

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Governmental Oversight and Accountability

BILL: CS/SB 1144

INTRODUCER: Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee and Senator Burgess

SUBJECT: Hope Florida Program

DATE: April 2, 2025

REVISED: _____

| | ANALYST | STAFF DIRECTOR | REFERENCE | ACTION |
|----|---------|----------------|-----------|--------|
| 1. | Harmsen | McVaney | GO | Fav/CS |
| 2. | | | AHS | |
| 3. | | | AP | |

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1144 codifies the Office of Hope Florida within the Executive Office of the Governor. The Hope Florida program uses Hope Navigators to coordinate services for Floridians in need from both the public and private sectors.

The bill defines terms, provides participant eligibility requirements, and outlines the Office’s and participating agencies’ duties, including the operation of a toll-free “Hope Line,” development and maintenance of the program’s website, and creation of a case management system.

The bill is not expected to impact state or local government expenditures.

The bill takes effect upon becoming a law.

II. Present Situation:

Hope Florida—a Pathway to Prosperity, Economic Self-Sufficiency and Hope (Hope Florida) was established on September 9, 2021, by First Lady Casey DeSantis.¹ Hope Florida pairs Floridians who reach out to the program (the “client”) with a care navigator. The navigator helps

¹ HopeFlorida, *Timeline*, <https://hopeflorida.com/about-us/timeline.html> (last visited Mar. 25, 2025). However, a phased-in rollout of DCF’s Hope Florida

identify the client's goals and pairs the client with resources from faith-based, non-profit, government, and private sector entities to reach those goals.²

Hope Florida was initially implemented by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in a three-phase rollout, with services beginning in August 2020 in the state's northwest and central regions with 30 full-time care navigators; phase two expanded into the Northeast and Southeast regions in January 2021 with 65 full-time care navigators; phase three launched in July 2021 in the SunCoast and Southern regions with 102 full-time care navigators.³

Hope Florida has since grown to also include the:

- Hope Florida Fund (established July 15, 2022), which “harnesses the charity of the private sector to give funds to deserving local entities.”⁴
- Activate Hope (established August 21, 2024), an emergency response entity that works with the Florida Division of Emergency Management to help Floridians who are recovering from disasters.⁵
- Hope Line – A toll-free hotline, “833-GET-HOPE.”⁶
- Hope Florida- A Pathway to Potential program with the Department of Juvenile Justice and its 40 Hope navigators, to support vulnerable youth.⁷
- Coordinated efforts between Hope Florida, CareerSource Florida and the DCF to help unemployed Floridians find jobs. This specific program received \$4.3 million in state funds to fund Hope Navigators to work at all local workforce development boards and provide other related services.⁸
- Hope Florida- A Pathway to Purpose program with the Department of Elder Affairs (DEA) to provide volunteer opportunities for and support to elderly Floridians. The DEA established their own Hope Navigators to facilitate this program.⁹

² See, Florida Dep't of Children and Families, *Hope Florida: A Pathway to Prosperity* at 2, <https://www.homelesstrust.org/resources-homeless/library/providers/training/hope-florida.pdf> (last visited Mar. 25, 2025).

³ Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, *Introducing HOPE FLORIDA A Pathway to Prosperity* (Oct. 2021), <https://www.elcmdm.org/Content/Uploads/elcmdm.org/files/Meeting%20Packages/Hope%20Florida%20PPT.pdf> (last visited Mar. 25, 2025).

⁴ Press Release, the Executive Office of the Governor, *First Lady Casey DeSantis Makes Major Announcements to Support the Hope Florida-a Pathway to Prosperity Initiative* (July 15, 2022), <https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/press/2022/first-lady-casey-desantis-makes-major-announcements-support-hope-florida-pathway> (last visited Mar. 25, 2026).

⁵ Press Release, the Executive Office of the Governor, *Governor Ron DeSantis and First Lady Casey DeSantis Announce Emergency Response Hope Florida Expansion* (Aug. 21, 2024), <https://flgov.com/eog/news/press/2024/governor-ron-desantis-and-first-lady-casey-desantis-announce-emergency-response> (last visited Mar. 26, 2025).

⁶ Hope Florida, *Get Help*, <https://hopeflorida.com/get-help/> (last visited Mar. 26, 2025).

⁷ Press Release, the Executive Office of the Governor, *First Lady Casey DeSantis Announces Hope Florida- A Pathway to Potential, Expanding the Hope Florida Model to Support At-Risk Youth and Their Families* (Mar. 29, 2023), <https://flgov.com/eog/news/press/2024/first-lady-casey-desantis-announces-hope-florida-pathway-potential-expanding-hope> (last visited Mar. 26, 2025).

⁸ Press Release, the Executive Office of the Governor, *First Lady Casey DeSantis Announces Hope Florida to Help Floridians with Barriers to Employment Find Promising Careers* (Jun. 9, 2023), <https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/press/2023/first-lady-casey-desantis-announces-hope-florida-help-floridians-barriers> (last visited Mar. 26, 2025).

⁹ Press Release, the Executive Office of the Governor, *First Lady Casey DeSantis Announces Hope Florida to Support Seniors Through 'A Pathway to Purpose,'* (Aug. 30, 2022), <https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/press/2022/first-lady-casey-desantis-expands-hope-florida-support-seniors-through-pathway> (last visited Mar. 26, 2025).

- Hope Florida- A Pathway to Promise with the Guardian ad Litem office and the Department of Elder Affairs to assist youth who age out of foster care.¹⁰
- Hope Florida- A Pathway for Patriots program with the Department of Veterans' Affairs to assist veterans navigate their benefits.¹¹

In January 2025, the Hope Florida Office was established within the Executive Office of the Governor to oversee and administer Hope Florida.¹² The Hope Florida Office works with state agencies to “deepen partnerships with the public and private sectors.”

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Office of Hope Florida Within the Executive Office of the Governor

The bill establishes the Office of Hope Florida (Office) within the Executive Office of the Governor to align and coordinate state agency participation in the Hope Florida Program (program). The Office's duties include:

- Establishing goals and strategies for Hope Florida;
- Facilitating coordination and collaboration among participating agencies to achieve the program's goals;
- Expanding the Hope Florida Partner Network to meet the needs of those served by the program;
- Developing and implementing care plans for program participants in partnership with Hope Navigators;
- Using participating state agencies and public-private partnerships to serve program participants and help them overcome barriers to self-sufficiency; and
- Overseeing the Hope Florida Partner Network, which is composed of designated state agencies, private-public partnerships, and nonprofit, private sector, and faith-based organizations that are engaged in Hope Florida.

The bill grants the Governor authority to appoint a director of the Office who serves at the pleasure of the Governor.

Hope Navigators

The bill describes hope navigators as resources that “must be embedded within communities” and serve as a single point of contact for program participants. The hope navigators create care plans based on the information provided by the program participant to help connect the

¹⁰ Press Release, the Executive Office of the Governor, *First Lady Casey DeSantis Announces Hope Florida- A Pathway to Promise, Expanding the Hope Florida Model to Support Youth Aging Out of Foster Care*, (Sept. 20, 2023), <https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/press/2023/first-lady-casey-desantis-announces-hope-florida-pathway-promise-expanding-hope> (last visited Mar. 26, 2025).

¹¹ Press Release, the Executive Office of the Governor, *First Lady Casey DeSantis Announces Hope Florida Initiative Expansion to Serve Florida Veterans* (Nov. 22, 2023), <https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/press/2023/first-lady-casey-desantis-announces-hope-florida-initiative-expansion-serve-florida> (last visited Mar. 26, 2025).

¹² Press Release, the Executive Office of the Governor, *Governor Ron DeSantis and First Lady Casey DeSantis Establish Hope Florida Office Within the Executive Office of the Governor* (Jan. 14, 2025), <https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/press/2025/governor-ron-desantis-and-first-lady-casey-desantis-establish-hope-florida-office> (last visited Mar. 26, 2025).

participant with community resources and realize their full potential. The bill also defines a hope navigator as an individual who coordinates care and assists participants and families seeking services through Hope Florida.

The bill defines a “care plan” as a written document that contains information provided by the Hope Florida program participant to develop and customize actionable steps and timelines to achieve their goals. The care plan must also address barriers the program participant may face. The bill additionally provides that the care plan must include “actionable steps” and timelines.

Agency Participation

The bill requires all state agencies to participate in Hope Florida if directed to do so by the Executive Office of the Governor (EOG). However, the Department of Children and Families, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Department of Juvenile Justice, Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office, Department of Education, Agency for Health Care Administration, Division of Emergency Management, Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Department of Commerce, and the Department of Elderly Affairs are required to participate without need for the Governor’s direction. An agency that is designated by the EOG to do so must perform the following duties under Hope Florida:

- Operate the Hope Line, a toll-free hotline for Hope Florida inquiries and referrals during normal business hours Monday through Friday.
- Develop and maintain a website that allows individuals to connect with Hope Florida in order to connect with the program.
- Develop and maintain a Hope Florida case management system that can at least conduct intake for Hope Florida inquiries and referrals.

Each agency must use its existing resources and personnel, to the extent possible, to operate Hope Florida.

The bill allows public-private partners, including CareerSource Florida and the Florida Commission on Community Service, to participate in Hope Florida at the direction of the Office.

Participant Eligibility

The bill sets forth the following eligibility guidelines, requiring participants in Hope Florida be:

- A Florida resident;
- A citizen or permanent resident alien of the United States; and
- At least 18 years of age, or, if emancipated, 16 years of age. However, an unemancipated minor may participate with his or her parent or guardian’s consent.

Miscellaneous

The bill creates the “Hope Florida Act” in ss. 23.41-23.45, F.S.

The bill defines the terms:

- “Hope Florida Partner Network” as a group of entities, including state agencies, public-private partnerships, and nonprofit, private-sector, and faith-based organizations that provides goods or services directly support Hope Florida participants.
- “Hope Line” as a toll-free hotline for Hope Florida inquiries and referrals for individuals and families in need of services.
- “Office” as the Hope Florida Office within the Executive Office of the Governor.
- “Participant” as an individual who voluntarily participates in Hope Florida.
- “Participating state agency” as a state agency participating in Hope Florida at the direction of the EOG.

The bill takes effect upon becoming a law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

Not applicable. The bill does not require counties or municipalities to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds, reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenue in the aggregate, nor reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

This bill is linked to SB 1146, which provides a public records exemption for the personal identifying information of a participant in the Hope Florida program.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None identified.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None identified.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None identified.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The Hope Florida program may make it easier for Floridians in need to become aware of services that could assist them.

C. Government Sector Impact:

An agency is required to use its existing resources, to the extent possible, to implement the bill. The Office may require additional funding to support its duties. However, it appears that this office is currently operating and staffed with personnel, so no new positions or appropriated funds are provided in this bill.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates sections 23.41, 23.42, 23.43, 23.44, and 23.45 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Governmental Oversight and Accountability on April 1, 2025:

- Moves the program to chapter 23, regarding “miscellaneous executive functions” and provides a title for the act, the “Hope Florida Act;”
- Adds additional defined terms; and
- Provides a more narrow list of the state agencies that shall participate in the program at the direction of the Executive Office of the Governor.

B. Amendments:

None.