

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to the Dozier School for Boys and  
3           Okeechobee School Victim Compensation Program;  
4           creating s. 16.63, F.S.; establishing the Dozier  
5           School for Boys and Okeechobee School Victim  
6           Compensation Program within the Department of Legal  
7           Affairs; specifying the purpose of the program;  
8           requiring the department to provide specified notice  
9           of the program; requiring the department to accept and  
10          process applications for the payment of compensation  
11          claims under the program; specifying application  
12          procedures and requirements; requiring the department  
13          to issue application approvals or denials under  
14          specified conditions; requiring notice of application  
15          approval or denial; requiring the department to pay a  
16          specified compensation amount to approved applicants;  
17          limiting the compensation an applicant may receive  
18          related to the claim; providing for rulemaking;  
19          authorizing the Commissioner of Education to award a  
20          standard high school diploma to specified persons;  
21          providing an appropriation; providing an effective  
22          date.

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24    Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:  
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26 Section 1. Section 16.63, Florida Statutes, is created to  
27 read:

28 16.63 Dozier School for Boys and Okeechobee School Victim  
29 Compensation Program.—

30 (1) The Dozier School for Boys and Okeechobee School  
31 Victim Compensation Program is established within the Department  
32 of Legal Affairs. The purpose of the program is to compensate  
33 living persons who were confined to the Dozier School for Boys  
34 or the Okeechobee School at any time between 1940 and 1975 and  
35 who were subjected to mental, physical, or sexual abuse  
36 perpetrated by school personnel while they were so confined.

37 (2) The Department of Legal Affairs shall accept, review,  
38 and approve or deny applications for the payment of compensation  
39 claims under this section. Notice of the availability of such  
40 compensation must be given and any relevant forms made available  
41 for download on a page of the department's official website  
42 accessible through a direct link on the website's homepage,  
43 which link and page must be titled "The Dozier School for Boys  
44 and Okeechobee School Victim Compensation Program."

45 (3) An application for compensation under this section  
46 must be made by a living person who was confined to the Dozier  
47 School for Boys or the Okeechobee School between 1940 and 1975;  
48 the personal representative or estate of a decedent may not file  
49 an application for or receive compensation under this section.  
50 Such application must be made on a form approved by the

51 department and include:

52 (a) The applicant's name, date of birth, mailing address,  
53 phone number, and, if available, electronic mail address.

54 (b) The name of the school in which the applicant was  
55 confined and the approximate dates of the applicant's  
56 confinement.

57 (c) Reasonable proof submitted as attachments establishing  
58 that the applicant was both:

59 1. Confined to the Dozier School for Boys or the  
60 Okeechobee School between 1940 and 1975, which proof may include  
61 school records submitted with a notarized certificate of  
62 authenticity signed by the records custodian or certified court  
63 records.

64 2. A victim of mental, physical, or sexual abuse  
65 perpetrated by school personnel during the applicant's  
66 confinement, which proof may include a notarized statement  
67 signed by the applicant attesting to the abuse the applicant  
68 suffered.

69 (d) A signed statement from the applicant acknowledging  
70 that, by accepting compensation under this section, the  
71 applicant waives any right to further compensation related to  
72 the applicant's confinement at the Dozier School for Boys or the  
73 Okeechobee School or any abuse suffered during such confinement.

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75 An application for compensation under this section must be

76 signed by the applicant under oath. A false statement in such  
77 application, including in any attachment or exhibit submitted  
78 therewith, is subject to the penalty of perjury under s.  
79 837.012.

80 (4) Applications for compensation under this section must  
81 be submitted no later than December 31, 2024.

82 (5) Upon completed review of an application submitted  
83 under this section, the department shall either:

84 (a) Subject to appropriation, approve a one-time payment  
85 to an applicant whose application meets the criteria specified  
86 in this section. Each approved applicant shall receive an equal  
87 share of the funds appropriated for this purpose.

88 (b) Deny the payment of compensation under this section to  
89 an applicant whose application does not meet the criteria  
90 specified in this section.

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92 Written notice of such approval or denial must be sent by  
93 certified mail, return receipt requested, to the mailing address  
94 provided by the applicant on the application form. An applicant  
95 whose application is rejected for providing insufficient  
96 information may submit a new application as provided in  
97 subsection (4).

98 (6) A person compensated under this section is ineligible  
99 for any further compensation related to the person's confinement  
100 at the Dozier School for Boys or the Okeechobee School or any

101 abuse suffered during such confinement.

102 (7) The department shall adopt by rule procedures and  
103 forms necessary to administer this section.

104 Section 2. Pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board of  
105 Education, the Commissioner of Education may award a standard  
106 high school diploma to a person compensated pursuant to s.  
107 16.63, Florida Statutes, who has not completed high school  
108 graduation requirements.

109 Section 3. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of \$20  
110 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is  
111 appropriated to the Department of Legal Affairs for the Dozier  
112 School for Boys and Okeechobee School Victim Compensation  
113 Program.

114 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.