

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [CS/HB 1253](#)

TITLE: Athletics in Public K-12 Schools

SPONSOR(S): LaMarca

COMPANION BILL: [CS/CS/SB 178](#) (Jones)

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

Committee References

[Student Academic Success](#)

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[Education & Employment](#)

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill requires the Florida High School Athletic Association to adopt bylaws that authorize a coach, employed by the school or school district, to support the welfare of a student he or she coaches, by using personal funds, not to exceed \$15,000 per athletic team per year, to provide, in good faith, effects such as food, transportation, physical therapy and rehabilitation services.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

None

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill requires the [Florida High School Athletic Association](#) (FHSAA) to adopt bylaws that authorize a coach, employed by the school or school district, to support the welfare of a student he or she coaches by using personal funds to provide, in good faith, effects such as food, transportation, physical therapy and rehabilitation services. The bylaws must define “athletic team” to include junior varsity and varsity levels, based on statutorily required [designations](#), and restrict such use of funds to one coach per athletic team. The coach who uses personal funds to provide such effects must report such use to the FHSAA in a manner provided by the FHSAA’s bylaws. If a coach uses personal funds, not to exceed \$15,000 per athletic team, per year beginning July 1, 2026, it is presumed not to be an [impermissible benefit](#) unless the use of personal funds is:

- not reported;
- reported and deemed not to be in good faith by the FHSAA; or
- used for recruiting purposes. (Section [1](#)).

The bill authorizes any other [organization governing interscholastic athletic competition](#) in this state may adopt bylaws similar to those required by this paragraph. (Section [1](#)).

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2026. (Section [6](#))

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

[The Florida High School Athletic Association](#)

The FHSAA is designated as a governing nonprofit organization of athletics in Florida public schools. Any public or private high school or middle school in this state, including charter schools, virtual schools, and home education

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cooperatives, may become a member of the FHSAA and participate in the activities of the FHSAA; however, membership in the FHSAA is not mandatory for any school.¹ The FHSAA is required to adopt bylaws that:

- Establish eligibility requirements.
- Prohibit recruiting.
- Require all students to pass a medical evaluation each year.
- Regulate people who conduct investigations on behalf of the FHSAA.
- Establish sanctions for coaches who have committed major violations of the FHSAA bylaws.
- Establish the process and standards by which FHSAA determines eligibility.
- Adopt guidelines to educate athletic coaches, officials, administrators, and student athletes and their parents about the risk of concussion and head injury.
- Adopt bylaws that require each student athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury in a practice or competition to be immediately removed from the activity.
- Adopt bylaws for the establishment and duties of a sports medicine advisory committee.²

Each year, the FHSAA sponsors over 3,500 championship series games, through which 144 teams and 294 individuals are crowned state champions in 32 sports. Over 800,000 students annually participate in these athletic programs.³

Designation of Athletics Teams

Florida law requires that all interscholastic, intercollegiate, intramural, or club athletic teams or sports that are sponsored by a public secondary school or public postsecondary institution must be expressly designated as one of the following based on the biological sex at birth of team members:

- Males, men, or boys;
- Females, women, or girls; or
- Coed or mixed, including both males and females.⁴

Athletic teams or sports designated for males, men, or boys may be open to students of the female sex while athletic teams or sports designated for females, women, or girls may not be open to students of the male sex.⁵

Florida High School Athletic Association Impermissible Benefits

According to the FHSAA's bylaws, no school employee, athletic department staff member, representative of the school's athletic interests or third parties, such as an independent person, business, or organization, may be involved, directly or indirectly, in giving an impermissible benefit to any student or any member of his/her family for the purpose of participating in interscholastic athletics, or to any student athlete who already attends a school.⁶ Specifically prohibited arrangements, assistance or benefits include, but are not limited to, the following:

- School-based financial assistance of any kind that exceeds the amount for which a student has been approved by an independent financial needs assessment company that is recognized by the FHSAA or otherwise is in excess of any supplemental assistance provided by a school to each and every student who qualifies for financial assistance.
- Cash or like items, such as credit cards, debit cards, gift cards, gift certificates, coupons, or vouchers.
- Gifts of clothing, equipment, merchandise, or other tangible items.

¹ Section [1006.20\(1\), F.S.](#)

² Section [1006.20\(2\), F.S.](#)

³ Florida High School Athletic Association, *About FHSAA*, available at <https://fhsaa.com/sports/2020/1/16/About.aspx>, (last visited Feb. 20, 2026).

⁴ Section [1006.205\(3\)\(a\), F.S.](#) For purposes of such designation, a statement of a student's biological sex on the student's official birth certificate is considered to have correctly stated the student's biological sex at birth if the statement was filed at or near the time of the student's birth. Section [1006.205\(3\)\(d\), F.S.](#)

⁵ Section [1006.205\(3\)\(b\)-\(c\), F.S.](#)

⁶ Florida High School Athletic Association, *Bylaws of the Florida High School Athletic Association, Inc. 2025-26 Edition*, available at https://fhsaa.com/documents/2025/11/21/2526_handbook_revised_10925.pdf?id=7098. at FHSAA Administrative Policy 36.4.1.

- Loans or assistance in securing a loan of any kind.
- Payment for any work or service that is not performed or that is in excess of the amount normally paid for such work or service.
- Free or reduced-cost transportation.
- Living on a full- or part-time basis, regardless of whether rent is paid, with any school employee, athletic department staff member, representative of the school's athletic interests, unless legal guardianship appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction has been obtained.
- Free or reduced-cost rent for housing, vehicles, or other items.
- Full or partial payment of moving expenses or assistance of any kind with an actual physical move.
- Employment or assistance in securing employment or contractual arrangement of any kind for which compensation may be paid.
- Free or reduced costs to attend a sport or skills camp.
- Allowing a student, who has not started the enrollment process, to participate prior to being fully enrolled.
- Any other form of arrangement, assistance, discount, or benefit that is not generally available to other students in the school or their families or that is based in any way on athletic ability.⁷

FHSAA bylaws do authorize student athletes to have essential expenses, limited to meals, lodging, and transportation, covered for any game in which he/she participates as a player.⁸

Incidents with Impermissible Benefits

In July 2025, Teddy Bridgewater, then head football coach of Miami Northwestern, posted on social media asking for donations to assist his team. In the same post, Teddy Bridgewater explained that he was providing Uber rides and meals to members of the football team.⁹ Soon after the social media post, Miami Northwestern self-reported the impermissible benefits provided to members of the football team. After investigating, the FHSAA determined that FHSAA bylaws 36.4.1 and 36.4.2.6 had been violated. As part of the corrective action, Miami Northwestern was fined \$2,500, of which \$2,250 will be returned to the school provided there are no other violations of FHSAA Policy 36 during the 2025-2026 school year.¹⁰

Other Florida Athletic Associations

Although FHSAA is the largest school athletic association in Florida, other associations are in operation and oversee their respective member schools' athletics and interscholastic competitions.¹¹ These associations primarily serve private and independent schools but some of the associations' school memberships are growing to include more public schools and sanctioned sports that may overlap or differ from the FHSAA.¹² Because Florida law recognizes the FHSAA as the governing nonprofit organization of athletics in Florida public schools,¹³ other associations operating in Florida may voluntarily implement student-athlete safety, fair play and governance transparency provisions. However, these other associations are not required to do so nor is there a statutorily

⁷ *Id.* at FHSAA Administrative Policy 36.4.2.

⁸ *Id.* at FHSAA Bylaw 9.9.3.

⁹ Doug Samules, *Teddy Bridgewater is seeking donations to help cover unconventional expenses for his Florida state champion program*, Footballscoop, Jul. 9, 2025, <https://footballscoop.com/2025/07/09/teddy-bridgewater-florida-high-school-football-miami-northwestern-state-champions-donations-uber-rides-recovery-trucks-unconventional> (last visited Feb. 20, 2026).

¹⁰ CBS Sports, *Buccaneers QB Teddy Bridgewater suspended for high school football season after giving impermissible benefits*, Sept. 12, 2025, <https://www.cbssports.com/nfl/news/buccaneers-qb-teddy-bridgewater-suspended-for-high-school-football-season-after-giving-impermissible-benefits/> (last visited Feb. 20, 2026).

¹¹ See Sunshine State Athletic Conference, *Our Members*, <https://www.sunshinestateathletics.com/page/show/5114535-our-members> (last visited Feb. 20, 2026); Florida Independent Christian Athletic Association, *Regions & Members*, <https://ficaa.org/members> (last visited Feb. 20, 2026); Florida Independent High School Athletic Association, *School Links*, <https://fihhsaa.org/schools/> (last visited Feb. 20, 2026); Sunshine Independent Athletic Association, <https://www.siaa1.com/> (last visited Feb. 20, 2026) (click "Member Schools" in menu).

¹² See Sunshine State Athletic Conference, *About Us*, <https://www.sunshinestateathletics.com/page/show/5084878-about-us> (last visited Feb. 20, 2026).

¹³ Section 1006.20(1), F.S.

designated mechanism monitoring other associations' compliance with the provisions specifically required of the FHSAA. These associations are subject to statutory provisions pertaining to all athletic associations in the state, such as permitting athletic associations to purchase insurance or self-insure to cover student athletes engaging in extracurricular activities.¹⁴

RECENT LEGISLATION:

YEAR	BILL #/SUBJECT	HOUSE/SENATE SPONSOR(S)	OTHER INFORMATION
2025	CS/CS/SB 248 - Student Participation in Interscholastic and Intrasccholastic Extracurricular Sports	Abbott/ <i>Simon</i>	The bill became law on July 1, 2025.
2025	CS/CS/CS/SB 1070 - Electrocardiograms for Student Athletes	Shoaf/ <i>Simon</i>	The bill became law on July 1, 2025.
2023	CS/CS/HB 225 - Interscholastic Activities	Hawkins, Canady/ <i>Collins</i>	The bill became law on July 1, 2023.

OTHER RESOURCES:

[2025-26 FHSAA Handbook](#)

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Student Academic Success Subcommittee	14 Y, 0 N, As CS	2/5/2026	Sanchez	Wolff
THE CHANGES ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required FHSAA bylaws to define “athletic team” to include junior varsity and varsity levels and distinguish teams by required designation. • Limited the use of personal funds authorized by the bill to one coach per athletic team and required such coach to be an employee of the school or school district. • Amended the authorized use of funds by replacing recovery services with physical therapy and rehabilitation services. • Authorized other governing organization to adopt bylaws similar to those required of the FHSAA. • Clarified the time frame for which the maximum allowable expenditure would be tracked. 			
Education & Employment Committee			Hassell	Wolff

THIS BILL ANALYSIS HAS BEEN UPDATED TO INCORPORATE ALL OF THE CHANGES DESCRIBED ABOVE.

¹⁴ See Section [1006.16, F.S.](#)