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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to education; creating s. 1004.933,
3 F.S.; providing legislative intent; establishing the
4 Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE)
5 Program within the Department of Education; providing
6 definitions; requiring institutions to waive payments
7 for specified student fees; providing requirements for
8 the provision of such waivers; providing eligibility
9 requirements; providing that students participating in
10 the program are eligible for a specified stipend under
11 certain circumstances; prohibiting an institution from
12 imposing additional eligibility requirements;
13 providing department responsibilities; providing
14 department reporting requirements; authorizing the
15 State Board of Education to adopt rules; amending s.
16 445.009, F.S.; revising the services to which the one-
17 stop delivery system is intended to provide access;
18 amending s. 1003.21, F.S.; requiring a student's
19 certified school counselor or other school personnel
20 to inform the student of opportunities in the GATE
21 Program; amending s. 1003.435, F.S.; requiring
22 district school boards to notify all candidates for
23 the high school equivalency diploma of adult secondary
24 and postsecondary education options, including
25 specified eligibility requirements; creating s.
26 1009.711, F.S.; creating the GATE Scholarship Program;
27 requiring the department to administer the program;
28 requiring the program to reimburse eligible
29 institutions for specified student fees and costs;

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30 requiring participating institutions to report
31 specified information to the department; requiring the
32 department to reimburse participating institutions
33 within a specified timeframe; providing that
34 reimbursements are contingent upon legislative
35 appropriation and must be prorated under certain
36 circumstances; authorizing the state board to adopt
37 rules; amending s. 1009.895, F.S.; revising student
38 eligibility criteria for the Open Door Grant Program;
39 amending s. 1011.80, F.S.; revising the number of
40 courses for which certain students may be reported for
41 certain funding purposes; providing that such courses
42 do not have to be core curricula courses; deleting a
43 requirement that the department develop a list of
44 courses to be designated as core curricula courses;
45 creating s. 1011.804, F.S.; establishing the GATE
46 Startup Grant Program within the department for a
47 specified purpose; defining the term "institution";
48 providing eligibility requirements; providing
49 department duties; providing requirements for grant
50 proposals, grant awards, and the use of grant funds;
51 providing reporting requirements; authorizing the
52 state board to adopt rules; creating s. 1011.8041,
53 F.S.; creating the GATE Program Performance Fund for a
54 specified purpose; defining the term "institution";
55 subject to legislative appropriation, requiring each
56 participating institution to receive a specified
57 amount of money per student, subject to certain
58 conditions; authorizing the state board to adopt

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59 rules; providing an effective date.

60
61 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

62
63 Section 1. Section 1004.933, Florida Statutes, is created
64 to read:

65 1004.933 Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education
66 (GATE) Program.—

67 (1) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.—

68 (a) It is the intent of the Legislature to create an
69 alternative pathway to education and workforce opportunities for
70 students who have withdrawn from high school prior to
71 graduation.

72 (b) It is the intent of the Legislature to affirm the
73 unequivocal value of a standard high school diploma as the
74 primary education credential by which students access higher
75 education and workforce opportunities. Further, the Legislature
76 affirms that parental consent is required for a student under 18
77 years of age to withdraw from high school prior to graduation.

78 (c) The Legislature intends to expand opportunities for
79 students to complete high school courses and earn a standard
80 high school diploma.

81 (d) The Legislature recognizes that when a student
82 withdraws from high school prior to graduation, the student has
83 not received the full value of a taxpayer-funded pre-K-12
84 education, and therefore lacks the education credential
85 essential to gainful employment and future educational
86 opportunities. Therefore, the Legislature intends to provide an
87 alternative pathway program, waiving tuition and fees for the

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88 program for participating students who have not earned a
89 standard high school diploma.

90 (2) PROGRAM CREATION.—The Graduation Alternative to
91 Traditional Education (GATE) Program is created within the
92 Department of Education.

93 (3) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:

94 (a) "Career education program" means an applied technology
95 diploma program as defined in s. 1004.02(7) or a career
96 certificate program as defined in s. 1004.02(20).

97 (b) "Institution" means a school district career center
98 established under s. 1001.44, a charter technical career center
99 established under s. 1002.34, or a Florida College System
100 institution identified in s. 1000.21.

101 (4) PAYMENT WAIVER; ELIGIBILITY.—

102 (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of state law, an
103 institution shall waive 100 percent of the registration,
104 tuition, laboratory, and examination fees for a student
105 participating in the GATE Program. A waiver provided under this
106 section after a student's first term shall be provided after
107 state aid pursuant to s. 1009.895 is applied. Instructional
108 materials assigned for use under the GATE Program must be made
109 available to GATE Program students free of charge. An
110 institution may not require payment by students of instructional
111 materials costs eligible for reimbursement under s. 1009.711.

112 (b) To be eligible for participation in the GATE Program, a
113 student must:

114 1. Not have earned a standard high school diploma pursuant
115 to s. 1003.4282 or a high school equivalency diploma pursuant to
116 s. 1003.435 before enrolling in the GATE Program;

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117 2. Have been withdrawn from high school;

118 3. Be a resident of this state as defined in s. 1009.21(1);

119 4. Be 16 to 21 years of age at the time of initial
120 enrollment, provided that a student who is 16 or 17 years of age
121 has withdrawn from school enrollment pursuant to the
122 requirements and safeguards in s. 1003.21(1)(c);

123 5. Select the adult secondary education program and career
124 education program of his or her choice at the time of admission
125 to the GATE Program, provided that the career education program
126 is included on the Master Credentials List under s. 445.004(4).
127 The student may not change the requested pathway after
128 enrollment, except that, if necessary for the student, the
129 student may enroll in an adult basic education program prior to
130 enrolling in the adult secondary education program;

131 6. Maintain a 2.0 GPA for career and technical education
132 coursework; and

133 7. Notwithstanding s. 1003.435(4), complete the programs
134 under subparagraph 5. within 3 years after his or her initial
135 enrollment unless the institution determines that an extension
136 is warranted due to extenuating circumstances.

137 (c) Subject to the availability of funds, a student who
138 meets the requirements of paragraph (b) and is enrolled in the
139 GATE Program is eligible to receive the stipend specified in s.
140 1009.895(3).

141 (d) An institution may not impose additional criteria to
142 determine a student's eligibility to receive a waiver under this
143 section.

144 (5) DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES.—In addition to
145 administering the GATE Program, the Department of Education

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146 shall perform the following duties:

147 (a) Disseminate information about the GATE Program to
148 eligible institutions, local workforce development boards, and
149 other local, regional, or state initiatives that interact with
150 the GATE Program's target population.

151 (b) Connect prospective students directly to eligible
152 institutions.

153 (c) Provide access to online career planning tools.

154 (6) REPORTING.—Beginning October 1, 2025, and each October
155 1 thereafter, the Department of Education shall submit a report
156 to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of
157 the House of Representatives on the number and value of
158 registration, tuition, laboratory, and examination fees and
159 instructional materials costs waived and reimbursed, by
160 institution; the number of students who have obtained a standard
161 high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma while
162 participating in the GATE Program; the number of students
163 completing an applied technology diploma or career certificate
164 while participating in the GATE Program; the number of students
165 participating in the GATE Program who receive a stipend under s.
166 1009.895(3); the number of students who have earned an industry
167 certification on the CAPE Industry Certification Funding List
168 while participating in the GATE Program; and the number of
169 students who completed the GATE Program. The reporting period
170 shall cover the previous academic year.

171 (7) RULES.—The State Board of Education may adopt rules to
172 implement this section.

173 Section 2. Paragraph (g) of subsection (1) of section
174 445.009, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

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175 445.009 One-stop delivery system.-

176 (1) The one-stop delivery system is the state's primary
177 customer-service strategy for offering every Floridian access,
178 through service sites or telephone or computer networks, to the
179 following services:

180 (g) Adult education, ~~and~~ basic skills training, integrated
181 education and training, and the Graduation Alternative to
182 Traditional Education Program under s. 1004.933.

183 Section 3. Paragraph (c) of subsection (1) of section
184 1003.21, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

185 1003.21 School attendance.-

186 (1)

187 (c) A student who attains the age of 16 years during the
188 school year is not subject to compulsory school attendance
189 beyond the date upon which he or she attains that age if the
190 student files a formal declaration of intent to terminate school
191 enrollment with the district school board. Public school
192 students who have attained the age of 16 years and who have not
193 graduated are subject to compulsory school attendance until the
194 formal declaration of intent is filed with the district school
195 board. The declaration must acknowledge that terminating school
196 enrollment is likely to reduce the student's earning potential
197 and must be signed by the student and the student's parent. The
198 school district shall notify the student's parent of receipt of
199 the student's declaration of intent to terminate school
200 enrollment. The student's certified school counselor or other
201 school personnel shall conduct an exit interview with the
202 student to determine the reasons for the student's decision to
203 terminate school enrollment and actions that could be taken to

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204 keep the student in school. The student's certified school
205 counselor or other school personnel shall inform the student of
206 opportunities to continue his or her education in a different
207 environment, including, but not limited to, adult education, and
208 high school equivalency examination preparation, and the
209 Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education Program under s.
210 1004.933. Additionally, the student shall complete a survey in a
211 format prescribed by the Department of Education to provide data
212 on student reasons for terminating enrollment and actions taken
213 by schools to keep students enrolled.

214 Section 4. Subsection (3) of section 1003.435, Florida
215 Statutes, is amended to read:

216 1003.435 High school equivalency diploma program.—

217 (3) Each district school board shall:

218 (a) Offer and administer the high school equivalency
219 diploma examinations and the subject area examinations to all
220 candidates pursuant to rules of the State Board of Education.

221 (b) Notify each candidate of adult secondary and
222 postsecondary education options available in or near the school
223 district, including the Graduation Alternative to Traditional
224 Education Program under s. 1004.933. The candidate must also be
225 informed of the eligibility requirements and any minimum
226 academic requirements for each available option.

227 Section 5. Section 1009.711, Florida Statutes, is created
228 to read:

229 1009.711 GATE Scholarship Program.—

230 (1) The GATE Scholarship Program is created to financially
231 support institutions participating in the GATE Program
232 established pursuant to s. 1004.933.

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233 (2) The Department of Education shall administer the GATE
234 Scholarship Program in accordance with rules adopted by the
235 State Board of Education.

236 (3) The GATE Scholarship Program shall reimburse eligible
237 institutions for registration, tuition, laboratory, and
238 examination fees and related instructional materials costs for
239 students enrolled in the GATE Program. Institutions must be
240 reimbursed at the in-state resident tuition rate established in
241 s. 1009.22(3)(c).

242 (4) Each participating institution shall report to the
243 department all students enrolled in the GATE Program during the
244 fall, spring, or summer terms within 30 days after the end of
245 regular registration. For each eligible student, the institution
246 shall report the total reimbursable expenses by category, which
247 the department must consider in determining an institution's
248 award under this section. The department shall reimburse each
249 participating institution no later than 30 days after the
250 institution has reported enrollment for that term.

251 (5) Reimbursements from the GATE Scholarship Program are
252 contingent upon an annual appropriation in the General
253 Appropriations Act. If the statewide reimbursement amount is
254 greater than the appropriation, the institutional reimbursement
255 amounts specified in subsection (3) must be prorated among the
256 institutions that have timely reported eligible students to the
257 department.

258 (6) The State Board of Education may adopt rules to
259 implement this section.

260 Section 6. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section
261 1009.895, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

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262 1009.895 Open Door Grant Program.—

263 (2) ELIGIBILITY.—In order to be eligible for the program, a
264 student must:

265 (b) Be enrolled in an adult secondary education program or
266 an integrated education and training program in which
267 institutions establish partnerships with local workforce
268 development boards to provide basic skills instruction,
269 contextually and concurrently, with workforce training that
270 results in the award of credentials under s. 445.004(4) or a
271 workforce education program as defined under s. 1011.80(1)(b)–
272 (f) that is included on the Master Credentials List under s.
273 445.004(4); and

274

275 An institution may not impose additional criteria to determine a
276 student's eligibility to receive a grant under this section.

277 Section 7. Subsection (10) of section 1011.80, Florida
278 Statutes, is amended to read:

279 1011.80 Funds for operation of workforce education
280 programs.—

281 (10) A high school student dually enrolled under s.
282 1007.271 in a workforce education program operated by a Florida
283 College System institution or school district career center
284 generates the amount calculated for workforce education funding,
285 including any payment of performance funding, and the
286 proportional share of full-time equivalent enrollment generated
287 through the Florida Education Finance Program for the student's
288 enrollment in a high school. If a high school student is dually
289 enrolled in a Florida College System institution program,
290 including a program conducted at a high school, the Florida

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291 College System institution earns the funds generated for
292 workforce education funding, and the school district earns the
293 proportional share of full-time equivalent funding from the
294 Florida Education Finance Program. If a student is dually
295 enrolled in a career center operated by the same district as the
296 district in which the student attends high school, that district
297 earns the funds generated for workforce education funding and
298 also earns the proportional share of full-time equivalent
299 funding from the Florida Education Finance Program. If a student
300 is dually enrolled in a workforce education program provided by
301 a career center operated by a different school district, the
302 funds must be divided between the two school districts
303 proportionally from the two funding sources. A student may not
304 be reported for funding in a dual enrollment workforce education
305 program unless the student has completed the basic skills
306 assessment pursuant to s. 1004.91. A student who is coenrolled
307 in a K-12 education program and an adult education program may
308 be reported for purposes of funding in an adult education
309 program. If a student is coenrolled in ~~core curricula~~ courses
310 for credit recovery or dropout prevention purposes and does not
311 have a pattern of excessive absenteeism or habitual truancy or a
312 history of disruptive behavior in school, the student may be
313 reported for funding for up to four ~~two~~ courses per year. Such a
314 student is exempt from the payment of the block tuition for
315 adult general education programs provided in s. 1009.22(3)(c).
316 ~~The Department of Education shall develop a list of courses to~~
317 ~~be designated as core curricula courses for the purposes of~~
318 ~~coenrollment.~~

319 Section 8. Section 1011.804, Florida Statutes, is created

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320 to read:

321 1011.804 GATE Startup Grant Program.—

322 (1) The GATE Startup Grant Program is established within
323 the Department of Education to fund and support the startup and
324 implementation of the GATE Program, subject to legislative
325 appropriation. The purpose of the grant program is to increase
326 access to programs that support adult learners earning a high
327 school credential, either a high school diploma or its
328 equivalent, and a workforce credential aligned to statewide or
329 regional demand. The department shall administer the grants,
330 determine eligibility, and distribute grant awards.

331 (2) As used in this section, the term “institution” means a
332 school district career center established under s. 1001.44, a
333 charter technical career center established under s. 1002.34, or
334 a Florida College System institution identified in s. 1000.21
335 which offers the GATE Program pursuant to s. 1004.933.

336 (3) The department may solicit proposals from institutions
337 without programs that meet the requirements of s. 1004.933(2).
338 Such institutions must be located in or serve a rural area of
339 opportunity as designated by the Governor.

340 (4) The department shall prioritize grant proposals that
341 combine adult basic education, adult secondary education, and
342 career education programs at one location or allow students to
343 complete programs through distance learning. An applicant may
344 not receive more than 10 percent of the total amount
345 appropriated for the program.

346 (5) The department shall make the grant application
347 available to potential applicants no later than August 15, 2024.
348 A grant proposal must include:

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349 (a) The institution or institutions that will provide the
350 adult basic education, adult secondary education, and career
351 education programs;

352 (b) The proposed adult basic education and adult secondary
353 education program or programs the institution or institutions
354 will provide, and the projected enrollment for such program or
355 programs;

356 (c) The proposed career education program or programs the
357 institution or institutions will provide and the projected
358 enrollment for such program or programs;

359 (d) The credential or credentials associated with the
360 career education program or programs. Such credential or
361 credentials must be included on the Master Credentials List
362 under s. 445.004(4);

363 (e) The cost of instruction for all programs contemplated
364 in the proposal, including costs for tuition, fees,
365 registration, and laboratory, examination, and instructional
366 materials costs;

367 (f) Outreach strategies, including collaboration with local
368 workforce development boards; and

369 (g) A plan or timeline for implementing s. 1004.933 and
370 enrolling students.

371 (6) Grant funds may be used for planning activities and
372 other expenses associated with the creation of the GATE Program,
373 such as expenses related to program instruction, instructional
374 equipment, supplies, instructional personnel, and student
375 services. Grant funds may not be used for indirect costs. Grant
376 recipients must submit an annual report in a format prescribed
377 by the department. The department shall consolidate such annual

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378 reports and include the reports in the report required by s.
379 1004.933(5).

380 (7) The State Board of Education may adopt rules to
381 administer this section.

382 Section 9. Section 1011.8041, Florida Statutes, is created
383 to read:

384 1011.8041 GATE Program Performance Fund.—

385 (1) The GATE Program Performance Fund is created to reward
386 institutions for the documented success of students
387 participating in the GATE Program established under s. 1004.933.

388 (2) As used in this section, the term "institution" means a
389 school district career center established under s. 1001.44, a
390 charter technical career center established under s. 1002.34, or
391 a Florida College System institution identified in s. 1000.21
392 which offers the GATE Program pursuant to s. 1004.933.

393 (3) Subject to legislative appropriation, each
394 participating institution must receive \$1,000 per student who
395 completes the GATE Program by earning a standard high school
396 diploma or high school equivalency diploma and a credential on
397 the Master Credentials List under s. 445.004(4) within 3 years.
398 If the student earned his or her diploma and credential at
399 different institutions, then each institution must receive \$500.
400 If funds are insufficient to fully fund the calculated total
401 award, such funds must be prorated among the institutions.

402 (4) The State Board of Education may adopt rules to
403 implement this section.

404 Section 10. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.