# COMMITTEE/SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION ADOPTED \_\_\_\_ (Y/N) ADOPTED AS AMENDED \_\_\_\_ (Y/N) ADOPTED W/O OBJECTION \_\_\_\_ (Y/N) FAILED TO ADOPT \_\_\_\_ (Y/N) WITHDRAWN \_\_\_\_ (Y/N) OTHER

Committee/Subcommittee hearing bill: Commerce Committee Representative Koster offered the following:

#### Amendment

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Remove everything after the enacting clause and insert:

Section 1. Part I of chapter 542, Florida Statutes, consisting of ss. 542.15-542.36, Florida Statutes, is created and entitled the "Florida Antitrust Act of 1980."

Section 2. Part II of chapter 542, Florida Statutes, consisting of ss. 542.41-542.45, Florida Statutes, is created and entitled the "Florida Contracts Honoring Opportunity, Investment, Confidentiality, and Economic Growth (CHOICE) Act."

542.41 Short title.—This part may be cited as the "Florida Contracts Honoring Opportunity, Investment, Confidentiality, and Economic Growth (CHOICE) Act."

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542.42 Legislative findings.—The Legislature finds that a
proper and legitimate state interest is served by enforcing
strong legal protections in contracts between employers and
contracted personnel which encourage optimal levels of
information sharing and training and development. The
Legislature further finds that alternative means of protecting
confidential information and client relationships, such as
nondisclosure agreements, fixed-duration term contracts, and
nonsolicitation clauses in employment contracts, are inadequate
to protect against the significant global risks faced by
companies in this state. The Legislature further finds that
predictability in the enforcement of contracts described in this
part encourages investment in this state. Therefore, the
Legislature determines and declares that this part fulfills an
<pre>important state interest.</pre>

- 542.43 Definitions.—For the purposes of this part, the term:
- (1) "Annual mean wage of employees in Florida" or "annual mean wage" means the most recent annual mean wage as calculated by the United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, or its successor calculation, for all occupations in this state.
- (2) "Benefit" means access to health insurance, life insurance, or disability insurance that is the same as or similar to the insurance that a covered employee had access to

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and at the same cost to that employee during the month before the commencement of his or her notice period.

- (3) "Covered employee" means an employee or individual contractor who earns or is reasonably expected to earn a salary greater than twice the annual mean wage. The term does not include a person classified as a health care practitioner as defined in s. 456.001(4).
- (4) "Covered employer" means an entity or individual who employs or engages a covered employee.
- (5) "Covered garden leave agreement" means a written agreement, or part of a written agreement, between a covered employee and covered employer in which:
- (a) The covered employee and covered employer agree to up to, but no more than, 4 years of advance, express notice before terminating the employment or contractor relationship;
- (b) The covered employee agrees not to resign before the end of such notice period; and
- (c) The covered employer agrees to retain the covered employee for the duration of such notice period and to continue paying the covered employee the same salary and providing the same benefits that the covered employee received from the covered employer in the last month before the commencement of the notice period. The covered employer is not obligated to provide discretionary incentive compensation or benefits or have the covered employee continue performing any work during the

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- (6) "Covered noncompete agreement" means a written agreement, or a portion of a written agreement, between a covered employee and a covered employer in which, for a period not to exceed 4 years and within the geographic area defined in the agreement, the covered employee agrees not to assume a role with or for another business, entity, or individual:
- (a) In which the covered employee would provide services similar to the services provided to the covered employer during the 3 years preceding the noncompete period; or
- (b) In which it is reasonably likely the covered employee would use the confidential information or customer relationships of the covered employer.
- (7) "Noncompete period" means the time from the covered employee's termination of employment through the end of the agreed-upon postemployment period of noncompetition as set forth in the covered noncompete agreement.
- (8) "Notice period" means the date from the covered employee's or covered employer's written notice of intent to terminate the covered employee's employment through the date of termination as set forth in a covered garden leave agreement.
- (9) "Primary place of work" means the location where the covered employee spends more work time than any other single workplace.
- (10) "Salary" means the base compensation, calculated on 963783 h1219-strike.docx

employee, including a base wage, a salary, a professional fee,
or other compensation for personal services, and the fair market
value of any benefit other than cash. Salary does not include
health care benefits, severance pay, retirement benefits,
expense reimbursement, distribution of earnings and profits not
included as compensation for personal services, discretionary
incentives or awards, or anticipated but indeterminable
compensation, including tips, bonuses, or commissions.

- 542.44 Covered garden leave agreement.-
- (1) APPLICABILITY.—This section applies to:
- (a) A covered garden leave agreement with a covered employee who maintains a primary place of work in this state, regardless of any applicable choice of law provisions; or
- (b) A covered garden leave agreement with a covered employer whose principal place of business is in this state and which agreement is expressly governed by the laws of this state.

If any provision of this section is in conflict with any other law, the provisions of this section shall govern.

(2) RESTRAINT OF TRADE.—A covered garden leave agreement does not violate public policy as a restraint of trade, as described in s. 542.18, or an attempt to monopolize trade or commerce in this state, as described in s. 542.19, and is fully enforceable according to its terms, provided that:

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117	(a) A covered employee was advised, in writing, of the
118	right to seek counsel prior to execution of the covered garden
119	leave agreement and was provided notice as described in
120	subsection (3);
121	(b) A covered employee acknowledges, in writing, receipt
122	of confidential information or customer relationships; and
123	(c) The covered garden leave agreement provides that:
124	1. After the first 90 days of the notice period, the
125	covered employee does not have to provide services to the
126	<pre>covered employer;</pre>
127	2. The covered employee may engage in nonwork activities
128	at any time, including during normal business hours, during the
129	remainder of the notice period;
130	3. The covered employee may, with the permission of the
131	covered employer, work for another employer while still employed
132	by the covered employer during the remainder of the notice
133	period; and
134	4. The garden leave agreement notice period may be reduced
135	during the notice period if the covered employer provides at
136	least 30 days' advance notice in writing to the covered
137	employee.
138	(3) NOTICE.—
139	(a) A covered employer must provide a proposed covered
140	garden leave agreement to:
141	1. A prospective covered employee at least 7 days before

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		an	offer	of	employment	expires;	or
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- 2. A current covered employee at least 7 days before the date that an offer to enter into a covered garden leave agreement expires.
- (b) A covered employer may, as provided for in the covered garden leave agreement, shorten the term of the notice period at any time during the notice period by providing at least 30 days' advance notice in writing to the covered employee.
- (4) OTHER AGREEMENTS.—This section does not affect or limit the enforceability of any other employment agreement or any other agreement.
  - (5) BREACH OF A COVERED GARDEN LEAVE AGREEMENT; REMEDIES.—
- (a) Upon application by a covered employer seeking enforcement of a covered garden leave agreement, a court must preliminarily enjoin a covered employee from providing services to any business, entity, or individual other than the covered employer during the notice period. The court may modify or dissolve the injunction only if the covered employee establishes by clear and convincing evidence, based on nonconfidential information, that:
- 1. The covered employee will not perform, during the notice period, any work similar to the services provided to the covered employer during the 3-year period preceding the commencement of the notice period, or use confidential information or customer relationships of the covered employer;

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167	or

- 2. The covered employer has failed to pay or provide the salary and benefits provided for in the covered garden leave agreement during the notice period and has had a reasonable opportunity to cure the failure.
- (b) Upon application by a covered employer seeking enforcement of a covered garden leave agreement, a court must preliminarily enjoin a business, an entity, or an individual from engaging a covered employee during the covered employee's notice period. The court may modify or dissolve the injunction only if the business, entity, or individual establishes by clear and convincing evidence, based on nonconfidential information, that:
- 1. The covered employee will not provide any services similar to the services provided to the covered employer during the 3-year period preceding the commencement of the notice period, or use confidential information or customer relationships of the covered employer; or
- 2. The business or individual seeking to employ or engage the covered employee is not engaged in, and is not planning or preparing to engage in, any business activity similar to that engaged in by the covered employer during the notice period.
- Any information filed with the court which the covered employer deems to be confidential must be filed under seal to protect

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confidentiality or avoid substantial injury. A court must
presume that an employee or individual contractor has access to
confidential information or customer relationships if the
employee or individual contractor acknowledges the access or
receipt of such access in writing.

- (c) The injunctive relief provided under this section is not an exclusive remedy, and a prevailing covered employer is entitled to recover all available monetary damages for all available claims.
- (d) In any action to enforce this section, the prevailing party is entitled to reasonable attorney fees and costs.
- (e) If the covered employee engages in gross misconduct against the covered employer, the covered employer may reduce the salary or benefits of the covered employee or take other appropriate action during the notice period, which reduction or other action may not be considered a breach of the covered garden leave agreement.
  - 542.45 Covered noncompete agreements.-
  - (1) APPLICABILITY.—This section applies to:
- (a) A covered noncompete agreement with a covered employee who maintains a primary place of work in this state, regardless of any applicable choice of law provisions; or
- (b) A covered noncompete agreement with a covered employer whose principal place of business is in this state and which agreement is expressly governed by the laws of this state.

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- In either case, if any provision of this section is in conflict with any other law, the provisions of this section govern.
- 220 (2) RESTRAINT OF TRADE.—A covered noncompete agreement
  221 does not violate public policy as a restraint of trade, as
  222 described in s. 542.18, or an attempt to monopolize trade or
  223 commerce in this state, as described in s. 542.19, and is fully
  224 enforceable according to its terms, provided that:
  - (a) A covered employee was advised, in writing, of the right to seek counsel prior to execution of the covered noncompete agreement and was provided notice as described in subsection (3);
  - (b) A covered employee acknowledges, in writing, that in the course of their employment they will receive confidential information or customer relationships; and
  - (c) A covered noncompete agreement provides that the noncompete period is reduced day-for-day by any nonworking portion of the notice period, pursuant to a covered garden leave agreement between the covered employee and the covered employer, if applicable.
  - (3) NOTICE.—A covered employer must provide a proposed covered noncompete agreement to:
  - (a) A prospective covered employee at least 7 days before an offer of employment expires; or
  - (b) A current covered employee at least 7 days before the 963783 h1219-strike.docx

242	date	that	an	offer	to	enter	into	а	covered	noncompete	agreement
243	expi	res.									

- (4) OTHER AGREEMENTS.—This section does not affect or limit the enforceability of any other employment agreement or any other agreement.
  - (5) BREACH OF COVERED NONCOMPETE AGREEMENT; REMEDIES.-
- (a) Upon application by a covered employer seeking enforcement of a covered noncompete agreement, a court must preliminarily enjoin a covered employee from providing services to any business, entity, or individual other than the covered employer during the noncompete period. The court may modify or dissolve the injunction only if the covered employee establishes by clear and convincing evidence, based on nonconfidential information, that:
- 1. The covered employee will not perform, during the noncompete period, any work similar to the services provided to the covered employer during the 3-year period preceding the commencement of the noncompete period, or use confidential information or customer relationships of the covered employer;
- 2. The covered employer has failed to pay or provide the consideration provided for in the covered noncompete agreement and has had a reasonable opportunity to cure the failure; or
- 3. The business or individual seeking to employ or engage the covered employee is not engaged in, and is not planning or preparing to engage in during the noncompete period business

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activity similar to that engaged in by the covered employer in the geographic area specified in the noncompete agreement.

- (b) Upon application by a covered employer seeking enforcement of a covered noncompete agreement, a court must preliminarily enjoin a business, an entity, or an individual from engaging a covered employee during the covered employee's noncompete period. The court may modify or dissolve the injunction only if the business, entity, or individual establishes by clear and convincing evidence, based on nonconfidential information, that:
- 1. The covered employee will not provide any services similar to the services provided to the covered employer during the 3-year period preceding the commencement of the noncompete period, or use confidential information or customer relationships of the covered employer; or
- 2. The business or individual seeking to employ or engage the covered employee is not engaged in, and is not planning or preparing to engage in during the noncompete period business activity similar to that engaged in by the covered employer in the geographic area specified in the noncompete agreement.

Any information filed with the court which the covered employer deems to be confidential must be filed under seal to protect confidentiality or avoid substantial injury. A court must presume that an employee or individual contractor has access to

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292	confidential information or customer relationships if the
293	employee or individual contractor acknowledges the access or
294	receipt of such access in writing.
295	(c) The injunctive relief provided in this section is not
296	an exclusive remedy, and a prevailing covered employer is
297	entitled to recover all available monetary damages for all
298	available claims.
299	(d) In any action to enforce this section, the prevailing
300	party is entitled to reasonable attorney fees and costs.
301	(e) If the covered employee engages in gross misconduct
302	against the covered employer, the covered employer may reduce
303	the salary or benefits of the covered employee or take other
304	appropriate action during the noncompete period, which reduction
305	or other action may not be considered a breach of the covered
306	noncompete agreement.
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308	Any action regarding a restrictive covenant that does not meet
309	the definition of a covered garden leave agreement or a covered
310	noncompete agreement as provided in this part is governed by s.
311	<u>542.335.</u>
312	Section 3. Section 542.15, Florida Statutes, is amended to
313	read:
314	542.15 Short title.—This part act shall be known and may
315	be cited as the "Florida Antitrust Act of 1980."

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Section 4. Section 542.16, Florida Statutes, is amended to

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542.16 Purpose.—The Legislature declares it to be the purpose of this <u>part</u> act to complement the body of federal law prohibiting restraints of trade or commerce in order to foster effective competition. It is the intent of the Legislature that this <u>part</u> act be liberally construed to accomplish its beneficial purpose.

#### Section 5. Section 542.17, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

- 542.17 Definitions.—Unless a different meaning is clearly indicated by the context, for the purposes of this <u>part</u> <del>chapter</del>, the terms defined in this section have the following meanings ascribed to them:
- (1) "Commodity" means any goods, merchandise, wares, produce, chose in action, land, article of commerce, or other tangible or intangible property, real, personal, or mixed, for use, consumption, production, enjoyment, or resale.
- (2) "Service" means any kind of activity performed in whole or in part for economic benefit.
- (3) "Person" means any individual, corporation, firm, partnership, limited partnership, incorporated or unincorporated association, professional association, or other legal, commercial, or governmental entity, including the State of Florida, its departments, agencies, political subdivisions, and units of government.

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	(4)	"Trade	or	comme	rce"	means	any	есо	nomic	activity	of	any
type	whats	soever	invo	olving	any	commod	dity	or	servic	e whatso	evei	c.

- (5) "Document" means any stored or retained data or information in whatever form.
- (6) "Attorney General" includes not only the Attorney General of Florida but also any designee of the Attorney General or any assistant attorney general or special assistant attorney general.
- (7) "State attorney" includes not only the state attorneys of Florida but also any designee of a state attorney or any assistant state attorney or special assistant state attorney.
- (8) "Local government" means a municipality, county, school district, or any other general-function or special-function governmental unit established by the laws of the state.

## Section 6. Section 542.20, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.20 Exemptions.—Any activity or conduct exempt under Florida statutory or common law or exempt from the provisions of the antitrust laws of the United States is exempt from the provisions of this part chapter.

## Section 7. Subsection (1) of section 542.22, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.22 Suits for damages.-

(1) Any person who shall be injured in her or his business or property by reason of any violation of s. 542.18 or s. 542.19

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may sue therefor in the circuit courts of this state and shall recover threefold the damages by her or him sustained, and the cost of suit, including a reasonable attorney's fee. The court shall award a reasonable attorney's fee to a defendant prevailing in any action under this <u>part chapter</u> for damages or equitable relief in which the court finds there was a complete absence of a justiciable issue of either law or fact raised by the plaintiff.

#### Section 8. Section 542.23, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.23 Equitable remedies.—In addition to other remedies provided by this <u>part chapter</u>, any person shall be entitled to sue for and have injunctive or other equitable relief in the circuit courts of this state against threatened loss or damage by a violation of this <u>part chapter</u>. In any action under this section in which the plaintiff substantially prevails, the court shall award the cost of suit, including a reasonable attorney's fee, to the plaintiff.

# Section 9. Subsection (4) of section 542.235, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

- 542.235 Limitations of actions and penalties against local governments and their officials and employees.—
- (4) No criminal action shall be maintained pursuant to s. 542.21(2), and no civil penalties, damages, interest on damages, costs, or attorneys' fees shall be recovered pursuant to s.

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542.21(1) or s. 542.22, against any local government official or employee for official conduct within the scope of her or his lawful authority, unless the official or employee has violated the provisions of this <u>part chapter</u> for the purpose of deriving personal financial or professional gain or for the professional or financial gain of her or his immediate family or of any principal by whom the official is retained.

#### Section 10. Section 542.24, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.24 Consent decrees and settlement agreements.—In a civil action maintained under this <u>part</u> chapter by the Attorney General or a state attorney, any party to such action may petition the court for entry of a consent decree or for approval of a settlement agreement. The proposed decree or agreement shall set out the alleged violations, the future obligations of the parties, the damages or other relief agreed upon, and the reasons for entering into the consent decree or settlement agreement.

#### Section 11. Section 542.25, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.25 Judgment in favor of state as prima facie evidence.—A final judgment or decree entered in any civil or criminal proceeding brought by the Attorney General or a state attorney under s. 542.21 or s. 542.23 to the effect that a defendant has violated s. 542.18 or s. 542.19, or entered in any

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civil or criminal proceeding brought by the United States
Department of Justice under comparable federal laws, shall be
prima facie evidence against such defendant in any civil action
or proceeding under this part chapter brought by any other
person against such defendant as to all matters with respect to
which such judgment or decree would be an estoppel as between
the parties thereto; however, this section does not apply to a
consent judgment or decree entered before any testimony has been
taken. Nothing contained in this section shall be construed to
impose any limitation on the application of collateral estoppel.

#### Section 12. Subsection (2) of section 542.26, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.26 Limitation of actions.-

(2) Whenever any civil or criminal proceeding is instituted by the Attorney General or a state attorney to prevent, restrain, or punish any violation of this part chapter, the running of the statute of limitations, with respect to every private right of action arising under this part chapter and based in whole or in part on any matter complained of in said proceeding, shall be suspended during the pendency thereof and for 1 year thereafter. Whenever the running of the statute of limitations in respect of a cause of action arising under s. 542.22(1) is suspended hereunder, any action to enforce such cause of action shall be forever barred unless commenced either within the period of suspension or within the period of

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442 limitation.

#### Section 13. Section 542.27, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.27 Enforcement authority.-

- (1) The Attorney General, or a state attorney with written permission from the Attorney General, acting jointly or independently, may commence and try all criminal prosecutions under this part chapter. Criminal prosecutions under this part chapter shall be commenced by indictment. With respect to commencement and trial of such prosecutions, the Attorney General or a state attorney shall have all the powers and duties vested by law with respect to criminal prosecutions generally. Incident to any investigation commenced under this part chapter, the Attorney General may participate in and appear before a grand jury in assistance of any state attorney, irrespective of the provisions of chapter 905.
- (2) The Attorney General is authorized to institute or intervene in civil proceedings seeking the full range of relief afforded by this <u>part</u> chapter or by federal laws pertaining to antitrust or restraints of trade on behalf of the state, its departments, agencies, and units of government. In addition, the Attorney General, as chief state legal officer, may institute any action authorized under this <u>part</u> chapter, federal laws pertaining to antitrust or restraints of trade, or similar laws of other states on behalf of natural persons in the state.

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(3) Whenever the Attorney General, by her or his own inquiry or as a result of a complaint, suspects that a violation of this <u>part</u> chapter or federal laws pertaining to restraints of trade is imminent, occurring, or has occurred, the Attorney General may investigate such suspected violation.

Section 14. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2), paragraph (b) of subsection (3), and subsections (5) and (13) of section 542.28, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

542.28 Civil investigative demand.-

- (2) The demand shall:
- (b) State the nature of the conduct which constitutes the violation of this <u>part</u> <del>chapter</del> or of the federal antitrust laws and which is alleged to have occurred or to be imminent.
- (3) No such demand shall require the production of any documentary material, the submission of any answers to written interrogatories, or the giving of any oral testimony if such material, answers, or testimony would be protected from disclosure under:
- (b) The standards applicable to a discovery request under the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, to the extent that the application of such standards to any such demand is appropriate and consistent with the provisions and purposes of this <u>part</u> chapter.
- (5) Within 30 days after the service of an investigative demand upon any person or at any time before the return date

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specified therein, whichever period is longer, the person served
may file in the circuit court in and for the county in which the
person resides or transacts business, and serve upon the
Attorney General or state attorney, a petition for an order of
the court modifying or setting aside the demand. The time
allowed for compliance in whole or in part with the demand as
deemed proper and ordered by the court shall not run while the
petition is pending before the court. The petition shall specify
each ground upon which the petitioner relies in seeking relief
and may be based upon the failure of the demand to comply with
the provisions of this <u>part</u> <del>chapter</del> or upon any constitutional
or other legal right or privilege of such person.

- (13) Nothing contained in this section shall impair the authority of the Attorney General or state attorney to:
  - (a) Institute a civil proceeding under s. 542.22;
- (b) Lay before a grand jury of this state evidence concerning a violation of this part <del>chapter;</del>
- (c) Invoke the power of a court to compel the production of evidence before a grand jury; or
- (d) File a civil complaint or criminal indictment alleging a violation of this part <del>chapter</del>.

#### Section 15. Section 542.29, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.29 Duty of public officers.—In any investigation and in any criminal or civil action commenced pursuant to this <u>part</u>

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chapter, it shall be the duty of all public officers and their deputies, assistants, clerks, subordinates, or employees to render and furnish to the Attorney General or a state attorney, when so requested, assistance and all information available in their official capacity.

#### Section 16. Section 542.30, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.30 Jurisdiction and venue.—Without regard to the amount in controversy, a suit or proceeding brought under this part chapter shall be brought in the circuit court in and for any county in which the cause of action arose; in which any defendant resides, is found, or has an agent; or in which any act in furtherance of the conduct prohibited by this part chapter occurred.

#### Section 17. Section 542.31, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.31 Action not barred as affecting or involving interstate or foreign commerce.—No action under this <u>part</u> chapter shall be barred on the grounds that the activity or conduct complained of in any way affects or involves interstate or foreign commerce. It is the intent of the Legislature to exercise its powers to the fullest extent consistent with the Constitutions of this state and the United States.

### Section 18. Section 542.32, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

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542.32 Rule of construction and coverage.—It is the intent
of the Legislature that, in construing this part chapter, due
consideration and great weight be given to the interpretations
of the federal courts relating to comparable federal antitrust
statutes. In particular, the failure to include in this <u>part</u>
<pre>chapter the substantive provisions of s. 3 of the Clayton Act,</pre>
15 U.S.C. s. 14, shall not be deemed in any way to limit the
scope of s. 542.18 or s. 542.19.

#### Section 19. Subsection (1) of section 542.33, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.33 Contracts in restraint of trade valid.-

(1) Notwithstanding other provisions of this <u>part</u> chapter to the contrary, each contract by which any person is restrained from exercising a lawful profession, trade, or business of any kind, as provided by subsections (2) and (3) hereof, is to that extent valid, and all other contracts in restraint of trade are void.

#### Section 20. Section 542.35, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.35 Remedies cumulative.—The remedies provided by this part act are cumulative of each other and of existing powers and remedies inherent in the courts.

## Section 21. Section 542.36, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

542.36 Continuing violations.—Violations commenced prior

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#### COMMITTEE/SUBCOMMITTEE AMENDMENT Bill No. CS/CS/HB 1219 (2025)

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to October 1, 1980, the effective date of this act and continuing after the effective date shall be actionable as provided in this part chapter. The fact that any conduct occurred prior to October 1, 1980, the effective date of this act shall not affect its relevance in proving that a violation of this part chapter has occurred or is occurring.

Section 22. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

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