

A bill to be entitled
An act relating to education and workforce development for inmates; amending s. 334.044, F.S.; authorizing the Department of Transportation to expend certain funds for all workforce development programs, rather than only construction workforce development programs; authorizing the department to provide grants to private educational providers to use for certain certification and training opportunities; amending s. 334.62, F.S.; requiring certification and training opportunities to include training for specified commercial driver licenses to certain inmates; providing eligibility; authorizing the department to use workforce development funds for certain certification and training opportunities; amending s. 944.801, F.S.; requiring the Correctional Education Program under the Department of Corrections to annually submit a report to the Secretary of Corrections with specified information; authorizing the Correctional Education Program to implement a career and technical education program in which certain inmates can earn specified commercial driver licenses; providing eligibility; amending s. 945.091, F.S.; authorizing an inmate to be transported in or to operate a state-owned vehicle under certain

26 circumstances; requiring a certified correctional
27 officer to be present during such transport or
28 operation; amending s. 945.0913, F.S.; authorizing
29 inmates to drive a state-owned vehicle under certain
30 circumstances; requiring a certified correctional
31 officer to be present during such transport or
32 operation; providing an effective date.

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

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36 **Section 1. Subsection (35) of section 334.044, Florida
37 Statutes, is amended to read:**

38 334.044 Powers and duties of the department.—The
39 department shall have the following general powers and duties:
40 (35) To expend funds for a ~~construction~~ workforce
41 development program, in consultation with affected stakeholders,
42 for delivery of projects designated in the department's work
43 program. The department may annually expend up to \$5 million
44 from the State Transportation Trust Fund for fiscal years 2025-
45 2026 through 2029-2030 in grants to state colleges, and school
46 districts, and private educational providers, with priority
47 given to state colleges and school districts in counties that
48 are rural communities as defined in s. 288.0656(2), for
49 certification and training opportunities within the Florida
50 Transportation Academy, for the purchase of equipment simulators

51 with authentic original equipment manufacturer controls and a
52 companion curriculum, for the purchase of instructional aids for
53 use in conjunction with the equipment simulators, and to support
54 offering an elective course in heavy civil construction which
55 must, at a minimum, provide the student with an Occupational
56 Safety and Health Administration 10-hour certification and a
57 fill equipment simulator certification.

58 **Section 2. Subsection (1) of section 334.62, Florida
59 Statutes, is amended to read:**

60 334.62 Florida Transportation Academy.—The Legislature
61 finds that the growth and sustainability of the transportation
62 industry workforce is vital to the continued success and
63 efficiency of the state's supply chain and economic
64 competitiveness. In order to prioritize the continued need for
65 transportation industry workforce development programs, the
66 Florida Transportation Academy is established within the
67 department. In order to support, promote, and sustain workforce
68 development efforts in the transportation sector, the department
69 may do all of the following:

70 (1) Coordinate with the Department of Corrections to
71 identify and create certification and training opportunities for
72 nonviolent, ~~scheduled-release inmates~~ and nonviolent inmates who
73 have 2 years or less remaining on their sentence and create a
74 notification process between the Department of Corrections and
75 the department for nonviolent inmates with imminent scheduled-

76 release dates who are expected to seek employment upon release.
77 Such certification and training opportunities must be offered at
78 state correctional institutions and correctional facilities and,
79 at a minimum, include training for Class A and Class B
80 commercial driver licenses. To be eligible to enroll in a Class
81 A or Class B commercial driver license training program offered
82 in accordance with this subsection, an inmate must be proficient
83 in English. Such proficiency may be demonstrated in a manner
84 specified by the department or the department's designee. The
85 department's workforce development funds as described in s.
86 334.044(35) may be used to fund such certification and training
87 opportunities.

88 **Section 3. Subsections (7), (8), and (9) of section**
89 **944.801, Florida Statutes, are renumbered as subsections (6),**
90 **(7), and (8), respectively, and paragraphs (a), (e), and (g)**
91 **through (j) of subsection (3) and subsection (5) and present**
92 **subsections (6) and (7) of that section are amended, to read:**

93 944.801 Education for state prisoners.—

94 (3) The responsibilities of the Correctional Education
95 Program shall be to:

96 (a) Develop guidelines for collecting education-related
97 information during the inmate reception process and for
98 disseminating such information to the classification staff of
99 the Department of Corrections. The information collected shall
100 include the inmate's areas of educational or career and

101 technical educational vocational interest, ~~vocational~~ skills,
102 and level of education.

103 (e) Enter into agreements with public or private school
104 districts, entities, ~~state community~~ colleges, ~~junior colleges~~,
105 ~~colleges~~, or universities as may be deemed appropriate for the
106 purpose of carrying out its duties and responsibilities and
107 ensure that agreements require minimum performance standards and
108 standards for measurable objectives, in accordance with
109 established Department of Education standards.

110 (g) Develop and maintain complete and reliable statistics
111 on the number of high school equivalency diplomas and career and
112 technical education vocational certificates issued by each
113 institution in each skill area, the change in inmate literacy
114 levels, and the number of inmate admissions to and withdrawals
115 from education courses. The compiled statistics shall be
116 summarized and analyzed in the annual report of correctional
117 education activities required by paragraph (f).

118 (h) Develop a written procedure for selecting programs to
119 add to or delete from the career and technical education
120 ~~vocational~~ curriculum. The procedure shall include labor market
121 analyses that demonstrate the projected demand for certain
122 occupations and the projected supply of potential employees. In
123 conducting these analyses, the department shall evaluate the
124 feasibility of adding career and technical vocational education
125 programs that have been identified by the Department of

126 Commerce, the Department of Education, or a regional
127 coordinating council as being in undersupply in this state. The
128 department shall periodically reevaluate the career and
129 technical vocational education programs in major institutions to
130 determine which of the programs support and provide relevant
131 skills to inmates who could be assigned to a correctional work
132 program that is operated as a Prison Industry Enhancement
133 Program. The annual report of correctional education activities
134 required under paragraph (f) must include all of the following
135 information:

136 1. The number of inmates who completed career and
137 technical education training, the type of training each inmate
138 completed, and the credential each inmate earned through the
139 Correctional Education Program.

140 2. The number of inmates who completed career and
141 technical education training through the Correctional Education
142 Program and were employed within 6 months after being released
143 from prison.

144 3. Statistics on whether the employed former inmates who
145 completed training through the Correctional Education Program
146 are employed in an occupation aligned with their education and
147 training received through the Correctional Education Program.

148 (i) Ensure that every inmate who has 2 years or more
149 remaining to serve on his or her sentence at the time that he or
150 she is received at an institution and who lacks basic and

151 functional literacy skills as defined in s. 1004.02 attends not
152 fewer than 150 hours of sequential instruction in a correctional
153 adult basic education program. The basic and functional literacy
154 level of an inmate shall be determined by the average composite
155 test score obtained on a test approved for this purpose by the
156 State Board of Education.

157 1. Upon completion of the 150 hours of instruction, the
158 inmate shall be retested and, if a composite test score of
159 functional literacy is not attained, the department is
160 authorized to require the inmate to remain in the instructional
161 program.

162 2. Highest priority of inmate participation shall be
163 focused on youthful offenders and those inmates nearing release
164 from the correctional system.

165 3. An inmate shall be required to attend the 150 hours of
166 adult basic education instruction unless such inmate:

167 a. Is serving a life sentence or is under sentence of
168 death.

169 b. Is specifically exempted for security or health
170 reasons.

171 c. Is housed at a community correctional center, road
172 prison, work camp, or career and technical education vocational
173 center.

174 d. Attains a functional literacy level after attendance in
175 fewer than 150 hours of adult basic education instruction.

176 e. Is unable to enter such instruction because of
177 insufficient facilities, staff, or classroom capacity.

178 4. The Department of Corrections shall provide classes to
179 accommodate those inmates assigned to correctional or public
180 work programs after normal working hours. The department shall
181 develop a plan to provide academic and career and technical
182 education ~~vocational~~ classes on a more frequent basis and at
183 times that accommodate the increasing number of inmates with
184 work assignments, to the extent that resources permit.

185 5. If an inmate attends and actively participates in the
186 150 hours of instruction, the Department of Corrections may
187 grant a one-time award of up to 6 additional days of incentive
188 gain-time, which must be credited and applied as provided by
189 law. Active participation means, at a minimum, that the inmate
190 is attentive, responsive, cooperative, and completes assigned
191 work.

192 (j) Recommend the award of additional incentive gain-time
193 for inmates who receive a high school equivalency diploma or a
194 career and technical education ~~vocational~~ certificate.

195 (5) The Correctional Education Program may:

196 (a) Establish a prison entrepreneurship program and adopt
197 procedures for admitting student inmates. If the department
198 elects to develop the program, it must include at least 180 days
199 of in-prison education. The program curriculum must include a
200 component on developing a business plan, procedures for

201 graduation and certification of successful student inmates, and
202 at least 90 days of transitional and postrelease continuing
203 educational services. Transitional and postrelease continuing
204 educational services may be offered to graduate student inmates
205 on a voluntary basis and are not a requirement for completion of
206 the program. The department shall enter into agreements with
207 public or private colleges or universities, other nonprofit
208 entities, or other authorized providers under s. 1002.45(1)(a)1.
209 to implement the program. The program must be funded with
210 existing resources.

211 (b) (6) The Correctional Education Program may Work in
212 cooperation with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
213 Services, Florida Forestry Service Division, and the Florida
214 Department of Financial Services, Division of State Fire Marshal
215 to develop a program for implementation within state
216 correctional institutions or correctional facilities to train
217 and certify inmates as firefighters. The program should include,
218 but not be limited to, certification of inmates as state forest
219 staff trained to help protect homes, forestland, and natural
220 resources from the effects of wildfires throughout the state.

221 (c) Implement a career and technical education program to
222 be offered at state correctional institutions and correctional
223 facilities to train and license inmates to operate a commercial
224 motor vehicle. The career and technical education curriculum
225 must include training for Class A and Class B driver licenses

226 and participation in such curriculum is limited to nonviolent
227 inmates who have 2 years or less remaining to serve on his or
228 her sentence. To be eligible to enroll in a Class A or Class B
229 commercial driver license training program offered in accordance
230 with this paragraph, an inmate must be proficient in English.
231 Such proficiency may be demonstrated in a manner specified by
232 the department or the department's designee.

233 (6)-(7) The department may contract with a district school
234 board, the Florida Virtual School, a charter school authorized
235 to operate under s. 1002.33, or a Florida College System
236 institution to provide education services in the Correctional
237 Education Program. The education services may include any
238 educational or, career and technical education, ~~or vocational~~
239 training authorized by the department.

240 **Section 4. Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section**
241 **945.091, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

242 945.091 Extension of the limits of confinement;
243 restitution by employed inmates.—

244 (1) The department may adopt rules permitting the
245 extension of the limits of the place of confinement of an inmate
246 as to whom there is reasonable cause to believe that the inmate
247 will honor his or her trust by authorizing the inmate, under
248 prescribed conditions and following investigation and approval
249 by the secretary, or the secretary's designee, who shall
250 maintain a written record of such action, to leave the confines

251 of that place unaccompanied by a custodial agent for a
252 prescribed period of time to:

253 (b) Work at paid employment, participate in an education
254 or a training program, or voluntarily serve a public or
255 nonprofit agency or faith-based service group in the community,
256 while continuing as an inmate of the institution or facility in
257 which the inmate is confined, except during the hours of his or
258 her employment, education, training, or service and traveling
259 thereto and therefrom. An inmate may travel to and from his or
260 her place of employment, education, or training only by means of
261 walking, bicycling, or using public transportation or
262 transportation that is provided by a family member or employer.
263 Contingent upon specific appropriations or as authorized in s.
264 945.0913(2), the department may transport an inmate in a state-
265 owned vehicle if the inmate is unable to obtain other means of
266 travel to his or her place of employment, education, or
267 training. An inmate may be transported in or may operate a
268 state-owned vehicle if the inmate is appropriately licensed and
269 enrolled in or has completed a department-operated or contracted
270 commercial driver license program for the purpose of completing
271 program requirements or demonstrating proficiency in the
272 program. At least one certified correctional officer must be
273 present during such transport or operation.

274 1. An inmate may participate in paid employment only
275 during the last 36 months of his or her confinement, unless

276 sooner requested by the Florida Commission on Offender Review or
277 the Control Release Authority.

278 2. While working at paid employment and residing in the
279 facility, an inmate may apply for placement at a contracted
280 substance abuse transition housing program. The transition
281 assistance specialist shall inform the inmate of program
282 availability and assess the inmate's need and suitability for
283 transition housing assistance. If an inmate is approved for
284 placement, the specialist shall assist the inmate. If an inmate
285 requests and is approved for placement in a contracted faith-
286 based substance abuse transition housing program, the specialist
287 must consult with the chaplain before such placement. The
288 department shall ensure that an inmate's faith orientation, or
289 lack thereof, will not be considered in determining admission to
290 a faith-based program and that the program does not attempt to
291 convert an inmate toward a particular faith or religious
292 preference.

293 **Section 5. Section 945.0913, Florida Statutes, is amended
294 to read:**

295 945.0913 Inmates prohibited from driving state-owned
296 vehicles to transport inmates in a work-release program;
297 exception.—

298 (1) Except as provided in subsection (2), an inmate may
299 not drive a state-owned vehicle for the purpose of transporting
300 inmates who are participating in a work-release program

301 authorized in s. 945.091(1)(b).

302 (2) An inmate appropriately licensed and trained may
303 operate a state-owned vehicle if he or she is enrolled in or has
304 completed a department-operated or contracted commercial driver
305 license training program. An inmate may only operate a state-
306 owned vehicle on department property or other state-owned
307 property specifically designated for commercial driver license
308 training purposes. At least one certified correctional officer
309 must be present during such operation.

310 **Section 6.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.