

**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 Committee on Education Pre-K -12

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BILL: SB 178

INTRODUCER: Senator Jones

SUBJECT: Athletics in Public K-12 Schools

DATE: January 16, 2026

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

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. Palazesi	Bouck	ED	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2. _____	_____	JU	_____
3. _____	_____	RC	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SB 178 requires the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) to adopt bylaws that authorize a coach 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, and recovery services.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

**II. Present Situation:**

**The Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA)**

The Florida High School Athletic Association (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 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.<sup>1</sup> The FHSAA is required to adopt bylaws that:<sup>2</sup>

- 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1006.20(1), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 1006.20(2), F.S.

- 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.

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.<sup>3</sup>

### ***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.<sup>4</sup> Specifically prohibited arrangements, assistance or benefits include, but are not limited to, the following:<sup>5</sup>

- 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.
- 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.

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<sup>3</sup> Florida High School Athletic Association, *About FHSAA*, available at <https://fhsaa.com/sports/2020/1/16/About.aspx>, (last visited Jan. 15, 2026).

<sup>4</sup> 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](https://fhsaa.com/documents/2025/11/21/2526_handbook_revised_10925.pdf?id=7098), at FHSAA Administrative Policy 36.4.1.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at FHSAA Administrative Policy 36.4.2.

### **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.<sup>6</sup> Soon after the social media post, Miami Northwestern self-reported the impermissible benefits provided to members of the football team.<sup>7</sup> After investigating, the FHSAA determined that FHSAA bylaws 36.4.1 and 36.4.2.6 had been violated.<sup>8</sup> As part of the corrective action, Miami Northwestern deemed Coach Bridgewater ineligible to coach for the 2025-2026 school year and Miami Northwestern was fined \$2,500, of which \$2,250 is being held in abeyance given there are no other violations of FHSAA Policy 36 during the 2025-2026 school year.<sup>9</sup>

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

SB 178 amends section 1006.20, F.S., to require the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) to adopt bylaws that authorize a coach 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, and recovery services. The bill requires that a coach who uses personal funds to provide such effects must report such use to the FHSAA in a manner provided by FHSAA bylaw. If a coach uses personal funds, 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.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

#### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

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

None.

#### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

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<sup>6</sup> Doug Samules, *Teddy Bridgewater is seeking donations to help cover unconventional expenses for his Florida state champion program*, Footballscoop, Jul. 9, 2025 available at <https://footballscoop.com/2025/07/09/teddy-bridgewater-florida-high-school-football-miami-northwestern-state-champions-donations-uber-rides-recovery-trucks-unconventional>.

<sup>7</sup> Email, Florida High School Athletics Association, *Miami Northwestern's self-report submission* (Jan. 14, 2026).

<sup>8</sup> Email, Florida High School Athletics Association, *Miami Northwestern's corrective action plan* (Jan. 14, 2026).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

**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 revenues or expenditures.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

The bill authorizes a coach 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, and recovery services. However, the language is unclear as to whether it would extend the same authorization to a coach affiliated with a different athletic association, rather than the FHSAA, to provide those benefits to students.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1006.20, 768.135, 1002.20, 1006.165, and 1012.468.

**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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