

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 Rules

BILL: CS/SB 540

INTRODUCER: Education Pre-K - 12 Committee; Senators Collins and Burgess

SUBJECT: Disability History and Awareness Instruction

DATE: April 15, 2025

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Brick</u>	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>ED</u>	Fav/CS
2.	<u>Brick</u>	<u>Yeatman</u>	<u>RC</u>	Pre-meeting

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 540 designates the act as the "Evin B. Hartsell Act" and amends s. 1003.4205, F.S., relating to disability history and awareness instruction.

The bill directs the Department of Education (DOE) to develop statewide curricula for disability history and awareness for the following grade ranges:

- Kindergarten through grade 3 – an introduction to physical disabilities and bullying;
- Grades 4 through 6 – autism spectrum disorder;
- Grades 7 through 9 – hearing impairments;
- Grades 10 through 12 – learning styles and intellectual disabilities.

The bill authorizes the DOE to consult with the Evin B. Hartsell Foundation to assist in developing the required curricula.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.

II. Present Situation:

Disability History and Awareness Instruction

Each district school board may provide disability history and awareness instruction in all K-12 public schools in the district during the first two weeks in October each year. District school

boards that provide this instruction must designate these two weeks as “Disability History and Awareness Weeks.”¹

Content and Scope of Instruction

During this two-week period, students may be provided intensive instruction to expand their knowledge, understanding, and awareness of individuals with disabilities, the history of disability, and the disability rights movement. Disability history may include the events and timelines of the development and evolution of services to, and the civil rights of, individuals with disabilities. Disability history may also include the contributions of specific individuals with disabilities, including the contributions of acknowledged national leaders.²

The instruction may be integrated into the existing school curriculum in ways including, but not limited to, supplementing lesson plans, holding school assemblies, or providing other school-related activities. The instruction may be delivered by qualified school personnel or by knowledgeable guest speakers, with a particular focus on including individuals with disabilities.³

Goals and Intended Outcomes

The goals of disability history and awareness instruction include:⁴

- Better treatment for individuals with disabilities, especially for youth in school, and increased attention to preventing the bullying or harassment of students with disabilities.
- Encouragement to individuals with disabilities to develop increased self-esteem, resulting in more individuals with disabilities gaining pride in being an individual with a disability, obtaining postsecondary education, entering the workforce, and contributing to their communities.
- Reaffirmation of the local, state, and federal commitment to the full inclusion in society of, and the equal opportunity for, all individuals with disabilities.

Evin B. Hartsell Foundation

The Evin B. Hartsell Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting disability awareness, education, and advocacy. The foundation's mission is to inspire the world to understand and appreciate the true value of people with disabilities, just like Evin did.⁵

The foundation offers educational initiatives aimed at increasing public understanding of disability history. The foundation also develops curriculum materials and educator training resources to support disability awareness instruction in schools.⁶

In collaboration with the University of South Florida, the foundation established the Evin B. Hartsell Endowed Memorial Scholarship, which supports students participating in the

¹ Section 1003.4205(1), F.S.

² Section 1003.4205(2)(a), F.S.

³ Section 1003.4205(2)(b), F.S.

⁴ Section 1003.4205(3), F.S.

⁵ Evin B. Hartsell Foundation, *About*, <https://evinbhartsell.com/about/> (last visited Mar. 19, 2025).

⁶ Evin B. Hartsell Foundation, *Education and Awareness*, <https://evinbhartsell.com/education-awareness/> (last visited Mar. 19, 2025).

Interdisciplinary Training Program of the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities. This scholarship prioritizes students pursuing degrees in social work, psychology, or counseling, with preference given to individuals with disabilities, U.S. military veterans, and students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher.⁷

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

CS/SB 540 designates the act as the "Evin B. Hartsell Act" and amends s. 1003.4205, F.S., relating to disability history and awareness instruction.

The bill directs the Department of Education (DOE) to develop statewide curricula for disability history and awareness for the following grade ranges:

- Kindergarten through grade 3 – an introduction to physical disabilities and bullying;
- Grades 4 through 6 – autism spectrum disorder;
- Grades 7 through 9 – hearing impairments;
- Grades 10 through 12 – learning styles and intellectual disabilities.

The bill authorizes the DOE to consult with the Evin B. Hartsell Foundation to assist in developing the required curricula.

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.

⁷ University of South Florida, *Evin B. Hartsell Foundation Gift Establishes Endowed Memorial Scholarship*, Dec. 14, 2021, <https://www.usf.edu/cbcs/news/2021/hartsell-gift.aspx> (last visited Mar. 19, 2025).

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

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 1003.4205 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 Education Pre-K -12 on March 31, 2025:

- Removes the bill's requirement that all K-12 public schools provide disability history and awareness instruction during a designated two-week period in October, and instead maintains current law, under which each district school board may choose whether to offer the instruction.
- Removes the requirement that district school boards implement grade-specific instructional content and instead directs the Department of Education to develop statewide curricula for four specified grade ranges.
- Specifies the content to be included in the Department-developed curricula by grade range as follows:
 - For kindergarten through grade 3, instruction must address physical disabilities and bullying;
 - For grades 4 through 6, instruction must address autism spectrum disorder;
 - For grades 7 through 9, instruction must address hearing impairments; and
 - For grades 10 through 12, instruction must address learning styles and intellectual disabilities.
- Authorizes the Department of Education to consult with the Evin B. Hartsell Foundation in developing the required curricula.

B. Amendments:

None.

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