

By the Committee on Governmental Oversight and Accountability;
and Senators Rouson, Davis, and Osgood

585-03005-24

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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 accept and process
9 applications for the payment of compensation claims
10 under the program; requiring the department to provide
11 specified notice of the program; specifying
12 application procedures and requirements; requiring the
13 department to issue application approvals or denials
14 under specified conditions; requiring the department,
15 subject to the appropriation of funds for that
16 purpose, to pay a specified compensation amount to
17 approved applicants; requiring notice of application
18 approval or denial; authorizing an applicant whose
19 application is rejected to submit a new application;
20 providing that a person compensated under the program
21 is ineligible for further compensation related to his
22 confinement; requiring the department to adopt by rule
23 specified procedures and forms; authorizing the
24 Commissioner of Education to award a standard high
25 school diploma to specified persons under certain
26 circumstances; providing an effective date.

27
28 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
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585-03005-24

202424c1

30 Section 1. Section 16.63, Florida Statutes, is created to
31 read:

32 16.63 Dozier School for Boys and Okeechobee School Victim
33 Compensation Program.—

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

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

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

56 (a) The applicant's name, date of birth, mailing address,
57 telephone number, and, if available, electronic mail address.

58 (b) The name of the school in which the applicant was

585-03005-24

202424c1

59 confined and the approximate dates of the applicant's
60 confinement.

61 (c) Reasonable proof submitted as attachments establishing
62 that the applicant was both:

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

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

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

77
78 An application for compensation under this section must be
79 signed by the applicant under oath. A false statement in such
80 application, including in any attachment or exhibit submitted
81 therewith, is subject to the penalty of perjury under s.
82 837.012.

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

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

87 (a) Subject to appropriation, approve a one-time payment to

585-03005-24

202424c1

88 an applicant whose application meets the criteria specified in
89 this section. Each approved applicant shall receive an equal
90 share of the funds appropriated for this purpose.

91 (b) Deny the payment of compensation under this section to
92 an applicant whose application does not meet the criteria
93 specified in this section.

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

101 (6) A person compensated under this section is ineligible
102 for any further compensation related to the person's confinement
103 at the Dozier School for Boys or the Okeechobee School or any
104 abuse suffered during such confinement.

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

107 Section 2. Pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board of
108 Education, the Commissioner of Education may award a standard
109 high school diploma to a person compensated pursuant to s.
110 16.63, Florida Statutes, who has not completed high school
111 graduation requirements.

112 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.