

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/CS/SB 178

INTRODUCER: Judiciary Committee; Education Pre-K - 12 Committee; and Senator Jones

SUBJECT: Athletics in Public K-12 Schools

DATE: February 9, 2026

REVISED: _____

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. <u>Palazesi</u>	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>ED</u>	Fav/CS
2. <u>Collazo</u>	<u>Cibula</u>	<u>JU</u>	Fav/CS
3. <u>Palazesi</u>	<u>Kruse</u>	<u>RC</u>	Favorable

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/CS/SB 178 requires the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) to adopt bylaws allowing head coaches of athletics teams to support the welfare of the students they coach using personal funds. Coaches may, in good faith, provide assistance in the form of food, transportation, and recovery services. The maximum amount of personal funds a coach may use per athletic team per year is \$15,000. The bill also authorizes any other organization governing interscholastic athletic competition in Florida to adopt similar bylaws.

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 the 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.¹

The FHSAA must adopt bylaws that:

¹ Section 1006.20(1), F.S.

- 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

Florida High School Athletic Association Impermissible Benefits

According to the FHSAA's bylaws, "[n]o 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 [or] her family for the purpose of participating in interscholastic athletics, or to any student-athlete who already attends a school."⁴

Specifically prohibited arrangements, assistance, or benefits include 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 or is otherwise 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, or representative of the school's athletic interests, unless legal guardianship appointed by a court has been obtained.
- Free or reduced-cost rent for housing, vehicles, or other items.

² Section 1006.20(2), F.S.

³ Florida High School Athletic Association, *About FHSAA*, <https://fhsaa.com/sports/2020/1/16/About.aspx> (last visited Jan. 28, 2026).

⁴ Florida High School Athletic Association, *Bylaws of the Florida High School Athletic Association, Inc.*, 97 (Bylaw 36.4.1) (2025-26 Ed.), available at https://fhsaa.com/documents/2025/11/21/2526_handbook_revised_10925.pdf?id=7098.

- 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.⁵

Incidents with Impermissible Benefits

In July 2025, Teddy Bridgewater, who was head football coach of Miami Northwestern Senior High School at the time, posted on social media asking for donations to assist his team. In the same post, Coach Bridgewater explained that he was providing Uber rides and meals to members of the football team.⁶

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 deemed Coach Bridgewater ineligible to coach for the 2025-2026 school year and Miami Northwestern was fined \$2,500, but \$2,250 of the fine amount is being held in abeyance provided there are no other violations of FHSAA Policy 36 during the 2025-2026 school year.⁷

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

CS/CS/SB 178 amends s. 1006.20, F.S., which governs athletics in public K-12 schools, to require the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) to adopt bylaws authorizing head coaches of athletics teams to support the welfare of the students they coach using personal funds. Coaches may, in good faith, provide assistance in the form of food, transportation, and recovery services.

The bill requires coaches who provide assistance using personal funds to report it 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 maximum amount of personal funds a coach may use per athletic team per year is \$15,000.

⁵ *Id.* (Bylaw 36.4.2).

⁶ Doug Samuels, *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>.

⁷ Email from Ashton Moseley to Kedler Pouca regarding “Miami Northwestern – Self Report – Football – Bridgewater – 07-14-25,” Sept. 12, 2025 (on file with the Senate Committee on Judiciary).

The bill also authorizes any other organization governing interscholastic athletic competition in Florida to adopt similar bylaws.

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.

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:

None.

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 Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS/CS by Judiciary on February 3, 2026:

The committee substitute revises the bill to clarify that it applies to head coaches of athletics teams only, not all coaches, and that the amount of personal funds a head coach may use per athletic team per year is a maximum of \$15,000. It also provides that other organizations governing interscholastic athletic competition in Florida, not just the FHSAA, may adopt bylaws similar to those required by the bill.

CS by Education Pre-K - 12 on January 20, 2026:

The committee substitute amends s. 1006.20, F.S., to limit the amount of personal funds a coach may use to provide assistance such as food, transportation, and recovery services, to \$15,000 per athletic team per year.

B. Amendments:

None.