

**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 Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education

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BILL: SPB 2516

INTRODUCER: For consideration by the Appropriations Committee

SUBJECT: Higher Education

DATE: February 17, 2026

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

ANALYST

Gray

STAFF DIRECTOR

Sadberry

REFERENCE

ACTION

**Pre-meeting**

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**I. Summary:**

SPB 2516 makes conforming changes related to the Senate’s Proposed General Appropriations Act for the 2026-2027 fiscal year.

Specifically, the bill:

- Transfers the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) Fund program to the Center for Nursing (Center) within the University of South Florida and:
  - Expands the fund to address workforce shortages in health science education programs.
  - Expands the definition of a health care partner.
  - Provides the definition of center to mean the Florida Center for Nursing within the University of South Florida.
  - Expands the allowed uses of the LINE Fund.
  - Specifies the participating institution should submit the completed proposal to the center rather than the Board of Governors (BOG) and the Department of Education (DOE).
  - Allows health care partners to provide non-monetary contributions that directly support the goals of the LINE Fund.
  - Provides examples of allowable non-monetary LINE contributions.
  - Establishes a standardized process for identifying related health science programs that are eligible for participation in the LINE Fund by designating the DOE as the lead entity.
- For the University of South Florida, Center for Nursing:
  - Authorizes the center rather than the BOG and DOE to serve as the administrator of the LINE Fund.
  - Provides the requirements of the center such as providing technical assistance to eligible institutions, to develop and publish on its website the guidelines for the LINE Fund administration including application procedures and deadlines, criteria for program eligibility, the application process, a process to ensure a fair evaluation of proposals and determination of award recipients, and reporting and accountability standards of the program.

- Allows the center to assign priority consideration for applicants that will improve services in underserved geographic areas for programs and partnerships that address the greatest workforce needs or gaps.
- Proposes that the center notify and provide a brief explanation to the applicant regarding the determination of the institution's proposal.
- Provides the allowed application determination statuses and definitions of such statuses.
- Allows but does not require the center to award funds to an approved proposal for up to three academic years immediately following the academic year within which the initial approval was granted.
- The bill requires students enrolled in a Program of Strategic Emphasis or in a state-approved teacher preparation program, who have out-of-pocket expenses for tuition and fees, have applied all federal, state and institutional gift aids, prior to the state waiving 100 percent of the student's out-of-pocket expenses for tuition and fees for an equivalent course in such program.

The bill will have a cost to the state if additional funds are appropriated to the Florida Center for Nursing for program administration. **See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.**

This bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

## II. Present Situation:

### Linking Industry to Nursing Education Fund

The Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) Fund was established in 2022<sup>1</sup> as a competitive grant opportunity and provides matching funds on a dollar-for-dollar basis to participating institutions that partner with health care providers<sup>2</sup> incentivizing collaboration to meet local, regional, and statewide demand for nurses.<sup>3</sup>

The LINE Funds are available to:

- District career centers,<sup>4</sup>
- Charter technical career centers,<sup>5</sup>
- Florida College System (FCS) institutions,
- State Universities,
- Independent nonprofit colleges or universities located and chartered in the state accredited by a United States Department of Education recognized accrediting agency or association to grant baccalaureate degrees,<sup>6</sup> and
- Independent school, college, or university with an accredited program as defined in s. 464.003 which is located in this state and licensed by the Commission for Independent Education pursuant to s. 1005.31, which has a nursing education program that meets or exceeds the following:

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 2022-154, s. 50, L.O.F.

<sup>2</sup> Sections 1009.8962 and 768.38, F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Florida Board of Governors, *All Universities with Nursing Programs Receive LINE Funding*, available at <https://www.flbog.edu/2024/10/31/all-universities-with-nursing-programs-receive-line-funding/> (Last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

<sup>4</sup> Section 1001.44, F.S.

<sup>5</sup> Section 1002.34, F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 1009.8962(3), F.S.

- For a certified nursing assistant program, a completion rate of at least 70 percent for the prior year.
- For a licensed practical nurse, associate of science in nursing, and bachelor of science in nursing program, a first-time passage rate on the National Council of State Boards of Nursing Licensing Examination of at least 75 percent for the prior year based on a minimum of 10 testing participants.<sup>7</sup>

The funds are to be administered by the Board of Governors (BOG) for state universities and by the Department of Education (DOE) for all other institutions.<sup>8</sup> The funds may be used for student scholarships, recruitment of additional faculty, equipment, and simulation centers to advance high-quality nursing education programs throughout the state. Funds may not be used for the construction of new buildings.<sup>9</sup>

Each institution is required to submit a proposal to the BOG or DOE. The proposal must identify the health care partner located and licensed in the state. The BOG or DOE must review and evaluate each proposal according to the following minimum criteria:

- Whether funds committed by the health care partner will contribute to an eligible purpose.
- How the institution plans to use the funds, including how such funds will be utilized to increase student enrollment and program completion.
- How the health care partner will onboard and retain graduates.
- How the funds will expand the institution's nursing education programs to meet local, regional, or state workforce demands. If applicable, it should include advanced education nursing programs and how the funds will increase the number of faculty and clinical preceptors and planned efforts to utilize the clinical placement process.<sup>10</sup>

For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, \$24,000,000 was provided to school district postsecondary technical career centers, charter technical career centers, FCS institutions, independent non-profit colleges or universities, and independent schools, colleges, or universities for participation in the LINE Fund program.<sup>11</sup> In the same year, \$6,000,000 was provided to state universities for participation in the LINE Fund program.<sup>12</sup>

### **Career and Technical Education Health Science Curriculum Framework**

The Department of Education (DOE) is responsible for developing and maintaining Career and Technical Education (CTE) curriculum frameworks for middle school, secondary, and postsecondary CTE programs. These programs are organized into 17 career clusters<sup>13</sup> and are designed to serve middle school, high school, district technical college, and FCS students statewide. The CTE curriculum frameworks establish standards and competencies developed in

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Section 1009.8962(4), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Section 1009.8962(6), F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Section 1009.8962(7), F.S.

<sup>11</sup> Chapter 2025-198, specific appropriation 131, Laws of Fla.

<sup>12</sup> Chapter 2025-198, specific appropriation 146, Laws of Fla.

<sup>13</sup> The Florida Department of Education, Career & Technical Education, *2025-26 CTE Curriculum Frameworks*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/career-tech-edu/curriculum-frameworks/2025-26-frameworks/> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026).

collaboration with business, industry, and education partners and are intended to prepare students for occupations important to Florida's economic development.<sup>14</sup> The CTE curriculum frameworks are adopted annually by the State Board of Education.<sup>15</sup> All CTE curriculum frameworks, including the Health Science framework, are available on the DOE CTE webpage and through CPALMS-CTE.<sup>16</sup>

The Health Science curriculum framework identifies courses, competencies, and instructional sequences that support health science career pathways from introductory through advanced levels across educational settings. Programs aligned with the Health Science curriculum framework include certificate and degree pathways that prepare students for health care-related occupations, such as nursing support, allied health, and clinical services.<sup>17</sup>

### **Florida Center for Nursing**

The Florida Center for Nursing (center) was established in Florida to address the issues of supply and demand for nursing.<sup>18</sup> The Legislature finds that the center will repay the state's investment by providing an ongoing strategy for the state's resources directed to nursing. The center's primary goals are developing a strategic statewide plan for nursing manpower, enhancing and promoting recognition, reward and renewal activities for nurses, and for convening various groups representative nurses, other health care providers, business and industry, consumers, lawmakers and educators.<sup>19</sup>

To help accomplish these goals, the center must develop a statewide plan for nursing manpower in the state by:

- Conducting statistically valid biennial data-driven gap analysis of the supply and demand of the health care workforce.
- Developing recommendations to increase nurse faculty and clinical preceptors, support nurse faculty development, and promote advanced nurse education.
- Developing best practices in academic preparation and continuing education needs of qualified nurse educators, nurse faculty, and clinical preceptors.
- Piloting innovative projects to support the recruitment, development, and retention of qualified nurse faculty and clinical preceptors.
- Encouraging and coordinating the development of academic-practice partnerships, including partnerships with hospitals which provide opportunities for nursing students to obtain clinical experience, to support nurse faculty employment and advancement.

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<sup>14</sup> The Florida Department of Education, Career & Technical Education, *CTE Curriculum Frameworks*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/career-tech-edu/curriculum-frameworks/> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026).

<sup>15</sup> Rule 6A-60571, F.A.C.

<sup>16</sup> CPALMS, *Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs*, <https://www.cpalms.org/PreviewCourseProgram/CTE?frameurl=%2Fsearch> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026).

<sup>17</sup> The Florida Department of Education, 2025-26 CTE Curriculum Frameworks, *Health Science*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/career-tech-edu/curriculum-frameworks/2025-26-frameworks/health-science.stm> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026).

<sup>18</sup> Section 464.0195(1), F.S.

<sup>19</sup> Section 464.0195(2), F.S.

- Developing distance learning infrastructure for nursing education and advancing faculty competencies in the pedagogy of teaching and the evidence-based use of technology, simulation, and distance learning techniques.

In addition, the center must enhance and promote recognition, reward, and renewal activities for nurses in the state by:

- Promoting nursing excellence programs such as recognition by the American Nurses Credentialing Center.
- Proposing and creating additional rewards, recognition, and renewal activities for nurses.
- Promoting media and positive image-building efforts for nursing.

Lastly, the center must convene various groups representative of nurses, or other health care providers, business and industry, consumers, lawmakers and educators to:

- Review and comment on a data analysis prepared by the center.
- Recommend systemic changes, including strategies for implementation of recommended changes.
- Evaluate and report the results of these efforts to the Legislature or other entities.<sup>20</sup>

The center is required to annually submit details of its activities during the preceding calendar year, including a nursing education program report.<sup>21</sup>

In 2024, the center conducted a Community Engagement Tour in all regions of the state. A total of 692 community members across the state participated in the Community Engagement Tour where they were able to respond to the latest center research and offer feedback about unique issues they face in their communities. Data collected during this tour will be used to build the 2026-2028 statewide strategic plan.<sup>22</sup>

The center initiated the Shaping the Future: Becoming Nursing Faculty program. This program is an online, 90-minute continuing education activity designed to provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities of nursing faculty. In 2024, the program had 1,224 enrollments and 472 completions. After completion 85 percent of participants indicated they would consider a pathway to becoming nursing faculty in Florida.<sup>23</sup>

### **Tuition Waivers**

Florida law provides waivers from specified fees to certain students who meet identified criteria. Some tuition and fee exemptions and waivers are established pursuant to Florida Statute and are considered mandatory, while others are permissive. For example, a State University System (SUS) or Florida College System (FCS) institution may waive tuition and fees for a classroom teacher who is employed full-time by a school district and who meets the established academic requirements, for up to six credit hours per term on a space-available basis in undergraduate

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<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> Section 464.0195(5), F.S.

<sup>22</sup> Florida Center for Nursing, *Florida Center for Nursing Impact Report 2024*, page 14, available at <https://flcenterfornursing.org/about-us/annual-impact-reports/2024-impact-report/> (Last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* at pages 19-20.

courses approved by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). Such courses must be limited to undergraduate courses related to special education, mathematics, or science.<sup>24</sup>

### **Program of Strategic Emphasis or In-State Teacher Approved Preparation Program Waiver**

Effective July 1, 2026, for every course in a Program of Strategic Emphasis (PSE), or in a state-approved teacher preparation program identified by the Board of Governors, in which a student is enrolled, a state university must waive 100 percent of the tuition and fees for an equivalent course in such a program. To be eligible, a student must:

- Be a resident for tuition purposes;<sup>25</sup>
- Earn at least 60 semester credit hours towards a baccalaureate degree within two academic years after initial enrollment at a Florida public postsecondary institution; and
- Be enrolled in one of 10 STEM PSE.<sup>26</sup> The programs identified by the Board of Governors must reflect the priorities of Florida and be offered at most state universities.<sup>27</sup>

The PSE waiver is applicable only for upper-level courses and up to 110 percent of the number of required credit hours of the baccalaureate degree program for which the student is enrolled.<sup>28</sup>

Bright Futures Florida Academic Scholars or Florida Medallion Scholars participating in the Program of Strategic Emphasis Waiver or a state-approved teacher preparation program must receive a disbursement equal to the award amount received for the courses paid by the Bright Futures Scholarship program.<sup>29</sup>

A state university providing waivers to students enrolled in programs of strategic emphasis may receive funding to offset the forgone tuition revenue if the Legislature appropriates funding in the General Appropriations Act.<sup>30</sup> For 2025-2026 fiscal year, the Legislature appropriated \$18,405,299 for this purpose.<sup>31</sup>

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

**Section 1** amends s. 464.0195, F.S., to clarify that the Florida Center of Nursing (Center) is located within the University of South Florida. The bill provides that the Center must administer the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) Fund and must proactively promote to eligible institutions the availability of matching funds through the LINE Fund prior to the opening of the annual application period.

<sup>24</sup> Section 1009.26, F.S.

<sup>25</sup> Section 1009.21(1)(g), F.S., provides that a student who is classified as a “resident for tuition purposes” is a student who qualifies for the in-state tuition rate.

<sup>26</sup> Section 1009.26, F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Section 1009.26(18)(a), F.S.

<sup>28</sup> Section 1009.26(18)(b), F.S.

<sup>29</sup> Section 1009.26(18)(c), F.S.

<sup>30</sup> Section 1009.26(18)(d), F.S.

<sup>31</sup> Chapter 2025-198, specific appropriation 147, Laws of Fla.

The center is also responsible for administering the application, evaluating, and distributing the LINE Fund and for providing technical assistance to eligible institutions prior to, during, and after the award process to maximize the success of the program statewide. The center must also develop and publish on its website guidelines for the LINE Fund that include: application periods and deadlines, criteria for program eligibility and funding priorities, a preapproval process, a process to ensure a fair evaluation of all submitted proposals and determination of award recipients, the process that each type of eligible institution must follow to certify the receipt of and pledged contributions from any other partner organizations, and reporting and accountability standards for recipients.

**Section 2** amends s. 1009.26, F.S., to specify that for students enrolled in a Program of Strategic Emphasis or in a state-approved teacher preparation program, and who have out-of-pocket expenses for tuition and fees after all federal, state, and institutional gift aids are applied, then a state university shall waive 100 percent of the student's out-of-pocket expenses for tuition and fees for an equivalent course in such program.

**Section 3** amends s. 1009.862, F.S., to expand the scope of the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) Fund to address workforce shortages in related health science education programs in addition to nursing programs. Further specifying such related health science programs include programs that are aligned with the State Board of Education (SBE) Career and Technical Education (CTE) Health Science curriculum framework.

This section of the bill also expands the definition of the term "health care partner" and allow the center to consider organizations that are connected to nursing education or the nursing workforce. The following organizations will now be eligible for consideration under the health care partner provision: an organization that manufactures or sells durable medical equipment or simulation equipment that demonstrably enhances or supplements a nursing student's education; an organization that provides educational materials or instruction related to preparation to pass a nationally recognized nursing licensure examination; a health care organization active in the state that employs or utilizes licensed nurses to deliver direct patient care; and a nonprofit organization or fund with a 501(c)(3) designation registered in the state for at least two years prior to the date of the initial LINE Fund application that is organized primarily, or that makes other reportable charitable contributions, to support the health care workforce of this state through training or the continuing education of health care professionals.

The bill authorizes the LINE Fund to provide a dollar-for-dollar match for contributions made by individuals or entities that are not health care partners, provided the contribution supports an eligible purpose of the fund. Contributions from health care partners must be given priority when awarding matching funds to the institution.

This section of the bill also provides the definition of center to be the Florida Center for Nursing within the University of South Florida.

In addition, the bill expands the allowed uses of the LINE Fund to include preceptors, increasing enrollment, completions, and licensure exam passage rates, internships, and other related activities determined by the center to advance high quality nursing education programs and to expand the qualified nursing workforce throughout the state.

The bill retains that funds may not be used for construction of new buildings but does allow for funds to be used to expand, retrofit, or upgrade existing facilities if the proposal will result in increased program enrollment or improved or modernized educational or simulation space for nursing education or related health science students.

The bill streamlines and simplifies the proposal process by requiring institutions to submit timely and completed proposals to the center, rather than the Board of Governors (BOG) or the Department of Education (DOE). The proposal must identify the specific health care partner whose monetary or non-monetary contributions will be matched. The bill further specifies the examples of non-monetary donations and the requirements to accept non-monetary contributions as health care partner matching funds.

The bill provides that the center must timely review and evaluate each submitted and completed proposal according to the minimum criteria requirements including but not limited to the institution's plan to utilize funds, and how the health care partner will onboard and retain graduates or otherwise improve the likelihood that graduates will successfully join the state or local workforce.

Additionally, the bill allows the center to assign priority consideration for applications that will improve services in underserved geographic areas or for programs and partnerships that address the greatest workforce needs or gaps.

The bill requires that after reviewing and evaluating each timely submitted proposal, the center must notify the applicant of its determination and provide a brief explanation for the reasons for reaching such determination.

The bill clarifies that the center may, but is not required to, award funds to an approved proposal for up to three academic years immediately following the academic year within which the initial approval is granted and provides the notification requirements to the institution.

The bill revises grant proposal evaluation criteria to include how funds will expand health science education programs to meet workforce demand. The bill revises annual reporting requirements for grant recipients to include enrollment data for applicable health science education programs, in addition to nursing programs.

Additionally, the bill designates the Department of Education (DOE) as the lead entity responsible for identifying and maintaining health science programs eligible for participation in the LINE Fund and requires the DOE to apply the SBE's CTE Health Science curriculum framework as the basis for determining program eligibility.

The bill requires the DOE to compile and publish an initial list of LINE-eligible health science programs by October 1, 2026. In developing and administering the list of LINE-eligible health science programs, the bill requires the DOE to:

- Compile the current CTE Health Science pathways and programs;
- Identify CTE-aligned health science programs offered through district technical colleges, career centers, and Florida College System institutions;

- Establish and apply alignment criteria, including credential type and applicable licensure or certification outcomes, for purposes of determining program eligibility; and
- Maintain an approved list of LINE-eligible health science programs for use in administering the LINE Fund.

The bill requires the DOE to annually publish and update the list of eligible health science programs to reflect changes to the CTE Health Science framework and program offerings.

The bill authorizes the Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) to provide workforce and labor market demand data to support prioritization of LINE Funding, but prohibits the office from determining program eligibility.

Lastly, the bill removes the requirement for the BOG and State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt regulations and rules to administer the funds, establish dates for submission and review of proposals, award funds, and other regulations and rules necessary to implement the LINE Fund.

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:**

SPB 2500 transfers \$30 million for the LINE Fund from the Florida College System and State University System - Education and General Activities budgets to the Florida Center for Nursing within the University of South Florida to reflect the center's role as the administrator for the program. In addition, SPB 2500 provides an additional \$2 million for program administration to the Florida Center for Nursing.

The bill provides a positive fiscal impact to the institutions by providing that a student may not receive a Programs of Strategic Emphasis or In-State Teacher Approved Preparation waiver until all other federal, state, and institutional gift aid is applied to their tuition and fees.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 464.0195, 1009.24, 1009.26, and 1009.8962.

**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.