social studies, including one credit each in United States History and World History; one-half credit in economics; and one-half credit in United States Government.¹³ Students in the middle grades

¹ Section 1000.03(4), F.S.

² Section 1000.03(5)(c), F.S.

³ Section 1003.42(2)(a)-(e), F.S.

⁴ Section 1003.42(2)(s), F.S.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Section 1003.44(1), F.S.

⁸ Section 1003.44(2), F.S.

⁹ See CPALMS, *Browse and Search Standards*, <http://www.cpalms.org/Public/search/Standard> (last visited Feb. 24, 2021) (providing the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for each subject area, by grade level).

¹⁰ Section 1003.4156(1)(c), F.S.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Section 1003.4282(1)(a), F.S.

¹³ Section 1003.4282(3)(d), F.S.

civics course and the high school United States History course must take an end-of-course assessment¹⁴ that constitutes 30 percent of the student's final course grade.¹⁵

Review of Civics Education

To further address civics education in Florida, Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order 19-32 in January 2019, directing the Commissioner of Education (commissioner) to review Florida's K-12 academic standards and identify opportunities to prepare high school graduates to be knowledgeable citizens, particularly in the principles of the United States Constitution.¹⁶

Additionally, in 2019, the Legislature established a requirement for the commissioner, in consultation with specified organizations and stakeholders, to review the state-approved middle grades civics education course instructional materials and the test specifications for the statewide, standardized civics end-of-course assessment.¹⁷ Recommendations for improvements to the materials and test specifications were provided to the Governor and Legislature on December 31, 2019.¹⁸

The DOE began a review of the statewide civics education course standards on January 1, 2020.¹⁹ The State Board of Education (SBE) is expected to adopt revisions to standards by summer 2021 and the approval of new course descriptions, with revised standards, is expected by fall 2021.²⁰

Service Learning

To encourage civic engagement, career exploration, and applying classroom curriculum in a student's community, the DOE encourages school districts to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize service-learning programs, activities, and policies in kindergarten through grade 12.²¹ Service learning refers to a student-centered, research-based teaching and learning strategy that engages students in meaningful service activities in their school or communities.²² The service activities are directly tied to academic curriculum, standards, and course, district, or state assessments.²³ The hours a high school student devotes to course-based service-learning activities may be counted toward meeting the service work requirements of the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.²⁴

Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

The Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program is a merit-based program that rewards Florida high school students for their high academic achievement and encourages them to continue their postsecondary education at eligible Florida institutions.²⁵ The scholarship program consists of the following awards:

- Florida Academic Scholars;
- Florida Medallion Scholars;
- Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars; and
- Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars.²⁶

¹⁴ Section 1008.22(3)(b), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 1003.4156(1)(c), F.S. and s. 1003.4282(3)(d), F.S.

¹⁶ Fla. Exec. Order No. 19-32 (Jan. 31, 2019).

¹⁷ Section 1003.4156(1)(c), F.S. *See also* Florida Department of Education, *Civics Review*, <http://www.fldoe.org/civicsreview/> (last visited Feb. 24, 2021).

¹⁸ Memorandum re Committee Substitute for (CS/HB) 807- Civics Education Report (Dec. 31, 2019).

¹⁹ *Id.* *See also* Florida Department of Education, *Civics Review*, <http://www.fldoe.org/civicsreview/> (last visited Feb. 24, 2021).

²⁰ Florida Department of Education, *Civics Review*, <http://www.fldoe.org/civicsreview/> (last visited Feb. 24, 2021).

²¹ Section 1003.497(1), F.S.

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Section 1003.497(3)(b), F.S.

²⁵ Section 1009.53, F.S.

²⁶ Ss. 1009.53(2) and 1009.536, F.S.

High school students seeking to qualify for a scholarship, must among other things, meet specified academic requirements and complete service work during high school.²⁷ Service work requirements for the scholarship awards include:

- Florida Academic Scholars - 100 service hours;
- Florida Medallion Scholars - 75 service hours;
- Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars - 30 service hours; and
- Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars - 30 service hours.²⁸

A student must identify a social or civic issue or professional area, develop a plan for personal involvement in addressing the issue or learning about the area, and through papers or other presentations, evaluate and reflect upon the experience.²⁹ Service work may include a business or governmental internship, work for a nonprofit community service organization, or activities on behalf of a candidate for public office.³⁰

Each district school board and the administrators of a nonpublic school must establish the approved activities and the process for the documentation of service hours for students.³¹ The hours must be documented in writing and signed by the student, the student's parent or guardian, and a representative of the organization where the student volunteered.³² If a high school student participates in the Florida Debate Initiative, the YMCA Youth and Government program, the American Legion Boys or Girls State programs, or other similar programs approved by the commissioner, the hours count toward the student's service work hour requirements.³³

YMCA Youth and Government Program

The YMCA³⁴ Youth and Government Program is a national program that engages students in state-organized, model-government programs.³⁵ Students discuss and debate issues that affect citizens in their state and propose legislation.³⁶ The Florida YMCA operates the national Youth and Government Program as the Youth in Government (YIG) Program, which is a yearlong model government and leadership development process.³⁷ "Senior"³⁸ student participants, students in grades 9-12, engage in activities relating to the three branches of government that are designed to prepare students for active citizenship built on the values of civil debate, statesmanship, and research-based policy solutions.³⁹ The senior student participants' yearlong program culminates in a trip to the State Capitol where the students engage in a model government process with students from across the state.⁴⁰ The YIG

²⁷ Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *2020-21 Bright Futures Student Handbook, Chapter 1: Initial Eligibility Requirements* (July 31, 2020), available at

<https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/BFHandbookChapter1.pdf>.

²⁸ See s. 1009.534(1), F.S.; s. 1009.535(1), F.S.; ss. 1009.536(1)(e) and (2)(b), F.S.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *2020-21 Bright Futures Student Handbook, Chapter 1: Initial Eligibility Requirements* (July 31, 2020), at 4, available at

<https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/BFHandbookChapter1.pdf>.

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

³³ Section 1003.44(5), F.S.

³⁴ The YMCA is a nonprofit organization that seeks to strengthen communities by empowering young people, improving health and well-being, and inspiring action in and across communities. YMCA, *About Us*, <https://www.ymca.net/about-us> (last visited March 10, 2021).

³⁵ YMCA, *Youth and Government*, <https://www.ymca.net/youthandgovernment> (last visited March 10, 2021).

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ Florida YMCA, *Youth in Government*, <https://ymca.org/programs/school/yig/> (last visited March 10, 2021).

³⁸ Florida's YIG program also offers "junior" participants, students in grades 6-8, an opportunity to participate in a version of the program that focuses solely on the legislative branch of government. *Id.*

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*

program is currently available at the South Orlando YMCA, Dr. Phillips High School, Maitland Middle School, and Windermere High School.⁴¹

In 2018, the Florida legislature funded a pilot program, “The Civics Fellows Program,” administered by the University of South Florida St. Petersburg (USF St. Petersburg) and the Florida YMCA’s YIG program.⁴² The pilot program provided scholarships for Florida high school students to participate in a yearlong civics education program, which included participating in civic projects, attending city council and school board meetings, engaging in the YIG State Assembly, and taking part in a Summer Civics Institute hosted by USF St. Petersburg⁴³ (conducted in person in 2019 and conducted virtually in 2020 due to Covid-19).⁴⁴ Students who successfully completed the Civics Fellows Program earned up to 6 college credits in leadership and political science at USF St. Petersburg.⁴⁵

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill requires the Commissioner of Education to develop minimum criteria for a civic literacy practicum that may be incorporated into a school’s curriculum for the high school United States Government course beginning within the 2022-2023 school year. The bill provides that the practicum’s purpose is to inspire meaningful civic engagement and help students learn how governmental entities, operating at local, state, and national levels, interact with the public.

The bill requires the practicum to provide students with an opportunity to be civically engaged through any of the following activities:

- Participation in an unpaid internship at a governmental entity.
- A series of simulations or observations of one or more governmental entities performing their core functions in relation to the public.
- Learning about the United States citizenship naturalization process and attending a United States citizenship naturalization oath ceremony.

As part of the practicum, a student must complete a research paper including all of the following:

- Reflection on the student’s experience.
- Explanation of the significance of the governmental entity’s role in the community, state, or nation.
- Explanation of how the governmental entity is responsive to the public.

The bill provides that the hours a student devotes to an unpaid civic engagement activity in the practicum, outside of classroom instruction, may count toward meeting the service work requirements for participation in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. The bill also encourages school districts to include and accept civic literacy practicum activities and hours toward requirements for

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² University of South Florida St. Petersburg, *Representatives of Florida Legislature Announce New Partnership Between USF St. Petersburg and the YMCA to Improve Civics Literacy in Florida* (July 19, 2018), <https://spcampus.usf.edu/home/2018/07/12/representatives-of-florida-legislature-to-announce-new-partnership-between-usf-st-petersburg-and-the-ymca-to-improve-civics-literacy-in-florida/>.

⁴³ The USF St. Petersburg Center for Civic Engagement was designed to make USF St. Petersburg distinctive in its commitment to civic and community engagement through the development of the citizen scholar model, which aims to combine academic instruction with implementation of concepts learned in the classroom into the local community. The Center spearheads a number of civic initiatives and programming collaborations for the University community. University of South Florida St. Petersburg Center for Civic Engagement, *About CCE*, <https://www.stpetersburg.usf.edu/student-life/center-for-civic-engagement/citizen-scholar-program/index.aspx> (last visited March 10, 2021).

⁴⁴ YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg, *Announcing the USFSP and YMCA Civics Fellows Program* (July 19, 2018), <https://www.stpeteymca.org/news/2018/07/19/home-news/announcing-the-usfsp-and-ymca-civics-fellows-program/>; University of South Florida St. Petersburg, *USF St. Petersburg Campus and YMCA to Host Virtual Civics Institute for High School Students to Improve Civics Literacy* (June 10, 2020), <https://spcampus.usf.edu/home/2020/06/10/usf-st-petersburg-campus-and-ymca-to-host-virtual-civics-institute-for-high-school-students-to-improve-civics-literacy/>.

⁴⁵ YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg, *Announcing the USFSP and YMCA Civics Fellows Program* (July 19, 2018), <https://www.stpeteymca.org/news/2018/07/19/home-news/announcing-the-usfsp-and-ymca-civics-fellows-program/>.

academic awards, especially those awards that include community service as a criterion or selection factor.

The bill also creates the Citizen Scholar program within USF, which will be headquartered at the USF St. Petersburg Center for Civic Engagement. Subject to appropriation, the bill requires USF St. Petersburg to contract with the YMCA to provide students participating in the Youth and Government Program the opportunity to be designated Citizen Scholars and earn undergraduate credit.

The bill establishes that the Citizen Scholar program must:

- Combine academic instruction with implementation of concepts learned in the classroom into the local community, including business, educational and social services, and laboratory research to improve civic literacy and expand educational experiences for students; and
- Provide students with opportunities to deepen their knowledge of American democracy and improve civil discourse.

The bill provides that students completing the program will receive up to 6 undergraduate credit hours and be designated Citizen Scholars.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Amends Section 1003.44., F.S., requiring the Commissioner of Education to develop minimum criteria for a civic literacy practicum; authorizing the integration of such practicum into a specified course; providing requirements for such criteria and practicum; providing the hours devoted to such practicum may be used for specified purposes; authorizing a school to integrate civic literacy practicum activity into requirements for academic awards.

Section 2. Amends Section 1003.342, F.S., creating the Citizen Scholar program; designating specific entities to administer the program; providing program requirements; authorizing undergraduate credit for program completion.

Section 3. Provides an effective date of July 1, 2021.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

If a school chooses to incorporate a civic literacy practicum into a school's curriculum for the high school United States Government course, any costs experienced would be absorbed within existing school district resources.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

None.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

On March 10, 2021, the Secondary Education and Career Development Subcommittee adopted one amendment and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment:

- Creates the Citizen Scholar program within the University of South Florida (USF) and headquartered at the USF St. Petersburg Center for Civic Engagement.
- Subject to appropriation, requires USF St. Petersburg to contract with the YMCA to provide students participating in the Youth and Government Program the opportunity to be designated Citizen Scholars and earn undergraduate credit.
- Establishes that the Citizen Scholar program must combine academic instruction with the implementation of concepts learned in the classroom into the local community and provide students with opportunities to deepen their knowledge of American democracy and improve civil discourse.
- Provides that high school students completing the program will receive up to 6 undergraduate credit hours and be known as Citizen Scholars.

The analysis is drafted to the bill as amended by the Secondary Education and Career Development Subcommittee.