

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to first responders; amending s.
3 445.08, F.S.; renaming the Florida Law Enforcement
4 Recruitment Bonus Payment Program as the Florida Law
5 Enforcement Officer and Firefighter Recruitment Bonus
6 Payment Program; revising and providing definitions;
7 including newly employed firefighters in the program;
8 requiring the Department of Commerce to consult with
9 the Division of State Fire Marshal to verify certain
10 information; requiring the division to define
11 firefighter misconduct by rule; revising the date the
12 program expires; amending s. 633.134, F.S.;
13 authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to appoint a
14 review panel to assist in reviewing certain grants;
15 providing for review panel membership; providing
16 duties and responsibilities of each review panel;
17 providing for general program support grants and
18 specific fire program grants; requiring the Chief
19 Financial Officer to review the panel's
20 recommendations and, beginning on a specified date,
21 include approved grant applicants in the Department of
22 Financial Services' legislative budget request;
23 requiring certain projects be funded until all
24 appropriated funds are depleted; requiring the
25 Division of State Fire Marshal to adopt certain rules;

26 creating s. 633.1424, F.S.; defining the terms "first
27 responder" and "public safety agency"; creating,
28 subject to appropriation, the Institute for
29 Posttraumatic Stress Disorder within the Department of
30 Financial Services for a specified purpose; providing
31 duties and responsibilities of the institute;
32 authorizing the institute to collaborate with other
33 entities to enhance program development and service
34 delivery; requiring the Division of State Fire Marshal
35 to adopt rules; providing an effective date.
36

37 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
38

39 **Section 1. Section 445.08, Florida Statutes, is amended to**
40 **read:**

41 445.08 Florida Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter
42 Recruitment Bonus Payment Program.—

43 (1) As used in ~~For the purposes of~~ this section, the term:

44 (a) "Break in service" means:

45 1. A period of time during which the person is employed
46 with a Florida criminal justice agency or fire service provider
47 but is not employed as a full-time law enforcement officer or
48 firefighter; or

49 2. A period of time during which the person is in between
50 employment as a full-time law enforcement officer or firefighter

51 for no longer than 15 days.

52
53 The time period for any break in service does not count toward
54 satisfying the 2-year full-time employment requirement of this
55 section.

56 (b) ~~(a)~~ "Commission" means the Criminal Justice Standards
57 and Training Commission within the Department of Law
58 Enforcement.

59 (c) ~~(b)~~ "Employing agency" has the same meaning as ~~provided~~
60 in s. 943.10(4).

61 (d) "Fire service provider" has the same meaning as in s.
62 633.102(13).

63 (e) "Firefighter" has the same meaning as in s.
64 633.102(9).

65 (f) ~~(e)~~ "Law enforcement officer" has the same meaning as
66 ~~provided~~ in s. 943.10(1).

67 (g) "Newly employed firefighter" means a person who gains
68 or is appointed to full-time employment as a certified
69 firefighter with a fire service provider on or after July 1,
70 2026, and who has never been previously employed as a
71 firefighter in this state.

72 (h) ~~(d)~~ "Newly employed officer" means a person who gains
73 or is appointed to full-time employment as a certified law
74 enforcement officer with a Florida criminal justice employing
75 agency on or after July 1, 2022, and who has never before been

76 employed as a law enforcement officer in this state.

77 ~~(i)-(e)~~ "Program" means the Florida Law Enforcement Officer
78 and Firefighter Recruitment Bonus Payment Program.

79 (2) (a) There is created within the department the Florida
80 Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter Recruitment Bonus
81 Payment Program to aid in the recruitment of law enforcement
82 officers and firefighters within the state. The purpose of the
83 program is to administer one-time bonus payments of up to \$5,000
84 to each newly employed officer and newly employed firefighter
85 within the state.

86 (b) Bonus payments provided to eligible newly employed
87 officers and newly employed firefighters are contingent upon
88 legislative appropriations and shall be prorated subject to the
89 amount appropriated for the program.

90 (3) Each bonus payment shall be adjusted to include 7.65
91 percent for the officer's or firefighter's share of Federal
92 Insurance Contribution Act tax on the payment.

93 (4) The department shall develop an annual plan for the
94 administration of the program and distribution of bonus
95 payments. Applicable employing agencies and fire service
96 providers shall assist the department with the collection of any
97 data necessary to determine bonus payment amounts and to
98 distribute the bonus payments, and shall otherwise provide the
99 department with any information or assistance needed to fulfill
100 the requirements of this section. At a minimum, the plan must

include:

(a) The method for determining the estimated number of newly employed officers and newly employed firefighters to gain or be appointed to full-time employment during the applicable fiscal year.

(b) The minimum eligibility requirements a newly employed officer and newly employed firefighter must meet to receive and retain a bonus payment, which must include:

1. Obtaining certification for employment or appointment as a law enforcement officer under ~~pursuant to~~ s. 943.1395 or as a firefighter under s. 633.408.

2. Gaining full-time employment with a Florida criminal justice agency or a fire service provider.

3. Maintaining full-time employment as a law enforcement officer with a Florida criminal justice agency or as a firefighter with a fire service provider for at least 2 years after ~~from~~ the date on which the officer or firefighter obtained certification. The required 2-year employment period may be satisfied by maintaining full-time employment at one or more employing agencies or fire service providers, but such period must not contain any break in service longer than 180 calendar days.

(c) The standards by which the department will determine under what circumstances a break in service is acceptable. A law enforcement officer or firefighter must provide documentation to

126 the department justifying a break in service. ~~For purposes of~~
127 ~~this section, the term "break in service" means a period of time~~
128 ~~during which the person is employed with a Florida criminal~~
129 ~~justice agency but is not employed as a full-time law~~
130 ~~enforcement officer or a period of time during which the person~~
131 ~~is in between employment as a full-time law enforcement officer~~
132 ~~for no longer than 15 days. The time period for any break in~~
133 ~~service does not count toward satisfying the 2-year full-time~~
134 ~~employment requirement of this section.~~

135 (d) The method that will be used to determine the bonus
136 payment amount to be distributed to each newly employed officer
137 and newly employed firefighter.

138 (e) The method that will be used to distribute bonus
139 payments to applicable employing agencies and fire service
140 providers for distribution to eligible officers and
141 firefighters. Such method should prioritize distributing bonus
142 payments to eligible officers and firefighters in the most
143 efficient and quickest manner possible.

144 (f) The estimated cost to the department associated with
145 developing and administering the program and distributing bonus
146 payment funds.

147 (g) The method by which an officer or a firefighter must
148 reimburse the state if he or she received a bonus payment under
149 the program, but failed to maintain continuous employment for
150 the required 2-year period. Reimbursement may ~~shall~~ not be

151 required if an officer or a firefighter is discharged by his or
152 her employing agency or fire service provider for a reason other
153 than misconduct as designated on the affidavit of separation
154 completed by the employing agency or fire service provider and
155 maintained by the commission.

156
157 The department may establish other criteria deemed necessary to
158 determine bonus payment eligibility and distribution.

159 (5) The department shall consult quarterly with the
160 commission and the Division of State Fire Marshal to verify the
161 certification of newly employed officers and newly employed
162 firefighters and affidavits of separation submitted to the
163 commission and Division of State Fire Marshal which detail
164 officer or firefighter misconduct. The Division of State Fire
165 Marshal shall define by rule firefighter misconduct.

166 (6) The department shall submit the plan to the Executive
167 Office of the Governor's Office of Policy and Budget, the chair
168 of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and the chair of the
169 House Appropriations Committee by October 1 of each year. The
170 department is authorized to submit budget amendments pursuant to
171 chapter 216 as necessary to release appropriated funds for
172 distribution to applicable employing agencies and fire service
173 providers under this program.

174 (7) The funding allocation for the bonus payments must be
175 used solely to comply with the requirements of this section, but

176 applicable collective bargaining units are not otherwise
177 precluded from wage negotiation.

178 (8) The department shall adopt rules to implement this
179 section.

180 (9) This section expires July 1, 2028 ~~2026~~.

181 **Section 2. Section 633.134, Florida Statutes, is amended**
182 **to read:**

183 633.134 Gifts and grants; grant review panel.—

184 (1) The division may accept for any of its purposes and
185 functions any donations of property and grants of money from any
186 governmental unit, public agency, institution, person, firm, or
187 corporation. Such moneys shall be deposited, disbursed, and
188 administered in a trust fund as provided by law.

189 (2) (a) The Chief Financial Officer may appoint a review
190 panel to assist in the grant review process. A review panel must
191 consist of five members from the fire service industry or other
192 professions that involve the specific industry or program for
193 which the panel has been appointed. Each member of a review
194 panel is appointed to a 1-year term.

195 (b) Each review panel must review and score grant
196 applications and recommend to the department which applicants
197 should be awarded a grant. Each panel must submit to the
198 department a list of eligible applicants by score.

199 (c) Each review panel must hold a forum for public comment
200 before recommending a grant application.

201 (d) Each review panel must review the lists of eligible
202 applicants for a grant and create two lists, one of which must
203 consist of recommendations for eligible applicants for general
204 program support grants and one of which must consist of
205 recommendations for eligible applicants for specific fire
206 project grants, and submit the lists to the Chief Financial
207 Officer.

208 (e) A general program support grant or a specific fire
209 program grant includes, but is not limited to, all of the
210 following:

211 1. Grants for the purchase, replacement, or maintenance of
212 operational equipment and resources, including, but not limited
213 to, fire apparatuses, personal protective equipment,
214 communication systems, rescue tools, and other essential
215 firefighting and emergency response equipment.

216 2. Grants pertaining to fixed capital outlay, grants and
217 aids, and grants and aids to local governments and nonstate
218 entities-fixed capital outlay, as those terms are defined in s.
219 216.011(1), and the construction or remodel of fire departments.

220 3. Grants to support state-coordinated outreach programs
221 such as mobile fire safety exhibits, educational tours, and
222 statewide fire awareness campaigns. An outreach program must
223 prioritize grant funds to Florida-based fire departments, safety
224 educators, and emergency personnel and promote best practices in
225 fire prevention, public safety, and emergency preparedness.

226 4. Grants or stipends for individual firefighters or fire
227 service instructors selected through a competitive process based
228 on merit, leadership, or innovation in fire safety. Grant funds
229 may support training, research, or professional exchange
230 opportunities that advance public safety practices in this
231 state.

232 5. Grants for programs or projects that advance the
233 mission of fire prevention and emergency response, including,
234 but not limited to, firefighter health and wellness initiatives,
235 emergency planning and coordination systems, public safety
236 communications upgrades, or community preparedness efforts. A
237 program or project must clearly demonstrate alignment with the
238 goals of this subsection and provide measurable public safety
239 outcomes.

240 6. Grants for programs or projects that advance the
241 mission of arson prevention, arson investigation, juvenile arson
242 prevention, arson intervention programs, and police canine
243 programs. Eligible recipients include entities that investigate
244 or prevent arson. As used in this sub-subparagraph, the term
245 "police canine" has the same meaning as in s. 401.254(1).

246 (f) The Chief Financial Officer shall review the review
247 panel's recommendations and, beginning January 1, 2027, submit a
248 list of approved applicants to be included in the department's
249 legislative budget request. Projects from the Chief Financial
250 Officer's approved list must be funded by score until all

251 appropriated funds are depleted.

252 (g) The division shall adopt rules to implement and
253 administer this subsection, including rules establishing:

254 1. Eligibility criteria and the scoring rubric for the
255 awarding of grants.

256 2. Particular grant programs or projects, categories of
257 grants, and procedures necessary for the prudent administration
258 of the grant programs or projects.

259 **Section 3. Section 633.1424, Florida Statutes, is created**
260 **to read:**

261 633.1424 Institute for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.—

262 (1) As used in this section, the term:

263 (a) "First responder" has the same meaning as in s.
264 125.01045(2) .

265 (b) "Public safety agency" has the same meaning as in s.
266 365.172(3) .

267 (2) Subject to appropriation, the Institute for
268 Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is established within the
269 Department of Financial Services to serve as a statewide center
270 for research, training, outreach, and program development in
271 support of first responder behavioral health. The purpose of the
272 institute is to strengthen the mental resilience and well-being
273 of the state's public safety workforce through coordination of
274 research, training initiatives, public outreach, and policy
275 guidance.

276 (3) The institute must do all of the following:

277 (a) Coordinate statewide research efforts on behavioral
278 health issues, including suicide prevention, burnout reduction,
279 and resilience-building, which affect first responders.

280 (b) Develop and disseminate evidence-informed best
281 practices and policy recommendations relating to first responder
282 behavioral health.

283 (c) Facilitate training programs and technical assistance
284 in behavioral health initiatives for public safety agencies.

285 (d) Serve as a central hub for public outreach and
286 awareness campaigns aimed at improving mental health outcomes
287 for first responders.

288 (e) Evaluate behavioral health programs and initiatives to
289 measure their effectiveness and their impact on first
290 responders.

291 (4) The initiative may collaborate with public and private
292 partners, including, but not limited to, Florida College System
293 institutions, state universities, public safety agencies, mental
294 health providers, and community organizations, to enhance
295 program development and service delivery.

296 (5) The division shall adopt rules to implement this
297 section.

298 **Section 4.** This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.