

By Senator Wright

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Financial Services for a specified purpose; providing duties and responsibilities of the institute; authorizing the institute to collaborate with other entities to enhance program development and service delivery; requiring the Division of State Fire Marshal to adopt rules; providing an effective date.

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

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

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

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

(a) "Break in service" means:

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

2. A period of time during which a person is in between employment as a full-time law enforcement officer or firefighter lasting no longer than 15 days.

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

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

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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. 633.102(9).

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

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

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

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

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

85 (b) Bonus payments provided to eligible newly employed
86 officers and newly employed firefighters are contingent upon
87 legislative appropriations and shall be prorated subject to the

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88 amount appropriated for the program.

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

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

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

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

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

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

113 3. Maintaining full-time employment as a law enforcement
114 officer with a Florida criminal justice agency or as a
115 firefighter with a fire service provider for at least 2 years
116 after from the date on which the officer or firefighter obtained

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117 certification. The required 2-year employment period may be
118 satisfied by maintaining full-time employment at one or more
119 employing agencies or fire service providers, but such period
120 must not contain any break in service longer than 180 calendar
121 days.

122 (c) The standards by which the department will determine
123 under what circumstances a break in service is acceptable. A law
124 enforcement officer or firefighter must provide documentation to
125 the department justifying a break in service. ~~For purposes of~~
126 ~~this section, the term "break in service" means a period of time~~
127 ~~during which the person is employed with a Florida criminal~~
128 ~~justice agency but is not employed as a full-time law~~
129 ~~enforcement officer or a period of time during which the person~~
130 ~~is in between employment as a full-time law enforcement officer~~
131 ~~for no longer than 15 days. The time period for any break in~~
132 ~~service does not count toward satisfying the 2-year full-time~~
133 ~~employment requirement of this section.~~

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

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

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

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(g) The method by which an officer or a firefighter must reimburse the state if he or she received a bonus payment under the program, but failed to maintain continuous employment for the required 2-year period. Reimbursement may shall not be required if an officer or a firefighter is discharged by his or her employing agency or fire service provider for a reason other than misconduct as designated on the affidavit of separation completed by the employing agency or fire service provider and maintained by the commission.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

182 633.134 Gifts and grants; grant review panel.—

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

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

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

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

200 (d) Each review panel must review the lists of eligible
201 applicants for a grant and create two lists, one of which must
202 consist of recommendations for eligible applicants for general
203 program support grants and one of which must consist of

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204 recommendations for eligible applicants for specific fire
205 project grants, and submit the lists to the Chief Financial
206 Officer.

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

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

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

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

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

231 5. Grants for programs or projects that advance the mission
232 of fire prevention and emergency response, including, but not

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233 limited to, firefighter health and wellness initiatives,
234 emergency planning and coordination systems, public safety
235 communications upgrades, or community preparedness efforts. A
236 program or project must clearly demonstrate alignment with the
237 goals of this subsection and provide measurable public safety
238 outcomes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

260 633.1424 Institute for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.—
261 (1) As used in this section, the term:

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262 (a) "First responder" has the same meaning as in s.

263 125.01045(2).

264 (b) "Public safety agency" has the same meaning as in s.

265 365.172(3).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

290 (4) The initiative may collaborate with public and private

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291 partners, including, but not limited to, Florida College System
292 institutions, state universities, public safety agencies, mental
293 health providers, and community organizations, to enhance
294 program development and service delivery.

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

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