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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate	.	House
Comm: RCS	.	
04/26/2023	.	
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The Committee on Fiscal Policy (Rouson) recommended the following:

**Senate Amendment (with title amendment)**

Delete everything after the enacting clause  
and insert:

Section 1. The Certified Peer Specialist Gateway Pilot Program is created within the Department of Corrections. The purpose of the pilot program is to provide participating inmates with a path to becoming certified peer specialists under s. 397.417, Florida Statutes, upon release by offering such inmates while incarcerated the necessary training hours and experience



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11 needed for certification and to assist inmates who complete the  
12 pilot program's requirements with post-incarceration employment.

13 (1) The pilot program shall:

14 (a) Recruit and enroll inmates who have completed certain  
15 treatment programs while incarcerated into certified peer  
16 specialist training programs approved under s. 397.417, Florida  
17 Statutes.

18 (b) Provide core educational training and on-the-job work  
19 experience during each participant's incarceration which meets  
20 all of the requirements for peer specialist certification.

21 (c) Assist participants with completing any examinations  
22 required to become a certified peer specialist under s. 397.417,  
23 Florida Statutes.

24 (d) Assist in placing participants in employment as  
25 certified peer specialist professionals upon their release.

26 (2) Inmates at participating facilities may apply to  
27 participate in the pilot program. The Department of Corrections  
28 shall develop criteria for selecting qualified applicants for  
29 the pilot program, including, but not limited to, requiring that  
30 applicants:

31 (a) Have the appropriate custody classification.

32 (b) Meet certain discipline criteria.

33 (c) Have an expected release date within a specified  
34 timeframe.

35 (d) Be housed at the facility providing training.

36 (e) Have served as a positive role model during their  
37 incarceration.

38 (f) Express a desire to work in the behavioral health  
39 treatment field after release.



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40 (g) Not have been found guilty of, regardless of  
41 adjudication, or entered a plea of nolo contendere or guilty to,  
42 or have been adjudicated delinquent and the record has not been  
43 sealed or expunged for, any offense that would prohibit them  
44 from becoming a certified peer specialist under s.  
45 397.417(4)(e), Florida Statutes.

46 (3) A person who completes the pilot program's requirements  
47 is exempt from the background screening requirements for peer  
48 specialists under s. 397.417(4)(a)-(d), Florida Statutes.

49 (4) In assisting persons who have completed the pilot  
50 program's requirements with post-incarceration employment, the  
51 pilot program:

52 (a) Shall assist potential employers with acquiring bonds  
53 from the United States Department of Labor's Federal Bonding  
54 Program, if applicable.

55 (b) May offer funding to a potential employer to cover the  
56 initial costs of hiring and retaining such persons if the pilot  
57 program secures applicable grant funds for such purpose.

58 (5) After a person who has completed the pilot program's  
59 requirements has been released, he or she must provide each  
60 prospective employer with a copy of his or her incarceration  
61 record before the employer may hire the person. The person must  
62 also receive a signed informed consent form from any potential  
63 client seeking treatment from him or her. Such consent form must  
64 specify that the person has completed the pilot program's  
65 requirements and is certified as a peer specialist under s.  
66 397.417, Florida Statutes.

67 (6) The Department of Corrections shall adopt rules to  
68 implement this act.



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69           (7) The pilot program expires June 30, 2026.

70           Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.

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72 ===== T I T L E   A M E N D M E N T =====

73 And the title is amended as follows:

74           Delete everything before the enacting clause  
75 and insert:

76                               A bill to be entitled  
77           An act relating to the Certified Peer Specialist  
78           Gateway Pilot Program; creating the pilot program  
79           within the Department of Corrections; providing the  
80           purpose of and requirements for the pilot program;  
81           authorizing inmates at participating facilities to  
82           apply to participate in the pilot program; requiring  
83           the department to develop certain criteria for  
84           selecting qualified applicants; exempting persons who  
85           complete the pilot program's requirements from  
86           specified background screening requirements for peer  
87           specialists; requiring the pilot program to assist  
88           potential employers with acquiring specified bonds;  
89           authorizing the pilot program to offer funding to  
90           potential employers to cover specified costs under  
91           certain circumstances; requiring persons who have  
92           completed the pilot program's requirements to provide  
93           prospective employers with their incarceration  
94           records; requiring such persons to receive a signed  
95           informed consent form from any potential clients;  
96           providing requirements for such form; requiring the  
97           department to adopt rules; providing for expiration of



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the pilot program; providing an effective date.