

**By** the Committees on Fiscal Policy; and Governmental Oversight and Accountability; and Senators Rouson, Davis, Osgood, Burgess, Pizzo, Jones, Garcia, Torres, and Stewart

594-03802-24

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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 appropriation; providing  
27      an effective date.

28  
29   Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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59 (b) The name of the school in which the applicant was  
60 confined and the approximate dates of the applicant's  
61 confinement.

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

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

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

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

78  
79 An application for compensation under this section must be  
80 signed by the applicant under oath. A false statement in such  
81 application, including in any attachment or exhibit submitted  
82 therewith, is subject to the penalty of perjury under s.  
83 837.012.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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117 Program.

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