

**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.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education

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BILL: SB 1470

INTRODUCER: Senator Burgess

SUBJECT: School Safety

DATE: March 21, 2025

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Brick</u>	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>ED</u>	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	<u>Gray</u>	<u>Elwell</u>	<u>AED</u>	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
3.	_____	_____	<u>FP</u>	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SB 1470 strengthens school safety measures, enhances behavioral threat management protocols, expands oversight of school security personnel, and clarifies campus security requirements. Specifically, the bill:

- Aligns the training and certification requirements for school security guards with those for school guardians and requires that all security guards be trained and approved by a sheriff.
- Expands participation in the school security guard program to private schools, ensuring they meet the same training and screening requirements as public schools.
- Enhances reporting requirements for school security guards and safe-school officers, requiring employment and disciplinary actions to be reported to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE).
- Mandates that security guards submit the results of the required psychological evaluation to the sheriff for review.
- Requires the Office of Safe Schools (OSS) to create and maintain a list of security exceptions for situations where schools cannot safely or reasonably comply with locked campus requirements.
- Clarifies that locked campus requirements apply only during school supervision hours, rather than whenever students are present.
- Expands the use of firearm detection canines by authorizing school districts, in addition to law enforcement agencies, to employ them for school security.
- Establishes a formal partnership between OSS and the Florida Association of School Safety Specialists (FS3) to develop training and certification programs for school safety personnel.

This bill does not have a fiscal impact to state revenues or expenditures. **See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.**

The bill takes effect July 1, 2025

## II. Present Situation:

### **Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel Guardian Program**

#### ***School Guardian Training***

Florida law requires sheriffs to assist district school boards, charter school governing boards, and private schools in exercising options for safe-school officers. Each sheriff must provide access to the Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel Guardian Program to aid in the prevention or abatement of active assailant incidents on school premises.

A sheriff who establishes a guardian program must consult with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) on programmatic guiding principles, practices, and resources, and is responsible for certifying school employees as school guardians if they meet statutory qualifications, including:

- Holding a license to carry a concealed weapon or concealed firearm.
- Completing a 144-hour training program, consisting of 12 hours of training to improve the school guardian's knowledge and skills necessary to respond to and de-escalate incidents on school premises and 132 total hours of comprehensive firearm safety and proficiency training conducted by Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission-certified instructors.
- Passing a psychological evaluation.
- Submitting to and passing an initial drug test and subsequent random drug tests.
- Successfully completing ongoing annual training, weapon inspection, and firearm qualification.<sup>1</sup>

A sheriff who conducts the training or waives training requirements must issue a school guardian certificate and maintain detailed records of training, inspections, and certifications.<sup>2</sup>

#### ***Permitless Carry and Guardian Training Eligibility***

A sheriff may only certify school employees as school guardians if they hold a concealed weapon or concealed firearm license under s. 790.06, F.S.<sup>3</sup> However, in 2023, Florida enacted permitless concealed carry under s. 790.01(1), F.S., allowing individuals to carry a concealed firearm without obtaining a license under s. 790.06, F.S.<sup>4</sup> Current law does not explicitly authorize sheriffs to provide guardian training to individuals who are legally permitted to carry under Chapter 790, F.S., without a license.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 30.15(1), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* authorizes a sheriff to waive the guardian training requirements for a person who meets specified statutory criminal justice training standards and law enforcement qualifications.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> Section 790.01(1), F.S.

## **Sheriff and School Guardian Reporting Requirements**

### ***Sheriff Reporting Responsibilities***

A sheriff who issues a school guardian certificate must report to FDLE the name, date of birth, and certification date of the school guardian within 30 days. Additionally, each sheriff must submit quarterly reports to FDLE detailing:

- Upcoming school guardian training schedules.
- Training dates, locations, and registration contacts.
- Class capacity for training programs.

The FDLE must publish and update these reports at least quarterly on its website.

Sheriffs who fail to comply with these reporting requirements are ineligible to receive reimbursement from the Department of Education (DOE) for school guardian training expenses. However, upon submission of the required reports, sheriffs regain eligibility.<sup>5</sup>

### ***School District, Charter School, and Private School Reporting Requirements***

By February 1 and September 1 of each school year, each school district, charter school, and private school must report to the FDLE:

- The name, date of birth, and appointment date of each school guardian.
- The date of separation for any school guardian no longer serving in that capacity.

Failure to comply prohibits the school from operating a school guardian program in the following school year unless missing information is submitted.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The FDLE Responsibilities and Enforcement***

The FDLE must maintain a statewide list of all school guardians. This list must include:

- The guardian's name, certification date, and appointment date.
- The name of the appointing school district, charter school, or private school.
- Any additional information regarding misconduct or firearm discharges, except those occurring during training.
- The date a guardian separated from their appointment, if applicable.<sup>7</sup>

The FDLE must remove from the list any school guardian whose training has expired.

By March 1 and October 1 of each school year, the FDLE must notify the Department of Education of any sheriff, school district, charter school, or private school that has failed to comply with these reporting requirements.

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<sup>5</sup> Section 30.15, F.S.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

The FDLE is authorized to adopt rules to implement these reporting requirements and may require additional identifying information as necessary to ensure accurate record-keeping of school guardians.<sup>8</sup>

Currently, 53 counties participate in the Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel Guardian Program.<sup>9</sup>

### **Behavioral Threat Management and School Safety Oversight**

Florida law establishes the Office of Safe Schools (OSS) within the DOE to serve as the central authority for school safety, overseeing training standards, best practices, and compliance measures.<sup>10</sup>

The OSS develops, administers, and ensures compliance with Florida's statewide behavioral threat management framework, which includes a standardized threat assessment process, a digital reporting portal, and oversight of school-based and district-level threat management teams.<sup>11</sup>

The OSS is also required to develop and implement a School Safety Specialist Training Program for school safety specialists, based on national and state best practices on school safety and security and must include active shooter training.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Behavioral Threat Management Operational Process***

The OSS is responsible for developing a statewide behavioral threat management operational process to assist school districts, charter school governing boards, and individual schools in identifying, assessing, managing, and monitoring potential threats. This process includes:

- Establishing and defining the duties of threat management teams.
- Developing criteria for behavioral risk and threat assessment.
- Implementing intervention, school support, and community services procedures.
- Providing guidelines for law enforcement intervention and risk management procedures.
- Establishing monitoring mechanisms for ongoing threats and interventions.
- Requiring schools to use the Florida-specific behavioral threat assessment instrument to coordinate interventions for students who may pose a threat.

Each school district, charter school governing board, and individual school must use the statewide behavioral threat management operational process upon its availability.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, & Coach Scott Beigel Guardian Program*, <https://www.fldoe.org/safe-schools/guardian-program.stml> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

<sup>10</sup> Section 1001.212, F.S.

<sup>11</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Florida Harm Prevention and Threat Management Manual, Rule 6A-1.0019, F.A.C.*, available at <https://flrules.org/gateway/ruleno.asp?id=6A-1.0019>.

<sup>12</sup> Section 1001.212(4), F.S.

<sup>13</sup> Section 1001.212(11)(a), F.S.

### ***Florida-Specific Behavioral Threat Assessment Instrument***

The OSS is required to develop the Florida-specific behavioral threat assessment instrument, which school districts, charter schools, and governing boards must use to evaluate student threats and coordinate intervention services. The assessment instrument:

- Includes a standardized threat assessment report containing documentation of evaluations, interventions, and ongoing monitoring.
- Establishes procedures for assessing student, family, school, and social dynamics when determining threat levels.
- Outlines requirements for school responses, law enforcement engagement, and mental health provider coordination in response to threats.
- Is integrated into the statewide digital threat management portal, where records are retained in accordance with State Board of Education (SBE) rules.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Threat Management Portal and Data Access Restrictions***

The OSS is responsible for developing, maintaining, and administering a statewide digital threat management portal to support behavioral threat assessment and intervention efforts. The portal digitizes the Florida-specific behavioral threat assessment instrument and is used by school districts, charter schools, and school governing boards for reporting, documentation, and coordination of student threat assessments.<sup>15</sup>

Florida law strictly regulates access to records maintained in the portal:

- The OSS and its system administrators may not access a threat assessment report, its corresponding documentation, or any other information stored in the portal.
- School districts and charter school governing boards may not access education records within the portal unless authorized by SBE rule.
- Parents may access their own child's education records in the portal but are not permitted direct access to the portal itself.
- The portal must have security controls that alert system administrators to any unauthorized access attempts.

Florida law further requires:

- Education records stored in the portal to be retained, maintained, and transferred only in compliance with SBE rule.
- A quarterly portal access review audit process to be developed and implemented by the OSS.
- Annual role-based training for authorized users of the portal to be provided by the OSS beginning August 1, 2025.
- Any unauthorized access, use, or release of an education record in the portal to be punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Section 1001.212(11)(b), F.S.

<sup>15</sup> Section 1001.212(11)(c), F.S.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

## **Federal and State Privacy Protections for Student Records**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, is the primary federal law governing access to student education records. FERPA prohibits the disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII) from student education records without prior written parental consent, unless an exception applies.<sup>17</sup>

FERPA applies to any educational institution receiving federal funds, including Florida's public schools, charter schools, and state education agencies.<sup>18</sup> Education records include records that are directly related to a student and maintained by an educational agency or institution.<sup>19</sup>

Florida law further aligns with FERPA by stating that education records may not be disclosed without consent except as authorized by FERPA or other federal regulations.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Exceptions to FERPA's General Prohibition on Disclosure***

#### State Program Audits and Compliance Monitoring

FERPA authorizes the disclosure of student records without parental consent to state and local educational authorities for the purpose of audits, program evaluations, and compliance monitoring related to state-supported education programs.<sup>21</sup> This exception could permit the OSS to access threat assessment records if the access is necessary to monitor compliance with state safety policies.

#### Student Safety and Health Exceptions

FERPA's health or safety emergency exception allows schools to disclose student education records without parental consent when necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.<sup>22</sup> Disclosure under this provision must be limited to appropriate parties, such as law enforcement, school officials, or state safety agencies, who require the information to address an imminent threat.<sup>23</sup>

This exception may justify the OSS's access to student threat assessment records if the access is necessary to protect student safety and prevent school violence. However, disclosures under the health or safety emergency exception must be limited to the duration of the emergency, and routine access to records would not be justified under this exception alone.<sup>24</sup>

### **Florida Association of School Safety Specialists**

The Florida Association of School Safety Specialists (FS3) is a statewide organization formed in 2023 to support continuous improvement in school safety and security. FS3 brings together

<sup>17</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 C.F.R. § 99.30.

<sup>18</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 99.1.

<sup>19</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 99.3.

<sup>20</sup> Section 1002.221, F.S.

<sup>21</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 C.F.R. § 99.31.

<sup>22</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 C.F.R. § 99.36.

<sup>23</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 99.36(b).

<sup>24</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 99.36(c).

school safety specialists, mental health coordinators, and district threat management coordinators who are responsible for implementing and overseeing school security policies, emergency preparedness, and threat assessment procedures.<sup>25</sup>

FS3 provides resources, training, and professional development to professionals tasked with protecting students and staff from threats, emergencies, and other critical incidents. FS3 collaborates with school districts, law enforcement agencies, and state policymakers to promote best practices in school safety and threat management.<sup>26</sup>

### **District School Board Responsibilities for School Safety**

Each district school board is required to provide for the control, safety, and welfare of students on school campuses, including implementing security measures to prevent violence and unauthorized access. Each district school superintendent must establish policies and procedures for preventing violence on school grounds, including assessing and intervening with individuals who may pose a threat.<sup>27</sup>

Florida law also establishes specific locked campus requirements to regulate access to school buildings, classrooms, and campus gates. Each school district and charter school governing board must comply with statewide school safety requirements, which mandate:

- Locking all gates and access points that restrict ingress to or egress from a school campus when students are on campus, unless actively staffed, permitted under a shared-use agreement, or exempted by the school safety specialist based on other security measures.
- Keeping all school classroom doors and instructional spaces locked when occupied by students, except between class periods or when actively staffed at the door.
- Securing all campus access doors, gates, and entry points to school buildings at all times to prevent unauthorized ingress, unless a person is actively entering or exiting, or an exemption has been documented by the school safety specialist.
- Clearly marking the safest areas for sheltering in place within each classroom and instructional space, with students being notified of these locations within the first 10 days of the school year.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Enforcement and Compliance***

Each school district and charter school must document compliance with these requirements through the Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool (FSSAT),<sup>29</sup> maintained by the OSS. The OSS is authorized to conduct compliance visits to verify whether school safety specialists have appropriately documented exemptions or security adjustments.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Florida Association of School Safety Specialists (FS3), *About Us* (2023), <https://www.fl3.org/about> (last visited Mar. 4, 2025).

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> Section 1006.07, F.S.

<sup>28</sup> Section 1006.07(6), F.S.

<sup>29</sup> Section 1006.1493, F.S. The Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool (FSSAT) is a statewide risk assessment and compliance monitoring system used by school districts and charter schools to evaluate school safety, identify security vulnerabilities, and document compliance with statutory safety requirements.

<sup>30</sup> Section 1001.212(14), F.S.

## Safe-School Officer Requirements

Florida law requires each public school, including charter schools, to have at least one safe-school officer assigned to its facility. School districts may partner with law enforcement agencies or private security agencies to meet this requirement through any combination of the following safe-school officer options:

- School resource officers (sworn law enforcement officers).
- School safety officers (sworn law enforcement officers who are employed by the school district).
- School guardians (trained school personnel or volunteers who complete guardian program training).
- School security guards (contracted private security personnel meeting state training and screening requirements).<sup>31</sup>

### *School Security Guards and Required Screening*

A school district or charter school governing board may contract with a licensed security agency to employ a school security guard to fulfill the safe-school officer requirement. To serve in this role, an individual must:<sup>32</sup>

- Hold a valid Class “D” (unarmed security) and Class “G” (armed security) license under Chapter 493, F.S.<sup>33</sup>
- Complete 144 hours of required guardian program training.<sup>34</sup>
- Pass a psychological evaluation administered by a licensed psychologist, with the results submitted to the sheriff’s office, school district, or charter school governing board.
- Submit to and pass an initial drug test and subsequent random drug tests, following state drug-free workplace regulations and applicable school district policies.
- Complete ongoing annual training, weapon inspections, and firearm qualifications, providing documentation to the appropriate contracting entity.<sup>35</sup>

Additionally, contracts between a school district, charter school, or private security agency must specify who is responsible for training, inspection, and record maintenance related to school security guard qualifications.<sup>36</sup>

## Florida Safe Schools Canine Program

Florida law establishes the Florida Safe Schools Canine Program under the OSS within the DOE to support the use of firearm detection canines in K-12 schools. The program was created to:

- Encourage partnerships between schools, businesses, and law enforcement agencies to fund the acquisition, training, and care of firearm detection canines.

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<sup>31</sup> Section 1006.12, F.S.

<sup>32</sup> Section 1006.12(4), F.S.

<sup>33</sup> Section 493.6101(18), F.S.

<sup>34</sup> Section 30.15(1), F.S.

<sup>35</sup> Section 1006.12, F.S.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

- Enhance school safety by increasing the presence of firearm detection canines in schools, reinforcing public confidence in law enforcement's role in school security.<sup>37</sup>

A firearm detection canine is defined as any canine that is owned or the service of which is employed by a law enforcement agency for use in K-12 schools for the primary purpose of detecting firearms and ammunition.<sup>38</sup> These canines must be trained to interact with children and may also be trained as animal-assisted therapy canines.<sup>39</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill strengthens school safety measures, enhances behavioral threat management protocols, expands oversight of school security personnel, and clarifies campus security requirements.

#### **Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel Guardian Program**

The bill amends s. 30.15, F.S., to modify training, certification, and oversight requirements for school guardians and school security guards. Specifically, the bill:

- Aligns the training and certification requirements for school security guards with those for school guardians, establishing consistent standards across both roles.
- Requires a sheriff to establish a school guardian program if a school board, charter school, or private school contracts for the use of school security guards.
- Authorizes private schools to contract for school security guards and allows a sheriff to establish a guardian program to provide training for private school security guards.
- Clarifies that security agencies are responsible for all training and screening-related costs for school security guards, which may not be waived by sheriffs, preventing the use of state funds for private security agency expenses.
- Requires sheriffs to maintain documentation of training, certification, weapon inspection, and firearm qualification records for each certified school security guard.
- Specifies that a school security guard who has completed the guardian training program is not required to complete another guardian training program unless there has been at least a one-year break in appointment as a school guardian or employment as a school security guard.
- Authorizes a sheriff to provide guardian training to individuals who are legally permitted to possess or carry a concealed firearm under Florida law, aligning with the state's permitless carry provisions.
- Requires a sheriff to provide guardian training only to individuals who have already satisfied all background screening, psychological evaluation, and drug test requirements.
- Requires a sheriff to issue a school security guard certificate to individuals who meet all statutory screening, training, and experience requirements and to maintain documentation of weapon and equipment inspections, training, certification, and qualification records for each certified school security guard.

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<sup>37</sup> Section 1006.121(1), F.S.

<sup>38</sup> Section 1006.121(2), F.S.

<sup>39</sup> Section 1006.121(3), F.S.

### **Sheriff and School Guardian Reporting Requirements**

To streamline reporting processes and enhance oversight, the bill aligns school security guard reporting requirements with those for school guardians. Specifically, the bill:

- Aligns school security guard reporting and recordkeeping requirements with those for school guardians and mandates that security agencies report to the FDLE the date a school security guard was last employed in a school.
- Specifies that if no guardian or security guard training sessions are scheduled, the sheriff is not required to submit a quarterly training report to the FDLE.
- Removes outdated reporting requirements for sheriffs, school districts, charter schools, and private schools regarding school guardian certifications and appointments.

### **Behavioral Threat Management and School Safety Oversight**

The bill amends s. 1001.212, F.S., to modify the duties of the OSS related to threat assessment processes and security exceptions. Specifically, the bill:

- Clarifies that the OSS is responsible for maintaining the statewide behavioral threat management operational process and the Florida-specific behavioral threat assessment instrument.
- Authorizes the State Board of Education to establish in rule when the OSS or its system administrators may access a threat assessment report, related documentation, or any other information required by the Florida-specific behavioral threat assessment instrument maintained in the portal. Access must comply with state and federal privacy laws.
- Requires the OSS to create and maintain a list of exceptions, with examples, for situations where a school cannot safely or reasonably comply with locked door, gate, or access point requirements.

### **Florida Association of School Safety Specialists**

Additionally, the bill requires the OSS, in partnership with FS3, to develop a framework for school safety training and certification. The bill requires the OSS to:

- Recommend a structure for initial and advanced training and certification for school safety specialists.
- Develop additional professional learning opportunities for school safety personnel.
- Identify and analyze research and best practices in school safety.
- Administer school safety grants to improve school security efforts.
- Provide policy recommendations to improve school safety requirements.

The OSS must submit its recommendations to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by September 1, 2025.

### **District School Board Responsibilities for School Safety**

The bill amends s. 1006.07, F.S., to modify locked campus and building requirements to apply only during school supervision hours rather than whenever students are present. It also clarifies when certain access points may remain unlocked. Specifically, the bill:

- Authorizes an exception to the requirement that campus areas and school buildings remain locked, permitting an access point to be unlocked if another closed and locked gate or access point separates it from areas occupied by students for campus areas, or if another closed and locked door, gate, or access point prevents access to a school building.
- Defines "school supervision hours" as the hours of the school day plus a reasonable time immediately before and after school when student supervision is available, as determined by school district policy.
- Clarifies that the exception allowing an access point to remain unlocked when it is actively staffed applies not only to campus entry points but also to school buildings when staffed by school personnel.
- Allows school campus gates, classroom doors, and other access points to remain unlocked if the school safety specialist, or their designee, documents in the Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool portal that the access point qualifies for an exception recognized by the OSS. The bill authorizes the OSS to conduct compliance visits to review documented exceptions.

### **Safe-School Officer Requirements**

The bill amends s. 1006.12, F.S., to expand participation in the school security guard program and increase oversight of security guard training, certification, and reporting requirements. Specifically, the bill:

- Authorizes private schools to contract with security agencies for school security guards.
- Requires private schools contracting for security guards to adhere to all training and screening requirements applicable to public schools.
- Requires that all school security guards be trained by a sheriff pursuant to the training requirements of the Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel Guardian Program.
- Mandates that security guards be approved by the sheriff of each county in which the school security guard will be assigned to a school before being assigned to a school in that county.
- Requires that school security guards submit the results of the required psychological evaluation to the sheriff for review.
- Mandates that all ongoing training, weapon inspections, and firearm qualifications for school security guards be conducted by a sheriff or through a sheriff-approved program.

The bill adds private school administrators to the notification requirements concerning safe-school officer misconduct and firearm discharges, supporting uniform reporting across all schools utilizing safe-school officers. The bill requires the OSS to provide the FDLE with any information it receives from a district school superintendent or charter school administrator, private school administrator, or respective designee concerning a school security guard who:

- Is dismissed for misconduct or is otherwise disciplined.
- Discharges his or her firearm in the exercise of the school security guard's duties, other than for training purposes.

**Florida Safe Schools Canine Program**

The bill expands the definition of the term "firearm detection canine" in s. 1006.121(2), F.S., to authorize school districts, rather than just law enforcement agencies, to employ firearm detection canines and specify that only sworn law enforcement officers may use the canines in K-12 schools.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:****A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

This bill does not have a fiscal impact on state expenditures.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 30.15, 1001.212, 1006.07, 1006.12, and 1006.121.

**IX. Additional Information:**

**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

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

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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