

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to the Step into Success Workforce
 3 Education and Internship Pilot Program; creating s.
 4 409.1455, F.S.; providing a short title; establishing
 5 the Step into Success Workforce Education and
 6 Internship Pilot Program within the Department of
 7 Children and Families for eligible foster youth;
 8 specifying the purpose and structure of the program;
 9 requiring the program to include qualified designated
 10 personnel who are responsible for specified services;
 11 providing definitions; requiring the department to
 12 establish and the Office of Continuing Care to develop
 13 and administer the program for eligible foster youth
 14 and former foster youth; providing requirements for
 15 the program; requiring the department to include in
 16 the annual independent living report a section
 17 regarding the program; providing requirements for such
 18 report; requiring the department to adopt rules;
 19 amending s. 414.56, F.S.; revising the duties of the
 20 Office of Continuing Care to include establishing and
 21 operating the pilot program; providing an effective
 22 date.

23
 24 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
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26 Section 1. Section 409.1455, Florida Statutes, is created
27 to read:

28 409.1455 Step into Success Workforce Education and
29 Internship Pilot Program for foster youth and former foster
30 youth.-

31 (1) SHORT TITLE.-This section may be cited as the "Step
32 into Success Act."

33 (2) CREATION.-The department shall establish the 3-year
34 Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship Pilot
35 Program to give eligible foster youth and former foster youth an
36 opportunity to learn and develop essential workforce and
37 professional skills, to transition from the custody of the
38 department to independent living, and to become better prepared
39 for an independent and successful future. The pilot program must
40 consist of an independent living, professionalism, and workforce
41 education component and, for former foster youth who complete
42 such component, an onsite workforce training internship
43 component. In consultation with subject-matter experts and the
44 community-based care lead agencies, the Office of Continuing
45 Care shall develop and administer the pilot program for
46 interested foster youth and former foster youth; however, the
47 department may contract with entities that have demonstrable
48 subject-matter expertise in the transition to adulthood for
49 foster youth and former foster youth, workforce training and
50 preparedness, professional skills, and related subjects to

51 collaborate with the office in the development and
52 administration of the pilot program. The independent living,
53 professionalism, and workforce education component of the
54 program must result in a certificate that allows former foster
55 youth to participate in the onsite workforce training
56 internship.

57 (3) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section, the term:

58 (a) "Community-based care lead agency" has the same
59 meaning as in s. 409.986(3).

60 (b) "Former foster youth" means an individual 18 years of
61 age or older but younger than 26 years of age who is currently
62 or was previously placed in licensed care, excluding Level I
63 licensed placements under s. 409.175(5)(a)1., for at least 60
64 days within the state.

65 (c) "Foster youth" means an individual at least 16 years
66 of age but younger than 18 years of age who is currently in
67 licensed care, excluding Level I licensed placements under s.
68 409.175(5)(a)1.

69 (d) "Office" means the Office of Continuing Care.

70 (e) "Participating organization" means a state agency, a
71 corporation under chapter 607 or chapter 617, or another
72 relevant entity that has agreed to collaborate with the office
73 in the development and implementation of a trauma-informed
74 onsite workforce training internship program pursuant to
75 subsections (6) and (7).

76 (4) REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND OFFICE.—The
 77 department shall establish and the office shall develop and
 78 administer the pilot program for eligible foster youth and
 79 former foster youth. The pilot program must be administered as
 80 part of an eligible foster youth's regular transition planning
 81 under s. 39.6035 or as a post-transition service for eligible
 82 former foster youth. The office must begin the professionalism
 83 and workforce education component of the program on or before
 84 January 1, 2024, and the onsite workforce training internship
 85 component of the program on or before July 1, 2024.

86 (5) INDEPENDENT LIVING PROFESSIONALISM AND WORKFORCE
 87 EDUCATION COMPONENT REQUIREMENTS.—For the independent living,
 88 professionalism, and workforce education component of the
 89 program, the office shall:

90 (a) Designate and ensure that the number of qualified
 91 staff is sufficient to implement and administer the component,
 92 which may be part of a larger independent living or life skills
 93 training program if such program meets the requirements of this
 94 subsection.

95 (b)1. Develop all workshops, presentations, and curricula
 96 for the component, including, but not limited to, all written
 97 educational and training materials for foster youth and former
 98 foster youth.

99 2. Resources may include, but are not limited to,
 100 workshops and materials to assist with preparing resumes, mock

101 interviews, experiential training, and assistance with securing
102 an internship or employment.

103 3. The office must review and update these materials as
104 necessary. The training materials must address, but are not
105 limited to, all of the following:

106 a. Interview skills.

107 b. Professionalism.

108 c. Teamwork.

109 d. Leadership.

110 e. Problem solving.

111 f. Conflict resolution in the workplace.

112 (c) Require that the training provided in the component be
113 in addition to any other life skills or employment training
114 required by general law. The training may be developed or
115 administered by the department, community-based care lead
116 agencies or subcontracted providers of the community-based care
117 lead agencies, or in collaboration with colleges or universities
118 or other nonprofit organizations in the community with workforce
119 education and training resources.

120 (d) Provide relevant written materials and any relevant
121 tools developed for the component to ensure a successful
122 transition from the program into internships in all
123 participating organizations that offer workforce training
124 internship opportunities.

125 (e) Provide materials to inform eligible foster youth and

126 former foster youth of the program, the requirements for
127 participation, and contact information for enrollment. The
128 community-based care lead agencies shall ensure that any
129 subcontracted providers that directly serve foster youth and
130 former foster youth receive this information.

131 (f) Advertise and promote the availability of the program
132 to engage as many eligible foster youth and former foster youth
133 as possible.

134 (g) Assess the career interests of each eligible foster
135 youth and former foster youth who expresses an interest in
136 participating in the program and determine the most appropriate
137 internship and postinternship opportunities for each youth based
138 on his or her expressed interests.

139 (6) ONSITE WORKFORCE TRAINING INTERNSHIP COMPONENT
140 REQUIREMENTS.—For the onsite workforce training internship
141 program for eligible former foster youth, the office shall:

142 (a) Develop processes and procedures to implement a
143 trauma-informed onsite workforce training internship component.
144 The processes and procedures of the internship component must be
145 designed to be replicated and scaled to meet various
146 organizational structures and sizes. The component must include
147 all of the following:

148 1. Recruitment of agencies, corporations, and other
149 entities to host interns as participating organizations.

150 2. Assisting participating organizations with mentor

- 151 recruitment, training, and matching.
- 152 3. Mentor-led performance reviews, including a review of
153 the intern's work product, professionalism, time management,
154 communication style, and stress management strategies.
- 155 4. Daily mentorship and coaching on topics including:
- 156 a. Professionalism.
- 157 b. Teamwork.
- 158 c. Leadership.
- 159 d. Problem solving.
- 160 e. Conflict resolution in the workplace.
- 161 5. Development of opportunities for participating former
162 foster youth to become employees of the participating
163 organization.
- 164 6. Reporting requirements specified in subsection (11).
- 165 (b) Develop at least 1 hour of required trauma-informed
166 training for mentors to teach the skills necessary to engage
167 with participating former foster youth.
- 168 (c) Provide assistance to eligible former foster youth
169 interested in participating in the internship component,
170 including, but not limited to, identifying and monitoring
171 internship opportunities, being knowledgeable of the training
172 and skills needed to match eligible former foster youth with
173 appropriate internships, and assisting eligible former foster
174 youth with applying for postinternship employment opportunities.
- 175 (d) Publicize specific internship positions in an easily

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176 accessible manner and inform eligible former foster youth of how
177 to locate such information.

178 (e) Provide a participating former foster youth with
179 financial assistance in the amount of \$1,517 monthly and develop
180 a process and schedule for the distribution of payments to
181 former foster youth participating in the component, subject to
182 the availability of funds.

183 (f) Distribute funds appropriated for the compensation of
184 mentors who are participating in the component as provided in
185 paragraph (7) (b).

186 (g) By May 1, 2024, provide to the Board of Governors and
187 the State Board of Education all relevant internship information
188 necessary to support the award of postsecondary credit or career
189 education clock hours for internship positions held by
190 participating former foster youth.

191 (h) Develop and conduct followup surveys with:

192 1. Former foster youth within 3 months after his or her
193 internship start date to ensure successful transition into the
194 work environment and to gather feedback on how to improve the
195 experience for future participants.

196 2. Mentors assigned to participating former foster youth.
197 Such data must be collected by October 1, 2024, and by October 1
198 annually thereafter, for inclusion in the independent living
199 services annual report.

200 3. Any other persons the office deems relevant for

201 purposes of continued improvement of the component.
 202 (7) REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS.—Each
 203 participating organization shall:
 204 (a) Collaborate with the office to implement a trauma-
 205 informed approach to mentoring and training former foster youth.
 206 (b)1. Recruit employees to serve as mentors for
 207 participating interns within such organizations. To serve as a
 208 mentor, an employee must:
 209 a. Have worked for the participating organization for at
 210 least 1 year.
 211 b. Have experience relevant to the job and task
 212 responsibilities of the intern.
 213 c. Sign a monthly statement documenting hours worked for
 214 the intern.
 215 d. Allocate at least 1 hour per month to conduct mentor-
 216 led performance reviews, including a review of the intern's work
 217 product, professionalism, time management, communication style,
 218 and stress-management strategies.
 219 e. Complete at least 1 hour of trauma-informed training to
 220 gain skills critical for successfully engaging with former
 221 foster youth.
 222 2. Subject to available funding, an employee who serves as
 223 a mentor and receives the required trauma-informed training is
 224 eligible for a maximum payment of \$1,200 per intern per fiscal
 225 year, to be issued as a \$100 monthly payment for every month of

226 service as a mentor.

227 3. An employee may serve as a mentor for a maximum of
228 three interns at one time and may not receive more than \$3,600
229 in compensation per fiscal year for serving as a mentor. Any
230 time spent serving as a mentor to an intern under this section
231 counts toward the minimum service required for eligibility for
232 payments under subparagraph 2. and this subparagraph.

233 (c) When necessary, have a discussion with an intern's
234 assigned mentor, the participating organization's internship
235 program liaison, and the office about the creation of a
236 corrective action plan to address issues related to the intern's
237 professionalism, work product, or performance and, if
238 applicable, after giving the intern a reasonable opportunity to
239 comply with the corrective action plan, document the intern's
240 failure to do so before discharging such intern.

241 (d) Provide relevant feedback to the office at least
242 annually for the office to comply with paragraph (6)(h).

243 (e) Collaborate with the department to provide any
244 requested information necessary to prepare the annual report
245 required under subsection (11).

246 (8) TIME LIMITATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION.—A former foster
247 youth who obtains an internship with a participating
248 organization may participate in the internship component for no
249 more than 1 year, calculated as 12 monthly payment periods. The
250 year begins on his or her start date as an intern with a

251 participating organization. A former foster youth may only
252 intern at one participating organization at one time. A
253 participating organization may hire a participating intern as an
254 employee, but a former foster youth may not be hired as an
255 employee for an internship under this section.

256 (9) AWARD OF POSTSECONDARY CREDIT OR CAREER EDUCATION
257 CLOCK HOURS.—The Board of Governors and the State Board of
258 Education shall adopt rules and regulations, respectively, to
259 award postsecondary credit or career education clock hours for
260 eligible former foster youth participating in the internship
261 component. The rules and regulations must include procedures for
262 the award of postsecondary credit or career education clock
263 hours, including, but not limited to, equivalency and alignment
264 of the internship component with appropriate postsecondary
265 courses and course descriptions.

266 (10) CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNSHIP
267 COMPONENT.—

268 (a) To become a participant in the internship component of
269 the program, the applicant must be a foster youth or a former
270 foster youth at the time such youth applies for an internship
271 position with a participating organization. A foster youth or
272 former foster youth who has completed the training component
273 with the department may apply for a position with a
274 participating organization but only a former foster youth may be
275 offered and accept an internship.

276 (b) If offered an internship, a former foster youth must
277 be classified as an intern and must work at least 80 hours per
278 month to be eligible for the monthly payment.

279 (c) A former foster youth must spend any payment funds
280 specified for clothing on clothing that is in compliance with
281 the dress code requirements of the participating organization
282 with which he or she is interning. Notwithstanding any
283 limitation on payment funds provided to purchase clothing, the
284 former foster youth must comply with any dress code requirements
285 of the participating organization with which he or she is
286 interning.

287 (d) Money earned pursuant to the internship component may
288 not be considered earned income for purposes of computing
289 eligibility for federal or state benefits, including, but not
290 limited to, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a
291 housing choice assistance voucher program, the Temporary Cash
292 Assistance Program, the Medicaid program, or the school
293 readiness program. Notwithstanding this paragraph, any reduction
294 in amount of benefits or loss of benefits due to receipt of the
295 Step into Success workforce education and internship pilot
296 program payments may be offset by an additional payment equal to
297 the value of the maximum benefit amount for a single person
298 allowed under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

299 (e) A former foster youth may, at the discretion of a
300 postsecondary institution in which such youth is enrolled, earn

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301 postsecondary credit or career education clock hours for work
302 performed as an intern under the onsite workforce training
303 internship component. Postsecondary credit and career education
304 clock hours earned for work performed under the onsite workforce
305 training internship component may be in addition to any
306 compensation earned for the same work performed under that
307 component and may be awarded for completion of all or any part
308 of the such component. Participating organizations shall
309 cooperate with postsecondary educational institutions to provide
310 any information about internship positions which is necessary to
311 enable the institutions to determine whether to grant the
312 participating former foster youth postsecondary credit or career
313 education clock hours toward his or her degree.

314 (f) A former foster youth who accepts an internship with a
315 participating organization pursuant to this section may only be
316 discharged from the internship component after the participating
317 organization engages the intern's assigned mentor and the
318 participating organization's internship program staff to assist
319 the intern in performing the duties of the internship. Before
320 discharging the former foster youth, the participating
321 organization must also document the intern's failure to comply
322 with a corrective action plan after being given a reasonable
323 opportunity to do so.

324 (11) REPORT.—The department shall include a section on the
325 Step into Success workforce education and internship pilot

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326 program in the independent living annual report prepared
327 pursuant to s. 409.1451(6) which includes, but is not limited
328 to, all of the following:

329 (a) Whether the pilot program is in compliance with this
330 section and, if not, the barriers to compliance.

331 (b) A list of participating organizations and the number
332 of interns at each participating organization.

333 (c) A summary of recruitment efforts to increase the
334 number of participating organizations.

335 (d) A summary of the feedback and surveys received under
336 paragraph (6)(h) from participating former foster youth,
337 assigned mentors, and internship program staff.

338 (e) Recommendations, if any, for actions necessary to
339 improve the quality, effectiveness, and outcomes of the pilot
340 program.

341 (f) Employment outcomes of former foster youth who
342 participated in the pilot program, including employment status
343 after completion of the program, whether he or she is employed
344 by the participating organization in which he or she interned or
345 by another entity, and a job description and salary, if
346 available.

347 (12) RULEMAKING.—The department shall adopt rules
348 necessary to implement this section.

349 Section 2. Subsection (5) is added to section 414.56,
350 Florida Statutes, to read:

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351 414.56 Office of Continuing Care.—The department shall
352 establish an Office of Continuing Care to ensure young adults
353 who age out of the foster care system between 18 and 21 years of
354 age, or 22 years of age with a documented disability, have a
355 point of contact until the young adult reaches the age of 26 in
356 order to receive ongoing support and care coordination needed to
357 achieve self-sufficiency. Duties of the office include, but are
358 not limited to:

359 (5) Developing and administering the Step into Success
360 Workforce Education and Internship Pilot Program for foster
361 youth and former foster youth as provided under s. 409.1455.

362 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.